

Children &

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Service to Children

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ON THE COVER: Students at Village Community School in the West Village community of Manhattan work on a project identifying media stereotypes in advertising, under the guidance of teacher Jennifer Gladkowski.



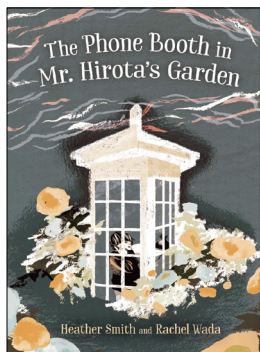
Editor's Note

How Books Touch Our Souls

By Sharon Verbeten

Over the past few months, I've grieved the loss of at least five friends and family members. It never fails to make me consider my own mortality. But thankfully, there are books to heal and touch our souls. And it seems like in the last decade or so, more authors have been penning children's books about death, grief, and funerals. I think that's a good trend.

With society being so nervous about accepting or even addressing death, it's a topic that families hesitate to talk about with children. And while there have been some classic children's book about grief over the years, I'm pleased to see more publishers taking changes on such titles. I've even compiled a booklist of recommended titles for a local funeral home and helped them build their grief library.



One book I'm heartily recommending recently is *The Phone Booth in Mr. Hirota's Garden* by Canadian author Heather Smith and illustrator Rachel Wada (Orca, 2019). It's a fictionalized account of a grieving man in Japan who erects a phone booth atop a hill in his garden; inside is a disconnected phone. Loved ones begin to flock to the venue to speak with their lost loved

ones, hoping their voices will carry on the wind. The haunting and atmospheric illustrations add to the weight of this enchanting story—offering hope in time of loss.

I was so inspired that I called and interviewed the author. I told my funeral-director friends to add it to their libraries. I stopped short—for now!—of recommending that funeral homes consider adding an old-time phone (disconnected, of course) to their private rooms, offering a tool for families to place those all-important, and healing, phone calls.

In short, books touch us—motivate us and move our souls. That's what Smith and Wada's book did for me at a time when I really needed it. I'm sure there's a book that has done that for you.

I'd love to hear about that book; drop me a line. If we get enough suggestions, maybe we can turn it into an article for a future issue. &

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Fostering Readers

Addressing the Knowledge Gap for Serving Beginning Readers

KATIE ANDERSON AND BRYCE KOZLA

How do we support children who have aged out of our 0–5 storytimes?”

With the introduction of great resources like Every Child Ready to Read and Babies Need Words Every Day, this question popped up more and more in electronic mailing lists, social-media groups, and in-person chats. The truth is, library staff all over the map are doing some really great things for emerging readers in kindergarten and beyond. This question says more about youth library staff’s desire for the confidence that research-based activities can equip us with than our actual ability to work with this age group.

Considering this question is what spawned the Fostering Readers project (<https://fosteringreaders.weebly.com>).

When we first brainstormed this project, we weren’t sure what the final product would look like. We were certain, however, about three aspects of the project. We wanted

1. the materials to be developed by practitioners who currently work with children;
2. the practitioners to consist of librarians and reading specialists, and at least one of each of them to be fluent in English and Spanish; and
3. the content to be flexible, with resources that could be easily scaled up or down.

We partnered with OregonASK, the state’s professional organization of afterschool providers, to broaden our reach and braid resources. After a successful Institute of Museum and Library Services Library Services and Technology Act grant application through the State Library of Oregon, we held a statewide search for our contracted team of experts. We contracted with four practitioners:

- Deborah Giltlitz, community librarian/bibliotecaria comunitaria at Wilsonville (OR) Public Library
- Jen Burkart, district literacy specialist at Beaverton (OR) Public School District
- Kari Kunst, youth services supervisor at Tigard (OR) Public Library
- Kelli Scardina, senior advisor for equity and systems improvement for emergent bilingual students at Education Northwest (Portland, OR)

The practitioners started by creating an extensive research review. The completed sixty-five-page review is available for free on the Fostering Readers website (<https://fosteringreaders.weebly.com/research-review.html>), with practical implications from the research featured under each heading for easy reference.

The research review resulted in five Key Elements to include in activities for beginning readers, and five Key Strategies.



The Key Elements of Fostering Readers

1. **Read-alouds:** They aren't just for preschoolers. All children benefit from being read to!
2. **Book browsing and choice:** Access, choice, and time engaging with text supports an interest in reading, which can result in success in school.
3. **Nurture diversity:** Be sure to include and celebrate diverse characters and experiences in books, and make sure literacy activities are culturally responsive.
4. **Draw connections:** Encourage children to find connections to the text and experiences they've already had or things that they know. Meaningful learning happens when we are able to make connections between what we're reading, ourselves, and our world.
5. **Have fun:** This is self-explanatory! You can make a program, lesson, event, or passive program as you normally would, and boost the literacy engagement with Fostering Readers.

The Key Strategies of Fostering Readers

1. **Read-aloud interactively:** During the read-aloud, be sure to help children observe and discuss illustrations or other images; clarify meaning through explanation, acting out, or retelling; and help them understand vocabulary in context by explaining, showing, and comparing.
2. **Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS):** A research-based education nonprofit founded by cognitive psychologist Abigail House and museum educator Philip Yenawine, VTS developed an inquiry-based method of using art to teach visual literacy, thinking, and communication skills. You can use this method while looking at the pictures in a book! The three VTS questions are: (1) What's going on in this picture? (2) What do you see that makes you say that? (3) What else can you find? There are no wrong answers to these open-ended questions.
3. **Discuss with a buddy:** Opportunities to discuss with a peer help with furthering comprehension and practicing language skills. Encourage conversation through "neighbor share/pair share."
4. **Extend language:** Extending language for children is a powerful tool to model new vocabulary words that are related to words they already know, so they can use the new word right away. Rephrase or extend participant comments or responses, increasing the richness and accuracy of the language being used.
5. **Nurture diversity:** Empower participants as experts in their own language or languages. Encourage reading, writing, and sharing in any language(s) individual attendees are most comfortable.

From the Key Elements and Key Strategies, our team of practitioners created sample activities designed to be used in your library. No planning time? Our extended activity plans have everything you need, including scripts to use during the program. Want to take one or two ideas from each activity and add them to an existing program? You can do that, too. On the Fostering Readers website, you can also find ideas for passive programs and for adding the Key Elements and Key Strategies to traditional storytimes for children in grades K-3.

After the initial development of Fostering Readers materials, we received a second year of funding through the State Library of Oregon and the Library Services and Technology Act. We contracted with NPC Research to create and run a limited pilot project that would help us recognize challenges and improve the resources to make them easier to use.

This resulted in the creation of the Streamlined Activity Plans and an increased highlight on the Key Elements and Key Strategies.

What do our pilot sites think about using these resources? We decided to ask them just that.

Pilot Site Responses

Amy Wycoff, youth services senior librarian at Beaverton (OR) City Public Library, does not have any current plans to use the Fostering Readers materials in future programs, but adds, "it's nice that those plans are now available on the website if I should need to refer to them in the future." Wycoff has, however, incorporated things she learned from the Fostering Readers materials in other programs for elementary-age children: "I have added in on occasion a time for kids to flip through a nonfiction title (from a selection displayed at the program) and then find one new fact to share with the other kids (or just one-on-one with another kid at their table). They seem to like the challenge of finding a new fact to share."

Asked if she had any tips to share with library staff who wish to try out Fostering Readers, she shared, "It's a great idea to pick and choose what will work best for your group of kids and location. I didn't know this during the pilot but later learned that from other participating libraries. I tried to stick to the more formal lesson plans and that was really difficult at my location because our programs are usually more hands-on and informal in nature here. Spending lots of time on the hands-on activities or adding in an additional activity or two would keep the group more engaged in the content of the programs."

Susan Cackler, library supervisor and programs coordinator at Banks (OR) Public Library, shared her experiences in a narrative about Banks's successful summer programming series, Camp Big Read:

When I used the Fostering Readers materials as part of the pilot project, it was a pretty intensive read-through of all of the materials for me and I even printed the script for the very first one. By the end of the pilot, I was much more comfortable with feeling that I could do the program and the students justice even if I wasn't sticking 100 percent to the curriculum as it was written, but I still referenced the lesson plans often for each lesson.

When I used the Fostering Readers materials this summer as part of our Camp Big Read, the lesson plans had been changed into a shorter format and I was working with teachers with a combined fifty years of experience, so I was able to use them in a more casual way. They were really an excellent resource for this because the center of each lesson was something fun and educational, and the lessons include some structure for how to get there. The teachers were able to read over the plan briefly and use their experience to really get to the nugget of each day. They loved having a plan that they didn't have to come up with and that was easy to execute in the time that we had with the kids. We plan to put Camp Big Read on again next year and we will most likely use the lessons again!

I can't emphasize enough how much of a help Fostering Readers was in my ability to put on Camp Big Read. I had hoped to be able to pay the teachers, in which case they would have developed their own curriculum and lesson plans, but we didn't get as much grant money as we hoped and the teachers agreed to be volunteers. That meant that the burden of planning Camp Big Read landed more squarely in my lap than I had anticipated. The teachers probably would have been willing to volunteer more, but that didn't seem fair to me. Having the lesson plans meant we could just plug one into each day of the camp, I could get the books from the book lists [on the Fostering Readers website] and we were ready to do a literacy camp! It also meant we could take turns presenting the main part of the lesson, so the students got to experience a variety of teaching styles.

I am also not certain that I would have been confident enough in my abilities to present literacy lessons to students

if I had not done them already [during the pilot project]. I had to make the decision of whether we would attempt the camp before we got notification of receiving the grant money and I'm not sure I would have believed we could pull it off if I hadn't had the Fostering Readers experience.

The partnership with the school in general—and with these two teachers in particular—has been a huge bonus to the library and our community. Camp Big Read was very visible in our community and very well-received. We went to the local park every day and we encountered different people who were happy to see kids out and about, learning and having fun. Our Friends group is passionate about getting books in the hands of children, so they were tickled with the fact that we were engaging some students who do not regularly participate in our Summer Reading Program. I learned a lot from observing the teachers teach and they learned a lot about how to have students succeed in a fun and unstructured format. The influence of Fostering Readers in my experience this summer is present in a lot of fairly intangible ways, but the end result was a really successful, fun program that boosted awareness of the library in our community and reached students with direct, one-on-one teacher contact.”

Later in the fall of 2019, Cackler contacted us to let us know that Camp Big Read, and the Fostering Readers materials, had a lasting effect on participants. She emailed, saying, “A parent of one of the Camp Big Read kids (who I haven't seen for a while) came in. I asked her how her daughter is doing and she said, ‘great, she's really started picking up a lot of books since she participated in the camp.’” She then included a series of enthusiastic and affirming exclamation points. &

Fostering Readers resources are available to use free for your library programming and partnerships. You can also create your own activities to share (<https://fosteringreaders.weebly.com/create-your-own-activities.html>). Fostering Readers is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Library Services and Technology Act, administered by the State Library of Oregon.

More Than Just Play

University-Based, Multiple Intelligences—Inspired Toy Library

MARY KATHERINE WAIBEL DUNCAN



In an unpublished master's thesis, Julia E. Moore described the history of toy libraries in the United States.¹ According to Moore, the first known toy library appeared in Los Angeles in 1935 during the Great Depression to afford children free access to games and toys. Toy libraries became more widespread in the 1960s and 1970s as women increasingly entered the workforce, the number of preschools and daycare programs grew, and the Children's Services Division (now ALSC) of the American Library Association supported the practice of loaning play materials. In the 1980s, lekoteks, or toy libraries that provide children with a disability access to specialized play materials and offer families professional advice about supporting their children's development through play, were introduced to America. Today, supported by organizations such as the USA Toy Library Association (www.usatla.org), the National Lekotek Center (www.pgpedia.com/n/national-lekotek-center), and the International Toy Library Association (www.itla-toylibraries.org/home), thousands of toy libraries with widely varying missions exist worldwide.

In a 1992 article, researchers Eva M. Bjorck-Akesson and Jane M. Brodin noted four major types of toy libraries.² Community-based toy libraries, for example, tend to be public libraries that offer advice on play as well as access to toys and learning activities primarily for preschool-aged children. Lekoteks operate more like family resource centers providing access to toys as well as guidance and support for young children with special needs and their families. Some toy libraries function more like social or cultural meeting places for people of all ages to play with traditional toys and games. Toy-lending libraries serve as repositories for play materials that can be borrowed and returned, similar to traditional book libraries. Regardless of type, toy libraries are founded on the beliefs that play supports physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development; promotes well-being; and can be facilitated by providing individuals with access to developmentally appropriate toys.

The purpose of this article is to describe a relatively less-known type of toy-lending library—a university-based, special-collections library—whose mission is to provide students access to play materials in support of their academic, professional, and civic development. Specifically, the BU Toy Library at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania launched in fall 2010 to help undergraduate and graduate students appreciate the value of play and unleash its power when working or preparing to work with individuals of all developmental ages and abilities through their coursework, research, student teaching, practicum/internship, service learning, or community-outreach activities. In addition to describing the holdings of the BU Toy Library, this article provides examples of activities supported by the toy library; shares informal feedback about the toy library's use and usefulness; and summarizes data from a year-long, institutional-review-board-approved online program assessment.

Literacy and Play Resources

The BU Toy Library includes approximately seven hundred books (excluding duplicates) and approximately six hundred toys (excluding duplicates). Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory and Thomas Armstrong's practical translation of MI Theory provided useful frameworks for



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identifying a diverse selection of literacy and play resources that honor the different ways in which individuals learn and create new knowledge.³

According to MI Theory, for example, linguistic intelligence refers to a person's ability to produce and understand spoken and written words.⁴ Individuals who enjoy using their "word smarts" may like to read, write, or tell stories; learn new words in their native or foreign languages; or play word games.⁵ The BU Toy Library's holdings include dozens of resources that support language and literacy play. For example, alphabet books, DVDs, puzzles, games (e.g., Alphabet BINGO), and manipulatives (e.g., magnets, tiles, bean bags, and die cuts) target letter knowledge, or knowledge about the shapes and sounds of letters. The toy library also provides access to English and Spanish dictionaries, rhyming dictionaries, thesauruses, word books, and word games (e.g., 5 Second Rule, Scrabble, Boggle, and Hangman) to support vocabulary, or the comprehension and production of words. Print awareness, or the understanding that printed text has meaning and follows a set of rules, is supported by access to family-literacy books and easy readers whose minimal text, large print, and engaging illustrations introduce new readers to concepts such as authors and illustrators, book orientation, directionality of reading, punctuation, and the difference between letters and words.

To support print motivation, or interest in reading and writing, the BU Toy Library's holdings include roleplay costumes and props that encourage literacy activities involved in pretend playing doctor/veterinarian, chef/food server, teacher, first responder, and other roles in the community. The toy library's onomatopoeia books, repetition and rhyming books, and games (e.g., Alphabet Soup, Word-for-Word, and Twisterz) support phonological awareness, or the understanding that language is made up of sounds, words, syllables, and rhymes. To support the development of narration skills, or the ability to describe things and tell stories, the BU Toy Library offers access to wordless picture books, felt storyboards, magnetic create-a-scene books, story-starter prompts, as well as conversation cards and cubes.

Logical-mathematical intelligence refers to a person's ability to use logic, numbers, and reasoning to understand how something works or to create something new.⁶ Individuals who enjoy using their "logic smarts" may like to play math or strategy games; solve riddles and mysteries; or cook, perform experiments, and invent things.⁷

To this end, the toy library offers math books, learning mats, and toys to support the teaching and learning of basic operations, sequencing, counting, categorizing, weighing, making change, and telling time. The library's holdings also include strategy games, illusion sets, and resources to support play-based experimentation (e.g., cookbooks, play food, and play kitchen equipment). Additionally, the BU Toy Library's science, technology, and engineering resources include, but are not limited to, color-mixing paddles, solar-system

models, models of human and plant anatomy, magnets, simple machine sets, as well as informational texts.

Spatial intelligence refers to the ability to visualize or mentally represent the spatial world.⁸ Individuals who enjoy using their "picture smarts" may like to draw, design things, look at photos or artwork, or complete puzzles.⁹ Accordingly, the toy library makes available art supplies and a die-cut center including approximately three hundred die-cuts for creating two-dimensional and three-dimensional crafts. In addition, the toy library's assortment of maps, puzzles, and construction toys (e.g., building blocks, wooden train sets, TinkerToys, Lincoln Logs, LEGOs, and K'nex toys) tap into spatial concepts. The library's holdings also include visually stimulating *I SPY* books as well as Caldecott Award-winning picture books. Furthermore, games such as Stare, Find It, Scavenger Hunt, Memory, and Rush Hour encourage children to visualize and problem-solve as they explore and practice using their spatial skills.

Bodily kinesthetic intelligence refers to the ability to use sensory or motor skills to understand or create something.¹⁰ Individuals who enjoy using their "body smarts" may like to act, dance, play sports, fix things, or perform magic tricks.¹¹ To this end, the BU Toy Library includes resources that target fine motor skills such as lacing cards, latches boards, and games (e.g., Feel-and-Find, Suspend, and Perplexis) as well as resources that target gross motor skills such as yoga cards, jump ropes, balls, parachutes, and tunnels. Literacy and play resources also support individuals' exploration of their sensory processing capabilities, sensitivities, and preferences. For example, tactile resources include kinetic sand, sensory bins, and touch-and-feel books. Vestibular resources include rotation and balance boards. Proprioceptive resources include pounding benches, jump rope, and weighted lap pads.

Musical intelligence refers to the ability to read, write, make, or appreciate music.¹² Individuals who enjoy using their "music smarts" may like to sing, hum, or whistle; tap, snap, or clap; play an instrument; compose songs; or listen to music.¹³ To support these play activities, the BU Toy Library provides access to several types of instruments such as chimes, hand bells, pianos, xylophones, tambourines, boom whackers, cymbals, and shakers. Other musical resources include a metronome, games (e.g., Spontaneous), and literacy resources such as songbooks, sound books and puzzles, and picture books based on popular songs.

Interpersonal intelligence refers to a person's ability to understand and interact with other people.¹⁴ Individuals who enjoy using their "people smarts" may make friends easily, like to work in groups, or look for ways to help others.¹⁵ Accordingly, the toy library makes available books that celebrate cultural diversity and games that encourage perspective- and turn-taking. Furthermore, the library offers resources that promote communication and cooperation such as reference books filled with team-building activities and ideas for youth volunteerism.

Intrapersonal intelligence refers to the ability to understand one's own thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behaviors.¹⁶ Individuals who enjoy using their "self smarts" may like to work alone, keep a journal, think about their future, or set personal goals.¹⁷ In other words, they tend to have a good sense of who they are, where they are going, and what they aspire to become. To this end, the toy library makes available books (e.g., Dr. Seuss's *My Many Colored Days* and Michael Hall's *My Heart is Like a Zoo*), flashcards, and games (e.g., *Guess How I Feel?*) about feelings as well as books (e.g., *Listography*), scrapbooking equipment, and art supplies (e.g., Create-a-Face and Create-A-Person drawing pads) to support self-reflection activities. In addition, the library's holdings include a collection of health literacy books published by Magination Press, an imprint of the American Psychological Association, to encourage self-discovery, self-acceptance, and self-direction.

Finally, naturalistic intelligence refers to a person's ability to recognize, classify, and understand things in nature.¹⁸ Children who enjoy using their "nature smarts" may like caring for animals, hiking and exploring nature, visiting parks and zoos, protecting the environment, collecting things from nature, watching the weather, or looking at the stars.¹⁹ To this end, the library provides access to toys that encourage outdoor play and exploration (e.g., nature reference guides and magnifying lenses) as well as nature-themed books, games, animal figures, and rock collections. In addition, sand, rice, glass bead, and bean sensory bins encourage the creation of real or imagined miniature worlds and promote discussions about the living and nonliving things that might inhabit these environments.

Curricular and Extracurricular Activities and Initiatives

In addition to providing access to an MI-inspired collection of books, toys, supplies, and equipment, the BU Toy Library promotes the value of play through on- and off-campus presentations and strives to advance students' academic, professional, and civic development. Faculty members across colleges (i.e., Liberal Arts, Education, and Science and Technology) have integrated the BU Toy Library into their courses through guest lectures, course projects, classroom demonstrations, and service-learning experiences. For example, education majors enrolled in an introductory course have adapted play materials for use with individuals with a disability in partial fulfillment of the requirements of their experiential course. In addition, psychology majors enrolled in a two-hundred-level early child development course have created toy portfolios describing how children of various developmental ages may demonstrate their physical, cognitive, social, and emotional competencies when playing with specific toys. Furthermore, advanced psychology majors routinely rely on the BU Toy Library when fulfilling the service-learning requirements of their three-hundred-level psychology courses.

For example, the toy library's MI-inspired holdings provided a template for filling hundreds of suitcases with play materials for children and youth enrolled in local foster care programs, creating a kitchen play space at a local battered women's shelter, and hosting an afterschool club in which children in grades K-8 explored their intellectual strengths and practiced using their competencies in service of others. Informal student feedback gathered through written course assignments has suggested that the resources of the BU Toy Library helped students understand and apply major concepts, theories, and research findings, promoted their critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills, and gave them realistic ideas about how to use their knowledge and skills in future academic and professional endeavors.

In addition to benefitting students' coursework, the toy library has supported students' research endeavors. In partial fulfillment of the requirements of an independent study research project, for example, a senior psychology major coauthored and assessed a neuroscience-inspired workbook titled "Do You Sense What I Sense?" to teach school-age children about brain structure and function with an emphasis on sensory processing.²⁰ Additionally, a senior nursing student co-authored and assessed an interactive booklet aimed at helping young children prepare for routine medical checkups. The *My Well-Child Check-Up: A Preschooler's Guide* booklet prompts children to think about answers to commonly asked questions (e.g., How old are you?), review the names and locations of body parts, and learn about instruments that medical professionals use during well-child checkups. It also includes a checklist of events that take place during a typical checkup and an outline of a child's body so that young patients may help medical professionals keep track of what body parts have been examined. The booklet ends with a Bingo game in which children may cross out all of the healthy things they did that day to see if they can get three in a row. One of the thirty preschool teachers and daycare workers who reviewed the booklet wrote, "It's clear, colorful, varied, easy-to-use. I think it's excellent! I've never seen anything like it and I think it would be very helpful before and during a doctor visit esp. [sic] for a nervous child. I work with special needs children who tend to have more doctor visits. I'd love a copy for each of my students!"

The BU Toy Library also has supported undergraduate- and graduate-level fieldwork experiences. For example, two advanced psychology majors enrolled in a senior capstone practicum course developed by the Friends of the BU Toy Library initiative to reinforce preschoolers' emerging literacy skills through shared reading and play. They visited local preschools each week for six weeks, targeting a different early literacy skill during each visit.

Furthermore, graduate students enrolled in the Master of Science Speech and Language Pathology program have noted their appreciation of the toy library's resources and trainings

with respect to their clinic work. One first-year graduate student wrote,

I wanted to thank you for the amazing resource of the toy library and how much it has supported our program. Before this semester, I had no previous experience working with kids with autism. When I was assigned a kindergartener with autism on my case load, I was unsure what kind of lessons to plan. When you brought an Elephant and Piggie book, with the characters, to talk to our class in the beginning of the semester, I knew it was something I needed to try. She absolutely LOVED the book, laughing throughout the whole thing. Since then, I've come to the toy library multiple times and I've done a bunch of different Elephant and Piggie books with her. Answering direct questions about a story is difficult for this student, but with the characters and all the props from the story, she can easily act out each event and recreate dialogue, demonstrating comprehension of the story—which is great! I've also borrowed books and puzzles from the toy library, for this particular student, and others, as well. Occasionally, I would just come over and browse because I needed inspiration!

Bridging the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Student Affairs, the BU Toy Library has supported students' engagement with the university and town. For example, the Residence Life program used the toy library's collection of puppets to produce a musical comedy series about college life and to conduct student-leader training sessions. The assistant director of Residence Life wrote, "It allowed me to diversify the presentation a bit and keep it fresh. It also helped me to educate the staff about the various resources and services . . . that perhaps the average student may not necessarily be aware is available to them." Additionally, the toy library has supported the Students Organized to Learn through Volunteerism and Employment (SOLVE) office's afterschool tutoring program. This program serves local elementary, middle, and high school-aged children with demonstrated social and academic needs. As volunteer tutors, college students bring tote bags of play materials to the schools to catalyze new learning experiences and promote positive social interactions.

In fall 2011, the toy library responded quickly when the town surrounding the university was devastated by a historic flood. When the waters receded, two local preschools were left with little to salvage. The day before the preschools welcomed their students to a temporary space in a local church, representatives of the BU Toy Library emptied the play resource center's shelves and delivered hundreds of books and toys to the church. The children enjoyed playing with the train sets, blocks, puzzles, games, doll houses, and puppets while they awaited the arrival of brand-new toys, books, and furnishings complements of the toy library and its campus partners. The success of this outreach initiative led to the creation of *Y.O.O. Rock Columbia County: Youth Outreach Opportunities for Families, Children, and Youth*,²² which has since been updated and revised into a booklet titled *Doing Good: Bloomsburg*. The

booklet highlights some of the town's greatest needs, inventories nonprofit organizations and agencies that are trying to meet these needs, and shares ideas for how people of all ages can help. The booklet has been distributed broadly through the elementary and middle schools. It is also a popular resource for the local chapter of Big Brothers/Big Sisters as it offers ideas and updated contact information so that mentors may have an easier time finding constructive, empowering activities in which to engage their mentees.

In addition, undergraduate and graduate students have been inspired by the availability of resources at the toy library to create their own outreach programs. For example, using the toy library's laptop computers, a senior psychology major taught basic computer-literacy skills to older adults. Twenty-four adult learners participated in this community outreach initiative to learn how to use the computer to gather information, communicate with friends and family members, for recreational purposes, and for cognitive rehabilitation exercises. Similarly, graduate students enrolled in the university's Master of Science Speech and Language Pathology program hosted an intergenerational therapy day in which they brought together preschool-age children from a local Head Start program and older adults affected by aphasia. Using picture books and musical instruments from the toy library, graduate students facilitated communication in a dynamic group setting through storytelling and singing (www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNavxzFeXWE&t=2s).

As a final example, the BU Toy Library has teamed up with the university's honors program on multiple occasions to develop educational and recreational curricula and to supply corresponding play materials for their spring break service trip to Jamaica. One faculty supervisor noted, "Without resources from the BU Toy Library, our teaching and learning sessions would not have had the impact we witnessed. This school is located in a remote area of the island. Resources are scarce. The children delighted in the books, puppets, and art materials that we carried on our journey."

Members of the local community also have used the toy library's resources to complement existing programming in their own schools, organizations, and other workplaces. For example, the toy library has benefitted the local children's museum by lending resources to support theme-based play activities for preschool-age children and their guardians. One museum volunteer wrote, "The children were totally engaged by those [resources] in this environment and the conversations, storytelling, vocabulary building, and nurturing that went on all morning with those puppets made me very grateful for the toy library." She added, "I should also mention that many parents decided to recreate the enrichment activities at home and they very much appreciated the chance to try out the many kinds of toys available through the toy library." This message was echoed by a mobile therapist who provided home intervention to children in need of emotional or behavioral support. She wrote, "I am so thankful for the lending library. It certainly helps me prepare content-laden,

interactive, fun lessons and home visits that offer such creative approaches to learning and coping strategies.”

Program Assessment

The previous section describes some of the many and varied ways that the BU Toy Library’s resources have been used. For several years, informal feedback about the toy library’s use and usefulness played an important role in securing internal and external funding (see acknowledgements). In addition, funding sources have inferred the toy library’s value from the number of people who have accessed it each academic year (approximately 140) and the number of resources they have borrowed (approximately 1,000). After five probationary years, the BU Toy Library was awarded an operating budget through the university’s Office of the Provost to fund the replacement of lost, worn, or broken books and toys. The budget also covers expenses associated with office supplies such as cleaning materials and totes for storing and transporting borrowed resources. Finally, duplicating services for the toy library’s educational booklets and brochures, assessment materials, and promotional items are funded through the operating budget. With growing calls for accountability throughout higher education, the continued ability of the BU Toy Library to secure funding will likely require a more formal program assessment to document its impact, record areas for improvement, and inform future initiatives. Accordingly, as the toy library approaches its ten-year anniversary, a year-long, IRB-approved online program assessment was piloted.

Method

Participants. Sixty-five people completed 71 online program assessments during the data collection period. Six respondents (five students, one faculty) completed the survey at two different data collection times. Of the 65 participants, 48 were students, five were faculty, nine were recent alumni, two were community professionals, and one was a homeschooling parent. With respect to faculty members’ and students’ college affiliations, 37 were from the College of Education, fifteen from the College of Science and Technology, six from the College of Liberal Arts, and four were unreported. Participants reported using the toy library for the following purposes: coursework (46), clinic work (20), practicum/internship (10), volunteer work (9), student teaching (8), university club (7), research (4), and other purposes (4) such as supplementing their own children’s educational or play resources.

Measure. An online Qualtrics survey was developed for the purpose of this study. After reading and signing a letter of informed consent, participants answered up to five demographic questions including whether they participated in the program assessment previously as well as their role (*student, faculty, staff, community professional, or other*), academic status (*freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student*),

college/department affiliation (*Science and Technology, Education, Liberal Arts, College of Business, or other*), and the purpose for which they used the BU Toy Library (*coursework, research, clinic work, student teaching, practicum/internship, volunteer work/community outreach, club/organization, or other*). Then, using a Likert scale (*not at all, a little, somewhat, a lot*), participants rated the extent to which the BU Toy Library supported their selected activities. Next, using a Likert scale (*extremely dissatisfied, dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied, satisfied, and extremely satisfied*), participants rated their satisfaction with the toy library’s selection of toys, books, die cuts, educational materials, and hours of operation. After that, participants used the same Likert scale to rate their satisfaction with the quality of the toy library’s toys, books, die-cuts, educational materials, and consultation services. Participants also noted whether they believed they saved time and money using the toy library (*yes, no, maybe*) and they indicated their likelihood of revisiting the toy library and recommending the toy library to others (*not at all, a little, somewhat, a lot*). Finally, participants responded to three open-ended questions designed to gather information about how the toy library impacted their academic, professional, and civic development. A fourth and final open-ended question solicited suggestions for improving the toy library.

Procedure. After receiving IRB approval for the program assessment, a representative from the university’s Office of Planning and Assessment emailed toy library users an invitation to volunteer their participation in the program assessment. The invitation was emailed at the end of the summer 2018, fall 2018, and spring 2019 semesters. At each data-collection period, prospective participants received two reminder emails spaced approximately one week apart. Participants also had the option of entering their names in a drawing to win one of three play resources. At the end of the year-long program assessment, data were exported to an Excel spreadsheet and descriptive statistics were run as appropriate. After reading through participants’ recommendations for improving the toy library, common themes were identified and participants’ open-ended responses were coded accordingly.

Results

Table 1 summarizes participants’ ratings of how well the BU Toy Library supported their curricular and extracurricular activities. Across activities, most participants noted that the toy library supported their efforts *somewhat* or *a lot*. Across all activities, the majority of respondents awarded the toy library the highest rating of usefulness. With respect to academic development, a faculty participant noted that the toy library “provided a wonderful resource for my students in the area of education and how toys can be used to promote the education of children in math, science, and reading.” Similarly, a student participant enrolled in the College of Education wrote,

Table 1. Participants' Ratings of the BU Toy Library's Support of Curricular and Extracurricular Activities

Activity	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot
Coursework (<i>n</i> = 45)	0	3	11	31
Clinic work (<i>n</i> = 20)	0	0	3	17
Practicum (<i>n</i> = 10)	0	1	2	7
Volunteer work (<i>n</i> = 9)	0	1	0	8
Student teaching (<i>n</i> = 8)	1	1	1	5
Club/organization (<i>n</i> = 7)	0	1	1	5
Research (<i>n</i> = 4)	0	0	2	2

The BU Toy Library has impacted my academic development by opening my eyes to what kinds of resources I will need in my future classroom. By seeing all of the toys and books they have at the library, I was able to come up with ideas for learning that involved play and socialization with heavy influence from the toy library. It has given me inspiration on what kinds of toys and books I would like to keep in my future classroom. The assignments from my classes that required me to utilize the toy library have helped me become a more creative thinker in terms of finding a toy or book and finding a way to make it relevant in my classroom.

In terms of professional development, a student enrolled in the Speech and Language Pathology graduate program noted, "Having a variety of books, toys, and tools available on campus enhanced the quality of my [therapy] sessions and allowed me to experiment with creativity without having the break the bank. I learned to use BU Toy Library materials for a variety of target goals with a variety of clients. My clients loved playing with new materials every week and they made learning fun."

With respect to civic engagement, one student participant wrote, "As a member of Best Buddies, my buddy comes to campus to visit. I have used the BU Toy Library to use toys to help entertain my buddy while visiting." Another student participant wrote, "The BU Toy Library has helped my club Autism Speaks U with the die cut machine because it allows our club to make professional looking bulletin boards and posters."

The majority of respondents reported being *satisfied* or *extremely satisfied* with the toy library's selection of toys (96 percent), books (78 percent), die cuts (88 percent), educational materials (76 percent), as well as the resource center's hours of operations (66 percent). The majority of respondents also reported being *satisfied* or *extremely satisfied* with the quality of the toys (99 percent), books (95 percent), die-cuts (93 percent), educational materials (85 percent), and consultation/training (84 percent) provided by the toy library and its staff. Additionally, most participants reported that they saved time (87 percent) and money (96 percent) by using the resources of the toy library. A student who used the resources for coursework, student teaching, volunteer work, and university-sponsored club activities noted, "The BU Toy Library has

impacted my professional development by providing me with resources I am unable to afford at this time. By having the option to [borrow] toys, games, books, etc. I am still able to provide presentations even though I would not be able to provide them for myself. It helps me [be] prepared and helps me become a better educator." In addition, most participants reported that they would be *a lot* likely to revisit the toy library (80 percent) and *a lot* likely to recommend the toy library to peers or colleagues (96 percent).

In addition to providing a more in-depth perspective on the benefits of the toy library, participants' open-ended responses suggested areas for improvement. For example, respondents' most common recommendation was to continue expanding the toy library's holdings (24 percent) with specific recommendations for more sensory resources, seasonal items, bilingual materials, die cuts, and books. Respondents also suggested relocating the BU Toy Library to a larger space on campus (18 percent), offering additional hours of operation during the evenings and on the weekends (14 percent), improving marketing and promotion efforts to promote awareness of the resource center (10 percent), and creating a searchable list of the BU Toy Library's literacy and play materials (6 percent).

Discussion

The BU Toy Library is a university-based toy-lending library whose mission is to advance students' academic, professional, and civic development by providing access to play materials that support their curricular and extracurricular activities. Guided by MI Theory, the BU Toy Library acquires, develops, and shares literacy and play resources that align with the intellectual strengths of individuals of all developmental ages and abilities.

Participants showed consensus in their high ratings of the BU Toy Library's ability to support their curricular and extracurricular activities. The most common reason participants gave for visiting the BU Toy Library was to support their coursework, and most responses indicate that the toy library supported it *somewhat* or *a lot*. The second most common reason for visiting the BU Toy Library was to support their clinic work, and all responses indicated the toy library supported it

somewhat or a lot. Similarly, participants reported consensus in their high ratings of the toy library's selection and quality of resources. The majority of participants reported being *satisfied* or *extremely satisfied* with the selection and quality of toys, books, die-cuts, and educational booklets/training materials. In addition, the majority reported being satisfied or extremely satisfied with the hours of operation and the quality of consultation offered through the BU Toy Library. Furthermore, most participants appreciated the opportunity to save time and money by using the BU Toy Library. Finally, most participants reported being *somewhat or a lot* likely to revisit the toy library and to recommend the toy library to others.

Respondents' most common suggestion for improvement was to continue adding to the BU Toy Library's holdings, including literacy resources (e.g., wordless picture books, bilingual books, and season-themed books), play resources (e.g., sensory play materials), equipment (e.g., die-cuts), and supplies (e.g., crayons, paints, colored pencils, and drawing pads). Every year, the toy library's staff maintains a wish list informed by users' suggestions. At the end of the fiscal year, remaining funds in the operating budget are directed toward fulfilling the wish list. For example, the recent development of an interdisciplinary minor in Aging Studies has led to increased calls for intergenerational play materials. Accordingly, the BU Toy Library expanded its collection of story-telling resources, large print books, board games, song books, construction toys, die cuts for 2-D and 3-D craft projects, as well as gross and fine motor resources.

Unfortunately, some requests cannot be honored due to financial constraints or space limitations. Other requests are partially fulfilled. For example, one program assessment participant requested theme kits that grouped relevant literacy and play resources into portable totes. At the toy library's founding, theme kits were available; however, they were rarely borrowed and took up a lot of space. Instead, users tended to deconstruct the kits to checkout only the resources that they believed would be most useful for their purposes. Looking ahead, the BU Toy Library will consider posting theme kit ideas as well as lists of corresponding available resources.

Other program assessment participants requested more consumable art supplies. While the BU Toy Library does offer complimentary card stock for use with the die-cut center, we cannot supply the unrestricted distribution of free arts-and-crafts materials. That being said, grant-funded projects that yield leftover or gently used materials are made available upon request to support students' curricular and extracurricular projects.

Finally, a few participants requested that the BU Toy Library make available more electronic resources and popular themed toys (e.g., Pokémon, SpongeBob, My Little Pony). Currently, space limitations create a challenge with respect to storing resources that may be only temporarily popular or appealing

to only a limited number of users based on gender, age, or theme. Should additional space be allocated to the BU Toy Library, future grant writing efforts may be directed toward acquiring popular themed toys with special attention paid to selecting resources that have broad appeal and that have been rated highly for their safety and durability. Currently, the expense of purchasing, maintaining, and replacing lost or broken electronic toys is prohibitive, but we could expand in the future. Special attention would be paid to selecting electronic resources that are adaptable to users' sensory preferences, ability, and pace and that encourage—rather than limit—social interactions between undergraduate and graduate students and the individuals with whom they are working.

Other constructive feedback includes requests for a larger space. From the start, the BU Toy Library has been conceptualized as an academic resource center. As such, this special-collections library has been situated on the academic quadrangle. When it was founded in fall 2010, the toy library shared space in the Student Services Center with an office devoted to community outreach and civic engagement. Three years later, the BU Toy Library received temporary space on the third floor of an academic building that housed several academic departments spanning three colleges (i.e., Liberal Arts, Education, and Science and Technology). Although ample in terms of square footage, the toy library's resources were spread across a suite of four rooms which were separated by a busy hallway. By fall 2015, the BU Toy Library was awarded a dedicated, permanent space on the first floor of this same academic building. It is hoped that data from this and ongoing program assessments will inform discussions about space allocation as the academic building has been slated for renovation.

Some participants requested additional hours of operation. Currently, various funding sources underwrite approximately thirty hours per week of staffing for the toy library. Twenty hours are state- and federal-funded undergraduate work study positions. In addition, a university-sponsored graduate assistantship (GA) has funded ten hours per week (including six credits/semester tuition waiver) for the fall, spring, and summer semesters. Accordingly, the BU Toy Library is typically open Mondays through Thursdays from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Additional staffing needs have been met by appointment or through the help of undergraduate volunteers and students enrolled in senior capstone psychology courses. Data from this initial program assessment suggest that some toy library users may benefit from additional hours later in the evenings or on Sundays. BU Toy Library staff have begun tracking visitors' use of the toy library. As patterns unfold, students' work study hours may be adjusted as appropriate.

Some participants recommended more advertising of the BU Toy Library through the university's website, social media, as well as through digital and print signage. Indeed, this is an area of high priority. Currently, the BU Toy Library's website (<http://butoylibrary.bloomu.edu>) informs site visitors of the toy library's mission, location, hours of operation, and

examples of play materials. It also provides a forum for sharing digital copies of educational resources as well as annual newsletters. One step toward increasing awareness about the BU Toy Library is already underway. Specifically, an electronic database of the toy library's holdings is being created and linked to the university's main library so members of the academic community can view the play resource center's inventory and determine the availability of specific resources.

This initial program assessment of the BU Toy Library is not without its limitations, none the least of which is the small sample size. As the program assessment is embedded into the toy library's standard operating procedure, it is expected to yield a larger and more representative sample of toy library users. A larger sample might add the perspectives and recommendations of a broader array of academic community members (i.e., faculty and staff). In addition, a more diverse sample may provide a richer and more detailed understanding about how the toy library supports students' coursework, fieldwork, club/organization, and research activities. For now, however, informal feedback combined with data from this initial program assessment suggest that the BU Toy Library is on the path to doing good work. In the words of one of the participants, "My overall impression of the toy library is it is a great contribution to this campus. It makes our campus unique and allows students endless opportunities for growth."

In summary, the BU Toy Library is a university-based special collections library that serves as an important and effective vehicle for supporting high-impact, on- and off-campus learning experiences. Specifically, a decade of feedback from

toy library members as well as data from a year-long program assessment suggest that the BU Toy Library has advanced the academic, professional, and civic development of undergraduate and graduate students. Members of the academic and broader communities have used the toy library's literacy and play resources to deepen and share their knowledge with others as well as to practice applying their knowledge and skills through meaningful fieldwork experiences. As institutions of higher education strive to recruit, retain, and cultivate good workers and good citizens, they may consider the value of adding a special-collections toy-lending library to their repertoire of campus-based resources. &

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School Book Buzz

A Professional Development Collaboration

MARY SCHREIBER

Schools and libraries have a common mission of serving the local community, especially children and families. So why not bring those specialists together for some professional training? That was the goal behind the School Book Buzz initiative at Cuyahoga County (OH) Public Library (CCPL).

CCPL has twenty-seven branches serving forty-seven diverse communities, and each branch works with its individual school system to support the school staff and families.

As teachers, school librarians, and families increasingly have more challenges to overcome, public libraries are looking for ways to further develop these relationships. As a former children's librarian turned collection development specialist, and someone with a lot of educator relatives, I wanted to see how the public library might help.

In fall 2017, I proposed a professional-development day for the area school librarians and educators to help support literacy and learning in the greater community—two key areas of strategic focus at CCPL. My presentation outlined the following:

- Host a free, day-long, professional-development day with lunch for school staff.
- Provide book talks on a curated list of the current year's books as well as offer a taste of upcoming publications.
- Partner with vendor Baker and Taylor and its school division, Follett.
- End the day with an author talk.

My immediate superiors in technical services loved the idea, which was supported by our now executive director, Tracy



Left to right: CCPL Book Talkers Megan Barrett (children's librarian), Kyra Nay (children's librarian), Julie Zukauckas (teen librarian), and Maria Trivisonno (children's librarian).

Strobel. Not only was she supportive and willing to find funding to provide lunch, but also she asked that one librarian from each branch attend alongside their school staff member. I was delighted. What better way is there to develop relationships between the schools and public libraries than having both sides in the same room?

I then pitched the idea to Baker and Taylor and its school division, Follett, who agreed to participate. Follett would do a short presentation on the services offered—more informative than sales-pitchy. Baker and Taylor would provide items for goody bags, book-talk upcoming titles, and help secure an author. With support and funding, the School Book Buzz was born.

To ensure there would be interest for the School Book Buzz, I developed an email survey that was sent to a central distribution list for schools. From the survey findings, I planned a day for librarians and staff who work with students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Respondents were most interested in seeing the hottest new titles, listening to an author talk, and learning about the public library's resources. Areas that were felt to make a bigger impact on administrators included the ability to show a direct correlation to the curriculum, book selection to help



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with future purchasing, and networking with public librarian counterparts.

I planned on hosting the School Book Buzz in the fall and most respondents thought October or November would be ideal; we selected a Monday.

Most helpful were the comments, including one that asked for a technology component as that was the only way her principal would allow her to attend. This sparked an afternoon session that involved a tour of the host library's Innovation Center (makerspace). School librarians were thrilled to learn the public library had some of the same maker equipment and that the public library offered training. This is a win-win and technology is now an essential part of the agenda each year.

Implementation

Once the survey results had been analyzed, it was time to start finalizing the day's activities and details that would make School Book Buzz a success.

Here is a brief list of tasks the event facilitator needs to complete to host a professional-development day at your library:

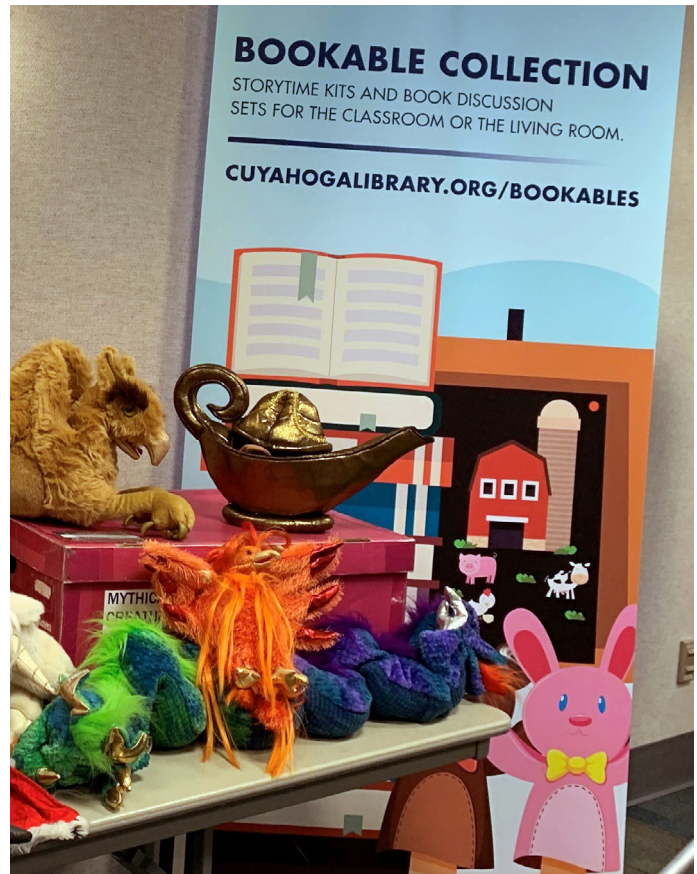
- Book a meeting room.
- Line up speakers and exhibitors.
- Create an agenda and post it on the registration website.
- Send "Save the Date" and registration emails.
- Order boxed lunches.
- Order copies of the titles being book-talked to display.
- Line up helpers for room setup the day before your event.
- Create and send a post survey for feedback.

Agenda Tips

The agenda is packed, and a timekeeper is used so everyone stays on track. Breaking it into smaller chunks keeps the day moving. For the second year, we offered shorter breaks (fifteen minutes instead of thirty), allowing for more informational sessions.

Agenda Breakdown for 2019

- Twenty-five minutes for each Book Talk segment (four topics)
- Fifteen minutes for each Resource Sharing segment (four topics)



Display of CCPL's circulating puppets, toys, and kits.

- Ten minutes for each School/Public Librarian Partnerships segment (three topics)
- Forty minutes for Author Talk
- One hour for lunch

To extend the learning, exhibits were available during the breaks and lunch. They consisted of a table staffed by Follett, several tables of CCPL's special-collection materials staffed by the Youth Literacy and Outreach staff, and tables with copies of the titles being book-talked. These books were also available for checkout.

Once the School Book Buzz was over, it was time to start thinking about the next one. No matter how successful, it's vital to listen to what attendees have to say and tweak your agenda. Creating an anonymous form using a product like Google Forms allows for honest opinions to be shared.

Building on feedback from the post attendee survey, we added a session on book talks for diverse books, and school and public librarians were invited to share some of their best practice partnerships in 2019. An electronic resource presentation sparked much discussion about library cards and the various types the public library offers. Topics under consideration for

our 2020 event include a rundown of different library cards, a cataloging segment, and a technology petting zoo.

Learning as We Go

In October 2019, we held our second annual School Book Buzz and welcomed forty-one attendees. The first year, we had forty-six attendees. While I had hoped to grow a little more in year two, I was happy with the number.

However, I learned during the event that our marketing department's emails may have been blocked by some of the schools. Since the event is only open to the school districts CCPL serves, I do not put the registration information on the public website. Email blasts are currently the only invitations being sent. We are looking at ways to resolve this issue in 2020 so all intended emails reach our school folks.

Making it Happen

Planning a full-day professional-development workshop is a lot of work, but the results are very rewarding. Cost can be a factor; we purchased boxed lunches from Panera Bread for sixty people, which cost around \$600 including delivery. This

funding has come directly from CCPL, but you could look for a sponsor or simply not include lunch.

The other large expense is the author talk. We were fortunate to have Baker and Taylor sponsor this portion of the day. Author Stacy McAnulty joined us in 2019 to talk about her writing process and her new book, *The World Ends in April*. Her visit was promoted on the registration page and in an email sent to potential attendees.

However, while having an author presentation is a treat for all attendees, it is not essential to your ability to offer a professional-development day. I learned from the post-event survey that it was not the determining factor for school staff to attend. Instead, the public library resources, information, and the many book talks are what draws them in; the author talk is an added bonus. So, don't let this be a stumbling block and stop you from moving forward.

You can begin your planning by conducting a survey to see what your school staff are most interested in. This will direct your planning. Be realistic in what your public library can support and tailor the event to your needs. Make it an afternoon, a couple hours in the evening, or host on a Saturday. No matter how you go about it, the end is the same—the youth advocates in your community are coming together. &

CCBC Names Charlotte Zolotow Winners

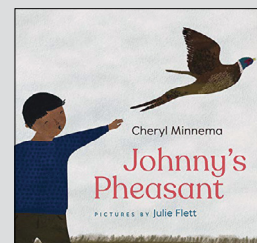
The winner of the 2020 Charlotte Zolotow Award is *Johnny's Pheasant*, written by Cheryl Minnema, illustrated by Julie Flett, and published by the University of Minnesota Press.

Five honor books included:

- *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story*, written by Kevin Noble Maillard and illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal (Roaring Brook Press/Macmillan)
- *A Map into the World*, written by Kao Kalia Yang and illustrated by Seo Kim (Carolrhoda/Lerner)
- *Pokko and the Drum*, written and illustrated by Matthew Forsythe (Simon & Schuster)
- *Saturday*, written and illustrated by Oge Mora (Little, Brown)
- *Truman*, written by Jean Reidy and illustrated by Lucy Ruth Cummins (Atheneum/Simon & Schuster)

The Charlotte Zolotow Award is given annually to the author of the best picture book text published in the United States in the preceding year. The award is administered by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, a children's literature library of the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Members of the 2020 Charlotte Zolotow Award committee included Shannon Furman, school librarian, Lake View Elementary School, Madison (WI); Kelsey Johnson-Kaiser, youth services manager, St. Paul (MN) Public Library, St.; Bridget Nolan, kindergarten teacher, Paul J. Olson Elementary School, Verona (WI); and Jeni Schomber, head of library services, Beloit (WI) Public Library. The committee was chaired by Merri Lindgren of the CCBC.



Mastering Mindfulness

Fostering a Mindfulness Culture in Children

ALICE A. ROBINSON

With the constant barrage of social media, and the plethora of children's apps, political correctness and being respectful to one another have become less important in today's culture, or so it seems.

Teachers, librarians, and childcare providers are trying their best to arrest the slide. Recognizing the problem, many teachers and public librarians are creating mindfulness programs for children. During professional-development workshops, presentations are given on the personal benefits of mindfulness, as well as guidance on how to introduce these activities to students. Follow-up activities include participants registering for online or summer college courses, leading to a mindfulness certificate, or watching TED talks or mindfulness videos, individually or as a group, and discussing important aspects.

As a junior high school library teacher, I initiated (and have continued) a two-week series of mindfulness activities with sixth-grade students. I started with read-aloud "Meditate With Me" (2017), and the students listened avidly and engaged in the activities, including viewing YouTube videos. Some students created and shared their own mindful mantras.

An awesome read-aloud that emphasizes empathy and kindness is *Who Is My Neighbor?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Flyaway, 2019). Children learn what it means to be a good neighbor. A neighbor is not necessarily someone who lives nearby, but rather a person who offers help, regardless of race, beliefs, or economic standing. Librarians, teachers, and caregivers can involve students in discussions on how they can become a better neighbor or friend to schoolmates, family members, or even to those living in their own neighborhoods.

Cookies: Bite-Size Life Lessons by Amy Krouse Rosenthal (HarperCollins, 2006) cleverly depicts the meaning of several good conduct words. Similarly, the 1946 classic *How to Behave and Why*, written by Munro Leaf, instructs children on being honest, strong, fair, and wise.

The nonfiction book *Caring* by Robin S. Doak (Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 2002) features many wonderful suggestions on how students can be loving and caring—for example, writing thank-you letters to firefighters or police officers, letting them know you appreciate their service; helping a senior neighbor with chores; or standing up for a friend when they are being made fun of.

Some activities that schools are engaging in to inspire students to be more thoughtful and kind are the bucket-filling activities based on the books by Carol McCloud. This is where students brainstorm ideas on how they can be bucket fillers on a daily basis, such as by being kind and respectful to their classmates, others at their school, and everyone they come in contact with. Sometimes students recite the bucket fillers' pledge or send friendly notes or cards to friends and family members.

Bucket filling can also encompass Random Acts of Kindness Week. Started in 1995, it is an annual global event with the



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aim of uniting people through kindness. In 2020, it will be observed February 16–23. Likewise, World Kindness Day, introduced in 1998, is another fantastic event, celebrated in several different countries on November 13. On these two occasions, adults encourage children to take a break from their personal devices and do something positive for someone else. This may consist of engaging in projects that make a difference in their communities, like painting a community center or planting flowers.

Being involved in character education principles and social and emotional learning at all levels offers students many chances to be caring, ethical, intentional, and responsible in their thoughts, words, and deeds. A helpful curriculum called Social Emotional Learning (SEL) that focuses on five core competencies (self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and social awareness) is available online at www.eanesisd.net/academics/services/sel.

Students are introduced to different aspects of the SEL curriculum and read, listen to stories, complete worksheets, create posters and storyboards, conduct role-play, and write poems or skits. Building-wide activities at schools involve placing large posters in cafeterias, auditoriums, and hallways as well as having assembly programs and visits by authors and other motivational speakers. Expanded activities may include the rededication or renaming of school corridors and entrances with visual reminders like Caring Street, Citizenship Way, Diligence Drive, Positivity Plaza, Respect Highway, Responsibility Road, and Trustworthiness Boulevard.

In the upper-grades (9–12), students are more aware of how their behavior affects others. They learn and practice how to be responsible, make good decisions and better choices, and develop healthier relationships with peers and adults.

Meditation and mindfulness are relatively new phenomena in schools but are quickly becoming the buzzwords of our time. Mindfulness is seen as a way to regulate students' behavior and to focus on learning. It emphasizes slow intentional breathing and awareness. Students engage in self-aware activities focusing on the present moment, their thoughts, and their surroundings. Students will be calmer, more mindful, and engaged after practicing the breathing techniques. &

Recommended Mindfulness Titles

- Binkow, Howard, and Reverend Ana. *Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns We Can All Get Along*. Illus. by Mike Ferrin. We Do Listen, 2014. 32p.
- Doak, Robin S. *Caring*. Photo research by Yvette Reyes. Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 2002. 32p.
- Dyer, Wayne H., with Kristina Tracy. *No Excuses! How What You Say Can Get in Your Way*. Illus. by Stacy Halder Bodnick. Hay House, 2009. 32p.
- Gates, Mariam. *Meditate with Me. A Step-by-Step Mindfulness Journey*. Illus. by Margarita Surnaite. Penguin, 2017. 40p.
- Graves, Sue. *Not Fair, Won't Share*. Illus. by Desideria Guicciardini. Free Spirit, 2011. 28p.
- Leaf, Munro. *How to Behave and Why*. Illus. by the author. Universe Pub., 1946. 48p.
- Levine, Amy-Jill, and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. *Who Is My Neighbor?* Illus. by Denise Turu. Flyaway Books, 2019. 32p.
- McCloud, Carol, and Katherine Martin. *Fill a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Young Children*. Illus. by David Messing. Bucket Fillosophy, 2018. 24p.
- McCloud, Carol. *Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids*. Illus. by David Messing. Bucket Fillosophy, 2015. 32p.
- Ortner, Nick, and Alison Taylor. *My Magic Breath: Finding Calm through Mindful Breathing*. Illus. by Michelle Polizzi. Harper Collins, 2018. 32p.
- Pryor, Kimberley Jane. *Kindness*. Photo Research by Naomi Parker and Legend Images. Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2008. 32p.
- Robinson-Peete, Holly, and Ryan Elizabeth Peete. *My Brother Charlie*. Illus. by Shane Evans. Scholastic, 2010. 40p.
- *Room to Breathe: Teaching Mindfulness in the Classroom*, DVD. Kindred Media, 2012, 72 minutes.
- Rosenthal, Amy Krouse. *Cookies: Bite-Size Life Lessons*. Illus. by Jane Dyer. Harper Collins, 2006. 40p.
- Smith, Bryan. *Kindness Counts: A Story for Teaching Random Acts of Kindness*. Illus. by Brian Martin. Boys Town Press, 2016. 32p.
- Stewart, Whitney. *Mindful Kids: 50 Mindfulness Activities for Kindness, Focus and Calm*. Barefoot Books: Box Cards Ed., 2017. 50p.
- *Storyland Yoga*. DVD. Playful Planet, 2016, 53 minutes.
- *Yoga for Kids: 20 Playful Kid-Style Poses*. DVD. ABC's, 2015, 35 minutes.

Bookjoy! Día to Celebrate 25 Years

A Visit with Founder Pat Mora

BY ALLISON GRASSEL

It's no surprise that passing along her love of literature—or “bookjoy!” as she calls it—has always been important to Pat Mora, award-winning author and literacy advocate.

In fact, she compares her love of reading to her love of ice cream: “When you love ice cream, you want everyone else to like it. You think, ‘Oh, that’s delicious,’ and you don’t want anyone to miss the pleasure.”

That palpable passion is what led Mora to create Children’s Day, Book Day, also known as *El Día de los Niños*, *El Día de los Libros* (commonly known as Día), in spring 1996. She is eagerly anticipating the initiative’s twenty-fifth anniversary in 2021.

Years ago, when Mora learned of a holiday in Mexico where they celebrated children (*El Día Del Niño*), she thought, “We have Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. We need kids’ day too, but I also want to connect all children with bookjoy, the pleasure of reading.”

Día is a day centered around the promotion of children and literacy. Mora gained the support of friends at the University of Arizona, which grew rapidly. The Tucson Chapter of REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking, quickly became her next supporter as they decided to co-found Día with Mora. The two worked together and planned their celebrations for the very next year.

The first celebrations were held in April 1997. Every year since, Día is celebrated on or around April 30.

Since 2004, ALSC has been the national home of Día. In addition to ALSC, Día has gained the support of many librarians, educators, and organizations, allowing the celebrations to



spread throughout the country. Mora says, “These supporters were essential. After all, I am one person trying to write, and that was a real boost that other people shared that commitment.”

Mora is amazed and humbled by the creative minds of those organizing Día celebrations. “I get excited when people want to join the initiative. It’s easy to say, ‘I think children are important,’ or ‘I think reading is important,’ but when I sense that a person or an organization really wants to invest in making this dual goal a national tradition, that excites me.”

Mora believes the best way to excite children about Día is through creative outreach efforts. She feels so strongly about this that in 2000 she created the Estela and Raúl Mora Award, named for her parents, which is given to the group that creates the most imaginative and creative Día celebration each year. Winners receive a \$1,000 First Book Marketplace credit and publicity for their efforts. Last year’s winner was the Boys & Girls Clubs of South Alabama in Mobile; honor winners were Andress High School Library in El Paso, Texas, and Anaheim (CA) Central Library Children’s Room. A list of the past winners can be found online at www.patmora.com.



Allison Grassel is a student at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, studying English, psychology, and Spanish, and she hopes to pursue a career in journalism.

A Story about Alzheimer's

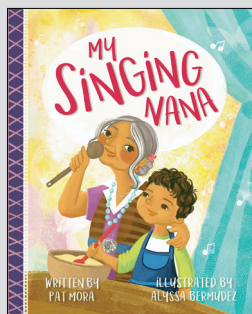
Pat Mora's newest book, *My Singing Nana* (Magination Press, 2019), thoughtfully takes on the topic of Alzheimer's disease, as seen through a child's eyes.

In her author's note, Mora says, "In their eighties, both of my parents suffered from dementia. I was encouraged to write this book by my sister, Stella Henry, who cared for our parents at the end of their lives. For over thirty years, as a nurse, administrator, and co-owner of a nursing home, she helped thousands of families deal with challenging health issues."

In the book, Billy and his Nana have a very close relationship, but he soon starts to realize that Nana is forgetting some things; along the way, he learns that this does not change the love that they have for each other.

The book allows children with family members experiencing memory loss to better understand a confusing, but increasingly common, concept. The story exudes Mora's belief that the most important thing that families can give their children is love, which teaches children to love in return.

The book teaches that togetherness is one of the most important things in life, and despite any obstacles life brings, those who love each other are "always *amigos!*"



Mora believes the most successful Día celebrations are centered around two things: (1) the creativity of the outreach and (2) the energy of the organizers. Their passion becomes contagious and draws children and families in, which is one of Día's goals.

Mora encourages all schools, libraries, publishers, and organizations committed to children and literacy to become involved. "Ideally every school and every library is working with its diverse families to make sure that all of our young people experience bookjoy. That's the dream," she says.

Mora hopes that everyone—no matter age, race, or gender—will feel comfortable in the library. She hopes that Día will continue to draw families into their local libraries and help them both to celebrate our children and to create a love of literature that compares to her own love.

"One of the benefits of Día is not only that it increases family reading and family emphasis on reading, but also that it can be a way for libraries to attract and serve members of the community who, for complex reasons, may never have felt at home in the library," Mora said.

For more information and tips on planning a Día celebration, visit <http://dia.ala.org> or www.patmora.com/images/planning-booklet-complete.pdf?pdf=booklet. &

For more on Día celebrations, see page 30.

Can *Anyone* Plan a Professional Conference?

Tales of a Conference Planning Newbie

NATALIE ROMANO

Professional conferences—love 'em? Many of us do, but they can mean something different to everyone. For organizations, they often serve as major sources of revenue, maintaining fiscal solvency and making future conferences financially sustainable.

For attendees, conferences provide structured opportunities for learning, inspiration, and networking. Sharing new information in the field, socializing with friends and colleagues, and enjoying the camaraderie of the profession are just some of the intended outcomes, and conference planners hope to produce a valuable and inspirational event for their colleagues.

When I chaired the Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL) conference in 2018, I, along with other members of our steering committee, hoped to design an event that would not only meet the needs of our members, but one that would serve as a long-term planning template for future conferences. Our membership and annual conference have grown over the past few years, and with that growth has come the need for a cohesive strategic vision. Above all else, our intention was to produce a memorable event that would add value to our statewide library community and, most of all, honor CLEL's founding members, as the 2018 conference was a ten-year milestone for the organization.

As someone who plans library programs, I am familiar with the basics of event planning, but coordinating a conference was something entirely new. Suddenly, my co-chair and I were faced with all logistics of such an event—transportation, parking, and location, among others.

About a year before the conference, I thoroughly researched library conference planning. Initially, I thought it would be easy to locate online and print resources. But almost every resource I consulted was tailored to meet the needs of more corporate-style events, and I found myself discouraged when their timelines and budgets seemed untenable for what CLEL hoped to accomplish.

None of the resources I consulted addressed the needs of library conferences, much less children's librarian conferences, making my search that much more challenging. As a small professional library organization with modest resources, outsourcing planning was not an option. So, with the time and talent of our steering committee and feedback from the previous year's conference, we began with a blank template and a lot of great ideas.

As I reflect on the planning process, I am so grateful for the expertise of my colleagues and fellow committee members, and I wonder if there are other conference planners in library land who were faced with some of the same bewilderment I was faced with as a conference planning newbie.



Natalie Romano is a Librarian at the Denver Public Library and serves on the Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL) steering committee. She holds an MLIS from the University of Denver.

I hope to share my experiences here to help those who are planning a similar event for their colleagues, and to offer my gratitude to the many people who helped the day come together. For reference, our one-day event in October 2018 was planned to accommodate approximately 220 people, and our conference planning committee consisted of a chair and co-chair, with support from our twelve-member steering committee and our fiscal administrator, the Colorado Library Consortium (CLiC).

What Makes a Conference for Children's Librarians Different?

CLEL is a statewide organization that promotes early literacy experiences in public libraries and in the communities they serve. Equally central to CLEL's mission is to offer training and professional development for our members, who are early literacy librarians, library staff, and other professionals who work across Colorado and elsewhere.

We support their efforts to provide quality literacy experiences in their communities, and to this end, CLEL has offered an annual conference since its inception in 2008. The diverse activities of our members are reflected in the conference's programs and sessions and represent the many different types of work that early literacy professionals do, including collection evaluation, process art programs, STEM/STEAM camps, and managing change within their organizations.

The CLEL conference committee received many exceptional session proposals on these and other topics, which informed our decisions about the timing and format of the event.

Working as a children's librarian is often highly interactive and hands-on. Knowing that conference presentations would reflect a range of presentation types and styles, our goal was to find a venue that could accommodate everything from process art demos to traditional lecture-and-slide presentations. That meant selecting a venue with plenty of tables and several spacious rooms that would inspire a lot of interaction and engagement. Ensuring accessibility for all attendees and providing free parking were at the top of our wish list, along with other details that we hoped would provide a comfortable environment for all.

Selecting a Venue

In my experience as conference chair, the most significant decision was choosing a venue. The venue we selected was very accommodating in helping us minimize costs, but it was still critical for us to be detail-oriented in our search to ensure we compared venues as equitably as possible in terms of pricing and amenities. Venues should be able to provide detailed information about room functionality, food and beverage minimum requirements, day-of technology support, and sample contracts so that fair comparisons between venues



Working on a STEM project.

can be made. Here are some questions to ask a potential venue:

- What kinds of transportation and shuttle options are available to and from the venue?
- Is overflow parking available, and if so, at what cost?
- What kinds of technical support is offered on-site and is there an additional cost?
- Are there any additional room fees if food and beverage minimums are not met? Offering all-day coffee and afternoon snacks is a great idea, especially if it helps to reach those minimums.
- Do venue staff assist with the transitions between sessions, or is that the responsibility of the planning committee? How much time is required for transitions, like putting up and taking down walls, moving tables, or reconfiguring projectors?

- Are there additional costs associated with setting up tables in the entryway for things like registration and vendors?
- Is there an additional fee for outside food or technology (projectors, laptops) that we bring ourselves or from outside businesses?
- Does the venue have room to grow? If you think your conference might expand over the years, it's great to find a venue that's a little bigger than what you need. It never hurts to have extra space!

Realize that no venue is perfect, and you may have to make difficult decisions about weighing conveniences like parking or location against the costs of food and beverage. One strategic decision we made was to offer all-day coffee as a small perk for attendees. It raised our costs slightly, but it helped us avoid additional room fees, which added value without elevating our costs significantly. Increasing conference fees is always an option, but do so with caution.

A venue should be able to help project different outcomes based on cost, attendance, and amenity options; working with our venue on this process took us a few months and many changes were made along the way. These decisions required the consideration and input from the entire committee.

Finances and Sponsorship

Publishers and other businesses in the library industry, both at the local and national levels, can be sources of conference funding. Depending on how much planning time is available and the layout of the venue, offering vendor tables for a fee can help generate some additional revenue. Consider offering businesses the opportunity to advertise their products and services in exchange for their support. Some businesses might be open to funding scholarships for attendees, or specific elements of the conference, like lunch or a keynote presentation. Seeking funding from vendors can be a time-consuming process that requires continuous follow-up, so it might be best to delegate this task to one or two people who have strong fundraising skills. Here are some other things we found helpful while seeking potential sponsors.

- Create an infographic that gives potential sponsors a snapshot of your organization's mission and goals, and the costs and benefits of each sponsorship level. Canva, the free online design software, is great for making such promotional materials.
- Create a tracking spreadsheet of potential sponsors, their contact information, and any special requests they have regarding the size of tables needed or space for large banners or posters.
- Acknowledge sponsors on social-media channels, your conference website, in conference publications, and with a verbal announcement at the conference. A written thank-you note is also a nice way to recognize sponsors after the event.

Our goal was to make the conference registration fee as affordable as possible for attendees, aiming to stay in a cash-positive position with the hope of also generating a modest profit. With careful planning and input from trusted advisers, we met both objectives, which will help us to manage the expected rising costs of future events.

One thing that can help inform pricing decisions is to see what organizations of similar sizes and types charge for their events, keeping in mind the varying professional development budgets of all kinds and sizes of libraries. Offering scholarships for librarians in districts with limited professional development funds ensures that attendees from all sizes of libraries can participate; our scholarships were made possible by the generous support of the Colorado State Library and CLiC.

Keynotes and More

Finding engaging keynote speakers for the conference was my favorite part of planning the conference. Traditionally, CLEL hosts speakers who have strong backgrounds in early childhood brain development or who have done original research in the area of early literacy programming in public libraries. Selecting speakers gives planners the opportunity to shape the central themes of the conference and can also create an opportunity to recruit speakers in a variety of creative ways.

- Consider asking longtime members to share their stories from previous conferences or other anecdotes from their library careers. Storytelling is a fun way to engage attendees, and no one knows the power storytelling better than librarians!
- Invite speakers from both inside and outside the library industry to share their expertise on unexpected topics. Wellness, organizational change, and even music programs can inspire and energize an audience, especially at the end of a long day of breakout sessions.
- Offer speakers complimentary registration to the conference, if possible.
- Reach out to university professors and researchers, who are excellent resources for finding local experts on topics of interest to librarians. Local colleges and universities can be a great place to start when searching for qualified conference speakers.
- Provide transportation for speakers to and from the venue, especially if they're from out of town, if possible.

Logistics and Details

Aside from choosing a venue, managing registration and processing payments from attendees is a major part of conference planning. We had the advantage of using our fiscal administrator's registration platform, which allowed us to take attendee information and payment in one step. However, if an organization doesn't have such access, a simple Google Form can be used to manage registration information, and depending on financial considerations, billing can be managed separately or even after the event.

Looking back, there are a few things I would have done differently in terms of registration, namely,

- develop a refund policy early, and communicate this clearly on the conference website;
- decide if additional fees should apply for last-minute or transfer registrations;
- consider how the registration platform could help streamline attendee name-badge creation considering all associated costs, like paper and printing; and
- evaluate the amount of time needed to effectively process last-minute registrations.

As the chair of the conference, one of the bigger challenges I faced was deciding how to handle last-minute registration requests. As librarians, we want to be as inclusive and

accommodating as possible (everyone is welcome!) *and* these last-minute requests can sometimes consume a lot of time and energy just days before the conference, which tend to be hectic already.

Our venue was flexible in allowing us to add more attendees to the final head count, but it was important for us to ask about this early in the venue-selection process, as our objective was to avoid turning attendees away at the last minute. Designating one person to respond to these queries can help prevent correspondence from getting lost in the shuffle.

Timelines and Planning

Making a timeline was an essential part of the planning process, not only for the 2018 conference, but for future events as well. My goal was to create a calendar template for future CLEL conference planners to make the process easier and more streamlined, and to help future chairs and co-chairs divide responsibilities and major tasks. To that end, I created a list to help myself and our committee stay on track and held accountable for what needed to be finished for the big day (see table 1).

Potential Pitfalls to Avoid and Tips for Planners

- **Delegate, delegate, delegate!** Your fellow committee members want to contribute, but they need specific direction on how to help. Be specific about exactly what tasks need to be done and when. Coordinating the registration table, order-

Table 1. A Sample Twelve-Month Conference Planning Guide

Number of Months/Weeks in Advance	Tasks
12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential conference venues; acquire pricing information and sample contracts • Research potential vendors and compile contact information for each • Research and contact any potential keynote speaker(s); draft a speaker contract • Establish a conference website; begin making a conference program document
8–9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure and sign contracts with venue • Create a budget for all conference expenditures • Finalize speakers and related contracts • Put out the call for breakout session presenters; contact vendors, if applicable • Preliminary walk-through of the venue, noting audiovisual specifications and onsite equipment pricing
6–7 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate conference scholarship application process • Select and test a conference registration and payment management system
4–5 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue a call for professional award nominations • Gather and review breakout session proposals; notify presenters of acceptance or rejection • Open online registration for the conference
2–3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm and send breakout session room assignments to all presenters • Finalize conference schedule of programs and send to membership, speakers, and post to conference website
1–2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second walk-through of the venue, addressing any outstanding audiovisual equipment or spatial discrepancies
2–3 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize attendee head count; coordinate name-badge creation; tabulate food and beverage totals; confirm all presenters and speakers • Ensure payments are processed for speakers and vendors • Final walk-through one week before the event

Table 2. Facts and Figures

Our venue: The Arvada (CO) Center for the Arts and Humanities

Venue total capacity: about 400

Number of official sponsors: 1

Element	Projected	Actual
Attendance	220	200
Cost per attendee	\$60—including light breakfast, coffee, and lunch	\$60—including light breakfast, all-day coffee, and lunch
Budget	Approx. \$10,000	Approx. \$8,000
Number of breakout sessions	12	12

ing books to put on display, monitoring individual breakout sessions, being on hand to assist with technology snafus, gathering giveaway prizes, and assisting with lunch distribution are just a few day-of tasks for volunteers to tackle. Create a day-of conference task sign-up sheet for volunteers to get ideas and work together.

- **Create time for networking and rest.** We provided a small window of time for informal networking in the morning, and an extra-long lunch for attendees to have time to catch up. In hindsight, a long lunch wasn't necessary, but it's still essential to work some time into the day for attendees to chat with each other or take a break. Conferences are fun and also overwhelming.
- **Money matters.** Continuously monitoring our budget and all contract payment deadlines was essential. Changes to our food and beverage orders produced several iterations of our venue contract, which necessitated careful and ongoing review of the charges and how they affected our bottom line. It also helped to have an extra set of eyes (or three) cross-checking our contracts and legal agreements with the venue, caterer, and keynote speakers.
- **Little things matter.** Anticipating that attendees would access our program on their laptops or phones, I didn't print enough copies of the conference program. This was a huge mistake. Being prepared with plenty of copies of the program is essential. Designating someone to take photos of sessions, presenters, and award winners is also something to arrange in advance, which I would do in the future.

- **Don't sweat the small stuff.** Conference planning is a process, and there's a good chance something will go awry the day of the conference. Be as prepared as you can, but also know that problems can be solved with the help of your venue and your awesome and flexible committee members and colleagues.

Evaluation and Assessment

Perhaps the most useful tool in measuring a conference's success is attendees' post-conference feedback. For the 2018 conference, we offered a two-question survey asking attendees to rate the conference on a scale of one to five stars and provided space to share feedback in a short-answer format. We found that this was a bit easier to synthesize than a longer survey, and best of all, people were likelier to respond to two simple questions as opposed to a lengthier questionnaire. We gathered valuable feedback that we hope to integrate into future conferences, helping CLEL to serve its membership and support libraries across Colorado in their mission to promote early literacy.

Without the effort and expertise of our CLEL steering committee and our membership, our conference simply would not have been possible. Much like public library programming, seeing an event come together is exciting, humbling, and fulfilling all at once, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be conference chair. I hope that sharing my experience enables me to help others as they plan their own events, and I'd be happy to provide further guidance to anyone who hopes to plan a similar event for their own library organization. &

Studying Media Literacy

Kids Take on Gender Stereotypes in Advertising

JENNIFER GLADKOWSKI

I'd tell him to make his own darn coffee!" one sixth grader quipped, in response to viewing a black-and-white Folgers coffee television ad from the 1960s. In it, a perky young wife serves her husband a cup of coffee with a chipper, "Your coffee, sir."

The husband, after taking a sip, grimaces and complains, "How can such a pretty wife make such bad coffee?"

"I heard that!" pouts the wife, who then pays a visit to her older and wiser neighbor, Mrs. Olson, who introduces her to Folgers "mountain grown coffee." Now armed with the Folgers, the wife tries again, serving her husband with another obedient, "Your coffee, sir."

The husband sips, this time exclaiming, "How can such a pretty wife make such great coffee?!"

Shock and awe rippled across the library, as my class of twenty sixth-graders processed what they had just seen and heard. It was the first day of a media-literacy unit titled "Gender Stereotypes in Advertising."

Advertising is omnipresent in the lives of young people, whether they encounter it while playing online games, watching YouTube videos, using apps, watching television, or simply traveling to and from school seeing print ads on buses, billboards, and in subway stations. Too often this messaging is flawed, as bias and stereotypes frequently infiltrate advertising, reinforcing and perpetuating specific gender norms in particular. My goal was to provide students (two sections of twenty sixth-graders) with a skill set for recognizing bias and stereotypes in the media, as well as to spur them to begin questioning the media messages they incessantly receive.



Sebastian works on a project.

To kick off the unit, students engaged in discussions about advertising, its purpose, and its connection to their lives. Examples of humorous commercials were shared. The Super Bowl was mentioned as a showcase for many popular ads. The kids used adjectives such as "entertaining," "boring," "funny," "cute," and "annoying" to describe commercials. All of them agreed on one thing—commercials and advertisements are all around and they are inescapable.

Following their animated and, at times, heated group discussions, students watched a variety of television commercials that I curated, spanning from the 1960s to present day. For each commercial, students analyzed the message of the ad, the bias or stereotype presented (if any), the potential harm of the message, and ways the ad might be changed to make it more inclusive or less biased.

This is where things got interesting, as some students immediately spotted the bias and called it out. Other students argued their case that particular ads contained no stereotypes, that they were simply for entertainment purposes and not "a big deal."



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Some especially media-savvy sixth graders were able to recognize the satire in some ads, particularly a diet soda ad that mocks hyper-masculinity and tries to convince men that this particular soda is acceptable for them to drink because it is “not for women.” Disbelief was expressed by many students that advertising executives could be so tone deaf, portraying women as bad drivers, homemakers, trophies, and subservient to men.

Once students had analyzed ten different TV commercials, we moved into a deep dive of LEGO advertising. Our research led us to discover that LEGO ads were once quite inclusive and gender-neutral, especially in the 1980s, portraying girls in overalls building towering structures, airplanes, and trucks right alongside their male counterparts. Fast-forward to the 2010s, and LEGO had launched its LEGO Friends and LEGO City lines, and taken a specific approach to marketing them.

Students were struck by the distinct, biased marketing campaigns. LEGO Friends, designed in pink and purple, were specifically marketed to girls featuring Barbie-like figures in settings such as a beauty salon, animal hospital, and coffee shop. LEGO City featured the standard block-like figures in settings like the police station, a pirate ship, and the Jurassic period. However, it wasn't until the HTML5 Gendered Lego Advertising Remixer was introduced that students were able to fully grasp the biased messaging behind the advertising.

The HTML5 Gendered Lego Advertising Remixer (www.genderremixer.com) created by video remix artist Jonathan McIntosh, is a web-based application that allows users to mash-up or remix gender-specific toy ads to provide insights into the often subtle ways advertisements present messages that reinforce stereotypical gender norms. Students had the opportunity to mash-up LEGO Friends video with LEGO City audio and vice versa.

What they discovered while viewing these remixed ads was often humorous, yet also startling. LEGO was clearly using gender stereotypes to market its product lines specifically to boys and girls. The message was clear—boys like violence, dinosaurs, knights, superheroes, pirates, and dark colors, while girls like beauty salons, hanging out with their friends, domesticated animals, and all things pink and purple.

At this point, students were well equipped to begin the next phase of the unit—creating their own commercials. In self-selected groups, students were tasked with writing a commercial designed to satirize a gender stereotype or challenge an existing gender stereotype. Over the course of five weeks in library class, students collaboratively wrote scripts, designed

props, costumes and sets, rehearsed, filmed their ads, and edited them in iMovie.

The final products offered an insightful and comical look at students' application of their understanding of gender bias in the media. One group of students focused on the stereotype of women as nagging their husbands to help out around the house more and designed a stress relief tool to help husbands cope, complete with testimonials from those whose marriages were saved.

Is your wife a bad driver? No problem, according to another group who created an ad for a self-driving and self-parking car for the mom who can't seem to get her kids from point A to point B. A fitness tracker designed to help both men and women achieve their fitness goals “is for everyone,” stated an inclusive ad by a third group.

On the final day of the unit, we celebrated with a viewing party. Students watched each other's commercials with a critical eye, sharing patterns noticed across commercials as well as insights into how satire can be used as a valuable messaging tool to make an impact. Based on the student-produced commercials, group discussions, and feedback I received, I felt the goals of the unit were achieved. Students were now thinking about media in new and different ways and felt confident in their ability to recognize and call out bias and stereotypes when they see it.

Much of the student feedback I received via survey was similar in nature. Students expressed how much fun they had engaging in the unit activities while also arriving at new and lasting understandings of the power of media and advertising. A hint of activism could also be detected, as students shared that they now felt more empowered to speak up when they encounter sexism and stereotypes. These conversations also extended beyond the classroom. In social studies class, a powerful conversation was had about feminism and whether or not it is anti-male.

It is estimated that the average American is exposed to anywhere from four thousand to ten thousand advertisements per day.¹ With this bombardment of messages directed at children, educators need to be more vigilant than ever about equipping our students with the tools and strategies necessary to navigate this digital terrain. I hope the students who participated in this project continue to recognize potentially harmful messages they encounter in the media and do something about it beyond the confines of the school building. In an increasingly digital world, young people need the skills and the confidence to be responsible digital citizens. &

Reference

1. Ron Marshall, “How Many Ads Do You See in One Day?,” *Red Crow Marketing*, August 3, 2017, www.redcrowmarketing.com/2015/09/10/many-ads-see-one-day.

Bringing Tech, Teens, and Talent Together

Recording Audiobooks for Children with Disabilities

LYNN VROBLICK

It's Friday afternoon and, rather than embarking on weekend recreational plans, a group of high school students have arrived at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) to get down to work. They filter into the library's recording studio and two students take their places at the microphones in soundproof recording booths, while others settle in front of the electronic monitoring equipment just outside and follow the text of the children's book that is being recorded.

The teens are from the Barack Obama Academy of International Studies in Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood. They are participating in an innovative project in which they apply their talents to create audiobooks in an accessible format for an underserved population, children with visual, physical, or reading disabilities who are unable to read standard sized print.

By producing recorded books for young children, LBPH is supplementing the collection of the National Library Service (NLS), a division of the Library of Congress. The books are made available statewide, nationally, and internationally through NLS.

One of the teens, Piper Walsh, says, "It's nice because all week I'm involved with my own work, but then I can step back and do something that's not for me personally, that helps other people. It's a good way to end the week."



Sam and Isaac (top photo) monitor a recording and Piper (bottom photo) records an audiobook in the recording studio.

The students narrate, monitor (follow narration electronically), and digitally edit the books, a complicated and exacting process that follows narration. Mark Sachon, LBPH's volunteer coordinator and recording studio manager, compares the freshly recorded books to "uncut, unpolished diamonds" requiring small but important corrections, such as the removal of unwanted breaths and other extraneous sounds through editing. "There's a lengthy editing process, then the students do retakes, and the books are reviewed by at least two reader-patrons for quality assurance before being circulated," Sachon said.

He says the program enriches all the participants and especially "benefits young library patrons because it provides them with books that they wouldn't otherwise have, in an accessible format. When they're released, we're confident they'll have a wide circulation."



Lynn Vroblick has worked at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped for over thirteen years and is currently a Reader Advisor. In this role, she enjoys assisting patrons of all ages throughout Pennsylvania in book selection, so that they can access the topics and authors that interest them.

Library Honored as Network Library of the Year

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped was recently honored as the national Network Library of the Year by the National Library Service of the Library of Congress. The library provides, for free, more than 85,000 digital audiobook titles (by mail or download), digital players, 14,000 large-print books, Playaways, and described videos to 15,000 Pennsylvania residents, as well as free access to Bookshare. (Described video is the narrated description of a program's nonverbal elements that may include surroundings, costumes, and body language. The description is added during pauses in dialogue and enables people to form a mental picture of what is happening in the program. It may use a separate audio track added to the program after the program has been completed.)

Recognized for its creative and innovative programming, it offers tech training to patrons in person and over the phone, and a statewide virtual storytime via conference call for children who are blind or have limited vision. Its children's programs also include Tactile and Braille Early Literacy Kits (which include tips on the five Every Child Ready to Read early literacy practices for parents) and in-house playgroups facilitated by Children's Specialist Briana Albright and TEIS (Therapeutic Early Intervention Services) teachers for children with multiple disabilities. The library has presented two tactile art shows titled Somatosensory at <https://vimeo.com/254136113/a5cbf12257>.

Mark Lee, library service administrator of LBPH says, "By working to make books accessible to print disabled children, these Pittsburgh Public Schools teens increase their awareness of accessibility issues and, along the way, have a positive experience that they can put on their college applications."

Melissa Dodge, a retired English and French teacher who supervises the students, says, "I enjoy seeing their reactions of surprise, joy, and pride in the outcome of their work, and I am touched by their respect for people who have disabilities."

To set up the program, Russ Kuba, LBPH accessible technology specialist, reached out to his contacts at the Pittsburgh Public Schools. That culminated in a presentation to a large group of interested students, in which the challenges and rewards of narration were explained. The project took off from there.

The students take risks. With encouragement and critical feedback, two teens overcame initial difficulties enunciating through practice and focus. In the process, they gained confidence and produced flawless recordings.



Many of the books are in Spanish-English bilingual format, including a series by Mary Austen.

Choosing the books to record is collaborative, with input from Briana Albright, LBPH children's specialist, supervisor Dodge, and the students. It's a democratic process, with two-way communication.

When several students observed that there were fewer books with female protagonists, more books celebrating women and girls were included. The recorded books, both fiction and nonfiction, often highlight notable figures like Rachel Carson (*Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World* by Laurie Lawler, 2012) and Ruth Bader Ginsburg (*Ruth Bader Ginsburg: The Case of R.B.G. vs. Inequality* by Jonah Winter, 2017). Winter's book, for grades three through six, puts forward fact after fact describing Ginsburg's experiences from girlhood through law school and later as a lawyer and judge, as if in a courtroom setting, with the reader as the jury rendering a verdict on her life.

Obama Academy junior Sam Bisno reflects about his experiences saying, "I believe reading is just about the best thing in the world, so the fact that I get to help others have that experience is rewarding to me. But reading out loud is hard! I often stop myself and force myself to do a retake because I didn't like the way something sounded."

He continues, "The most challenging book I've done is *Iconoscope*, an anthology of poems by Peter Oresick. The poems are extremely personal and that really required me to put myself in the author's shoes to try to bring nuance to each poem."

Daevan Mangalmurti, who narrated *Amma, Tell Me about Holi!*, says he recognizes "how much of a privilege it is to have literature written for people whose eyes can capture everything on a page and how important it is to make sure that the blind have equal access to literature."

One of Sachon's favorite recordings is the award-winning *Looking Like Me* by Walter Dean Myers. As narrated by sophomore Guillermo Harris, the book is lyrical and rhythmic. Its protagonist is a young African American boy growing up in an urban setting, but it has a universal appeal. It's about the complexity of identity; the boy realizes his personality is faceted and he has many strengths, and Sachon says it "is read with enthusiasm and delight, like a parent would read to their child."

The entire student recording program works on multiple levels and is reciprocal. It builds the library's collection and benefits the disability community, and in the process, both the teens themselves, as well as the young library patrons, learn, have fun, and grow. Together the student team has produced more than seventy-five recorded titles that would otherwise not have

been available to print-disabled users. In the process they learn real twenty-first-century skills including public speaking, use of computer hardware and the library's Hindenburg recording software, basic reading skills, the creative process, commitment and perseverance, and—perhaps in today's society the most important quality of all—empathy for others. &

Doing Día

Thanks to our readers, here is a look at a few Día celebrations of the past.

Amalia E. Butler, senior children's librarian, Maplewood (NJ) Memorial Library

In 2018, we focused on our youngest patrons beyond the regularly scheduled storytimes. The week was filled with special early literacy activities, including puzzle making, a guest dance program for caregivers and children, a collaborative preschool art project, and an early Día program. The library is in a commuter town, so children are often accompanied to programs by their babysitters, nannies, au pairs, and grandparents during the day. A large number of the caregivers are multilingual and represent a wide variety of cultures. With this in mind, the program was planned as a celebration of families, inviting attendees to share their favorite childhood songs with the group between stories. Since then, storytime planning has become more intentional and focused on using more picturebooks and short narrative biographies that feature diverse characters, as well as nonfiction with photographs of real people.

In 2019, a few weeks prior to our celebration, I began to share information during weekly storytimes and approached caregivers individually to ask about their favorite childhood songs. In this way, the song lyrics, melodies, and hand motions could be learned ahead of time. We created a YouTube video playlist that featured the songs and fingerplays with subtitles, to encourage attendee participation. The videos also featured native-language speakers in addition to those in attendance. I shared bilingual and multicultural stories as well as rhymes, fingerplays, and songs in Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Tagalog, which continue to be used in storytimes throughout the year. A fortuitous partnership with an au pair named Estefany allowed her, as part of her cultural exchange educational program, to share an interactive lesson on the history and culture of Peru.

Christy Estrovitz, manager of youth services, San Francisco Public Library

Día has earned a special place in San Francisco, bringing joy to the heart of the Mission District, nexus of the Hispanic/Latino community, on the last Sunday in April.



Celebrated since 1999 and acknowledged by an official city proclamation, Día has weathered many changes over the past twenty years, but has remained dedicated to building home libraries and spreading the love of reading. Día first took place in Dolores Park, but when the park closed for renovations Día continued thanks to the organizing committee and unwavering support from the leadership at San Francisco Public Library (SFPL), who also rallied to keep it going. When the renovated Dolores Park reopened without a landing place for Día, the Mission Library, in conjunction with Sunday Streets (a popular street festival), sought to find a new home for this beloved celebration.

SFPL pitched the idea to the SF Early Literacy Network, a collaborative of local nonprofits serving young children and families. With mission alignment, each member immediately stepped up to lead an activity, donate books, and join the organizing committee. The response was truly amazing on every level. Families flocked to the event to celebrate Día's return to the Mission.

The following year, SFPL leveraged its role as a city agency to bring Día to Parque Niños Unidos. This special park felt more akin to the spirit of children, justice, and opportunity, qualities Día imbues. This sunny, triangular-shaped park started out as an underutilized lot that the community petitioned to transform into a park for children. It is here that Día, thanks to leadership support from SFPL and their ability to leverage city resources along with community agencies, has been allowed to grow and flourish.

Last year, Día marked its twentieth anniversary with more than 1,200 participants and twenty community organizations providing literacy-based activities. &

From Parent to Patron

Stressing Early Literacy to New Parents

LEAH HOENIG

Don't look now, but you may be overlooking one of your very best new audiences to the library—new parents are a valuable resource.

Not only will you be able to hook a whole family of future patrons into “librarying,” you’ll also catch them when they are at their most suggestible. An abundance of anecdotal evidence confirms that new parents (new mothers especially) are particularly voracious consumers of information about their precious bumps and bundles (note the bestselling tendencies of various pregnancy books).

While many people today rely on the internet for quick information, new parents are still highly reliant on family and friends for questions they need answered, such as, “What’s the best stroller or car seat? How many kicks should I be feeling each hour? Why is my baby crying?”

All these and more are addressed adequately in most pregnancy guides or parenting books, and while they could always ask their healthcare practitioner, somehow hearing it from an experienced parent in-person is worth more.¹

Libraries can step in, forming parent social groups or giving classes on pregnancy, parenthood, and early literacy. Hopefully, they’ll be back for more with their kids in tow.

No Kids? No Problem

Of course, if it’s an option, librarians who have “been there, done that” may be more comfortable running this sort of program. But don’t be scared off. Even if you haven’t had children yourself and feel less “qualified” to discuss parenting, realize that you *are* an expert on children. As a children’s librarian,



You’re never too young for a good story!

you deal with kids all day long! And you know things that these parents might not—the best board books and nursery rhymes, how to research the most relevant resources, and what the library can offer kids.

Keep in mind that all you’re doing is presenting reliable information, not inventing it yourself. If participants do decide to challenge your authority, you can drop a line about the courses you took in early childhood development or best practices in early literacy, or the years of experience you’ve had dealing with kids.

Where to Start?

Planning and promoting an event like this can be tricky. Consider some of the following options and judge it based on your experience with your demographic.

Many parents are likely at work during the day, so you might want to look at early evening or weekend options. Do you have lots of stay-at-home moms coming religiously to baby storytime? Maybe highlight one as a special. Do you have regular attendance at a popular adult series? Try to devote one session to this. It can be tweaked to fit into the categories of literacy, health and wellness, parenting, and more.

Whatever you decide, make sure to promote it. Of course, include it in your regular calendars and brochures, and

Leah Hoenig is a Children’s Librarian at Queens Public Library in Flushing, New York. She and her husband are parents to a new baby.

display a flyer in the building. Venture outside, too. Can you hang up a sign at your local Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) office or at health practitioners that new or expecting parents might frequent? Is there an online discussion group or page for moms where you can post a digital notice?

Do you have a relationship with a local health organization? Getting a guest presenter (say a pediatrician or obstetric nurse) to deliver part of the information takes a load off you and lends added legitimacy to your event.

To set up for your program, consider how you're planning on running it. Will you be seating participants in an auditorium? Or do you want to be family-friendly and have an informal circle gathering in your storytime area, with toys for babies to play with? Keep in mind that parents, by definition, have kids to take care of.

What to Include

Where do you start? Try gathering information about local resources as a starting point. Here are organizations you might like to include on a handout, with their full contact information and hours of service:

- Local WIC center (federally funded resource for pregnant women and young children, provides vouchers for healthy food staples)
- Local La Leche League group (international organization in support of breastfeeding mothers; may have a membership fee)
- Local SNAP (food stamps) information
- Hotlines to call for advice and resources: New York State, for example, has the 24/7 Growing Up Healthy Hotline that connects callers to resources for health care, nutrition, pregnancy, family planning, and children's needs.
- Information about health insurance/Medicaid/CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program); let parents know that often children can qualify even if parents don't (www.insurekidsnow.gov is a good starting point).

The next local resource you'll want to let them know about is the library itself. Be sure to highlight the activities and programs offered for kids, and it can't hurt to mention that parents get to socialize at storytime too. If there are age limits or special rules for children's library cards, give the details. Do you offer fine-free cards for kids, or a way for them to read off their fines? What kinds of homework help or other services do you provide? Hours of service, branch information, and even the names of the children's librarians can help parents feel empowered to come visit.

If you're comfortable doing so, a packet or brochure of pregnancy health and wellness information can be valuable. You can print it directly from a reliable website if you don't want the responsibility of dispensing medical advice.

Next Up: Early Literacy

Here is your chance to introduce them to songs, fingerplays, games, and books, and offer early literacy tips and suggestions. Part of your program, depending on what you feel comfortable with and how you've marketed the event, can include live demos.

Don't assume that everyone knows "Twinkle, Twinkle" or other basic nursery rhymes; even if they do, you can show them the fingerplay and add asides about songs and rhymes as essential components of early literacy.

The same goes for books: show them what dialogic reading looks like, assure them that books are still good if they aren't read cover to cover (or even read at all), point out your board book and picturebook collections, and highlight a few favorites.

For the very young, simple, high-contrast, black-and-white books (such as those by Tana Hoban or Peter Linenthal) work well, as do books that feature photographs of faces such as the Global Babies series or Margaret Miller's *Baby Faces*. If you circulate touch-and-feel, mirrored, pop-up, or lift-the-flap books, you may want to showcase those.

Review how to play Peekaboo or This Little Piggy, and reassure them that scientific research backs up even these simple games. If you have a demographic that doesn't speak English at home, another good fact to know is that books and words, in any language, are terrific for a baby's development. The more words a child hears at home, the more prepared they will be for success in school.²

Even before a baby is born, he or she becomes accustomed to mom's voice and will react to songs and music that reach the uterus.³ Whether or not reading to a fetus will give it an advantage later in life (there are books out there specifically for this demographic), getting parents in the habit of bedtime stories is a definite good thing.

Finishing Touches

Any library event should include a book display. Depending on the focus of your program, pull titles on pregnancy, newborns, parenting, and literacy. Don't forget your video collection; there may be a childbirth class or prenatal yoga session

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Couples Who Collaborate

Tom Angleberger and Cece Bell

MARY-KATE SABLESKI



Tom Angleberger and Cece Bell

Tom Angleberger and Cece Bell are the unique couple behind numerous memorable books for children. The couple creates joyful, relatable characters and settings that invite children to return to their books again and again. In addition to their collaborative projects, the couple also supports each other in their independent pursuits, which are also hugely successful. Their insights and experiences on collaborating and creating books for children draw from their years of experience, and success, honing their craft together.

Cece Bell is the author and illustrator of a diverse range of books, including Newbery Honor-winning autobiography *El Deafo* (2014), Geisel Honor-winning *Rabbit and Robot: The Sleepover* (2014), *Rabbit and Robot and Ribbit* (2017), *I Yam a Donkey* (2016), *Bee-Wigged* (2017), *Itty Bitty* (2009), and the Sock Monkey series. She has also created books with her husband, Tom, including *Crankee Doodle* (2013) and the Inspector Flytrap series. She earned her graduate degree in illustration and design at Kent State University and became a full-time author and illustrator after many years of working as a freelance illustrator and designer.

Tom Angleberger is the author and illustrator of the popular Origami Yoda series, the QWIKPIK series, and numerous other funny and engaging books. Tom worked as a newspaper reporter before deciding to write and illustrate children's books full time after the birth of their first son.

Tom and Cece currently live in Virginia. They met while undergraduate students at The College of William and Mary, where both were art majors and worked in the graphic design department. Now, they share the same career, but not always the same studio space. Their collaborative thoughts about

creating children's books together are inspirational, honest, and, of course, funny.

Q: How did the two of you meet?

TA: Cece and I met in college. We'd run into each other our freshman year, but it was sophomore year when we both worked on the graphics staff of the college newspaper.

CB: I was not nice to Tom at first! I wanted to make straight A's, and *LIKING a BOY* was a *BIG DISTRACTION!* But he won me over!

Q: Did you always plan to create books together?

TA: We actually started work on a book while we were in college. But never finished it. My writing was poor, but Cece's cut-paper illustrations were going to be awesome.

CB: I remember that. Those cut-paper illustrations were *AWFUL!* But I was proud of them at the time. (And that's another way Tom won me over. Always so supportive about the stuff I made.)



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.

Q: Describe your process of creating books together, from the idea stage, to drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

TA: A lot of the “work” we do together goes like this: One of us says something crazy out loud. The other one says, “that would be a great kids book.” Sometimes we pursue it for a few minutes. Sometimes we actually write it down or draw a few pictures. But it very rarely becomes a book. But sometimes it does. We were on a long car ride when we created *Crankee Doodle*, just bouncing ideas back and forth. By the end of the ride, we had the whole book. Later, I wrote it out, but the story itself had been “written” out loud on that car ride. And then Cece spent a lot of time making the paintings.

CB: I also spent a little bit of time editing Tom’s writing. Hopefully he wasn’t *too* mad about that . . .

TA: As far as the other stages, those are often solo. Cece doesn’t need or want me hanging over her shoulder while she’s drawing. But the fun comes when she shows me what she’s made.

CB: I love to surprise Tom with my interpretations of things. I especially loved writing and illustrating these little one-page comics for him in the Inspector Flytrap books. So much of what we do when we collaborate is to try to create these silly little gifts for each other—something hilarious for the other to discover and get a big laugh out of.

TA: We used to spend a lot of time talking over our stories and trying to help each other think things out (usually in our kitchen). But these days, it’s often more about lending an understanding ear when the other one talks about what they’re up to. For instance, I’m working on a book about fractals and poor Cece has had to look at so many fractals and hear about so many fractals, that when/if the book finally comes out, she won’t need to read it.

CB: The fractals are cool. I dig them but still can’t quite get my head around what exactly they are. And yes, that understanding ear is the best. It’s pretty wonderful to be able to talk to your spouse about some of the frustrations that can occur when you’re working on a book—like, this font is awful! Why did they choose this font? First-world problems for sure, and others outside the biz might think, “who actually CARES about a font?” So it’s nice that we can have these discussions without feeling poo-pooed. (Poo-pooed looks even better typed than I anticipated!)

Q: Describe your work space for us. Do you work together, alone, at home, etc.?

TA: Most of the actual “work” work gets done alone. I do a lot of my work on the porch or at a table. I recently got a roll-top desk, but that’s more about protecting my stuff from the cats than anything else.

CB: I have my own studio space next door—it’s one of those Home Depot barns that’s been “finished” on the inside. But there’s no running water or toilet, so I run home to use the bathroom and end up “at the water cooler” yakking away to Tom about all our various projects. My studio is definitely off limits to just about everybody—and that includes the cats *and* Tom. :)

Q: How is it different to work with your spouse, as compared to another author or illustrator?

TA: As an author, I usually have almost no contact with the illustrator during the process. But when Cece is illustrating one of my stories, she and I obviously end up talking about it. I think it made the Inspector Flytrap books so much better, because she was able to reshape the books to fit her own vision. And it was a great vision.

CB: Tom is too generous. I can be pretty bossy with my vision of how I think a book we’re both working on should go. The tricky part for me about working with Tom as opposed to another writer is that I’m a lot more sensitive to his criticisms than I am to others’. I’m probably more sensitive than he is but I think we both try to be nice when we disagree about something. At least I *hope* I’m nice.



Interior art by Cece Bell for *Crankee Doodle*; permission granted by the creators.

Q: What is it like to share your work with children?

TA: That’s the best thing ever. Having kids make origami Star Wars characters, often from their own designs, is the coolest thing ever.

CB: I agree with Tom. It’s the best thing ever to feel connected to your readers. And I especially love meeting kids who use hearing aids or cochlear implants. It feels like we are instant friends.

Q: The We Need Diverse Books initiative has had an enormous impact on the children’s book market. How do you see your work fitting into this movement?

TA: Well, since I'm an autistic adult and a lot of characters are autistic kids, I think I fit in pretty well.

CB: I think my book *El Deafo* fits into this movement as a representation of disability lit, as it's a depiction of childhood hearing loss and using hearing aids—and the feeling of being different as a result.

Q: Do you have advice for other couples who might be interested in collaborating to create books for children?

TA: The roles of author and illustrator are pretty straightforward in the industry. But a real collaboration totally mixes those roles and upends all the rules. You're not firing off an email to an art director who will pass it on to an illustrator. You're face to face. The potential for a huge disaster or a huge success is much greater. For me, it's been easy because Cece is an amazing artist AND a great storyteller. When she gets a big idea, she cannot be stopped. So often I just need to stay out of the way!

CB: Again, Tom is too generous! My advice would be to be kind and thoughtful when you give each other suggestions, and to set aside separate, non-family time to talk about the project so that it doesn't take over everything. I'm really lucky to get to make things with someone as hilarious as Tom is. He's such a creative and generous and exciting collaborator, for sure. &

Books by Tom Angleberger and Cece Bell

- Angleberger, Tom. *Inspector Flytrap*. Illus. by Cece Bell. Amulet Books, 2016. 112p.
- Angleberger, Tom. *Strange Case of Origami Yoda*. Harry N. Abrams, 2015. 208p.
- Angleberger, Tom. *Poop Fountain!: The Qwikpick Papers*. Amulet Books, 2014. 144p.
- Angleberger, Tom. *Rocket and Groot: Keep on Truckin'!* Marvel Press, 2017. 272p.
- Angleberger, Tom. *Crankee Doodle*. Illus. by Cece Bell. Clarion Books, 2013. 32p.
- Bell, Cece. *I Yam a Donkey!*. Illus. by the author. Clarion Books, 2016. 32p.
- Bell, Cece. *El Deafo*. Illus. by the author. Harry N. Abrams, 2014. 248p.
- Bell, Cece. *Rabbit and Robot and Ribbit*. Illus. by the author. Candlewick Sparks, 2017. 48p.
- Bell, Cece. *Chick and Brain: Smell My Foot!*. Illus. by the author. Candlewick, 2019. 72p.
- Bell, Cece. *Bee-Wigged*. Illus. by the author. Candlewick, 2017. 40p.

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No Librarian Is An Island Volunteers Are Your Best Untapped Advocates

Chelsey Roos



Chelsey Roos is a Children's Librarian at Castro Valley (CA) Library.

When we think of advocacy, we often think of what we, as individuals, could be doing. Am I speaking up enough for the library? How's my elevator pitch? Am I attending city council meetings, back-to-school nights, farmers' markets? Am I doing everything I can to make sure that my community knows all the wonderful things the library has to offer?

But no librarian is an island, and you don't have to advocate alone. Consider a group of library users who already have a stake in the library, those you see with some regularity, and who can become vocal advocates with just a little assistance—your volunteers.

Your volunteers are natural advocates for the library. After all, they wouldn't be volunteering if they didn't have a soft spot for libraries! Volunteers already know at least a little about what the library offers. Maybe they volunteer with your Friends organization and know the annual book sale supports library funding. Maybe they bring their dogs to Paws to Read and have witnessed a child's face light up as they read a library book to a dog with confidence. No matter their role, almost any volunteer can share their own personal connection.

In my library system, I work with two distinct volunteer groups; both are fantastic advocates for the library. A group of adult volunteers we call "Bookleggers" visits every elementary classroom in our school district. With almost one hundred fifty elementary classrooms in our service area and only two and a half children's staff, we would never be able to visit every classroom while still providing the same level of service in branch.

Our Bookleggers go through a six-week training process where they become book-talking experts, choosing five or six books from a curated list to present to each classroom. Every visit is a perfect advocacy moment—they promote the library, talk up programs, and make sure kids and families know about the amazing resources the library offers. These volunteers are passionate literacy advocates, and they bring their passion both to the classroom and to the broader community, sporting one of our branded Booklegger tote bags and recruiting new volunteers.

Even your youngest volunteers can be advocates. In my library system, a team of almost one hundred middle schoolers helps us with our Summer Reading Game. These volunteers sign up families, explain the game, and cheer on readers who are close to earning prizes. They bound up to unsuspecting grown-ups, ready to spread the word about the joy of summer reading for all ages.

These tweens make great advocates because they're big library users and full of enthusiasm. Ours act like miniature carnival barkers, persuading reluctant grown-ups and explaining that yes, babies can participate in the Summer Reading program too. These volunteers are visible to everyone who walks into the library, and when they go home, they tell their friends about incentives, library events, and more. In their downtime, they hang

out at the volunteer table and read—nobody sets a better example than that!

By incorporating volunteers into my advocacy goals, I'm able to expand my reach. Bookleggers come from all walks of life and are able to spread the word to family and friends who may not be library users. My Summer Reading tweens are able to speak kid-to-kid, often reaching friends who haven't been to the library since they grew out of storytime. Because they're volunteers and not employees, they speak out of genuine, unbiased affection for the library, and listeners can tell.

It doesn't take much to turn a volunteer into a vocal advocate. When I train new Bookleggers, I include information that

volunteers can turn around and share. "Did you know the Friends of the Library offers free books for classrooms? Not all our teachers are aware, so bring them a flyer when you visit." This even works with our middle-school volunteers. "Who can guess how many people signed up for summer reading last year? More than five thousand! How many sign-ups should we try for this year?"

The next time you're feeling overwhelmed and unable to advocate, consider your volunteers. Whether you have just three or four dedicated regulars or a small volunteer army, they can revitalize your advocacy efforts without requiring you to do it all on your own. &

From Parent to Patron—continued from page 32

on DVD. At the end of the program, mention that all materials are available for checkout to mitigate the "too pretty to read" phenomenon that often leaves attractive displays untouched.

Have extra copies of handouts ready for latecomers. If you have some other giveaways they certainly can't hurt—again canvass your local pediatricians, WIC office, daycares,

maternity care centers, and anywhere else they might have brochures or goods to share.

Consider offering a tour of the children's room, or a sign-up sheet for your email newsletters. Thank everyone for coming and say that you look forward to seeing them back soon! &

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1. Katherine Loudon, Steven Buchanan, and Ian Ruthven, "The Everyday Life Information Seeking Behaviours of First-Time Mothers," *Journal of Documentation*, January 11, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-06-2014-0080>.
2. "Talk, Read, and Sing Together Every Day! Tips for Families," Talking Is Teaching, 2016, <https://talkingisteaching.org/resources/talk-read-sing-together-every-day-tips-families>.
3. Carolyn Granier-Deferre et al., "A Melodic Contour Repeatedly Experienced by Human Near-Term Fetuses Elicits a Profound Cardiac Reaction One Month after Birth," *PloS One* 6, no. 2 (February 23, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0017304>.

Brain and Body Working Together

Betsy Diamant-Cohen and Katie Scherrer



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. **Katie Scherrer** is the founder of *Stories, Songs, and Stretches!*, an early learning startup working to ensure all kids are school-ready in body, heart, and mind.



Using movement in the storytime setting is not new. Most presenters know that, at minimum, movement is a great tool for helping young children “get the wiggles out” and have fun before resettling for the parts of the program that require more attention and focus.

However, much like the use of songs, props, and conversation in the days before youth services staff were well-versed in the development of early literacy competencies, the use of movement in storytime is often intuitive rather than intentional. The great news is that these instincts to utilize movement are right on track! Not only does movement help children build gross and fine motor skills, emerging research indicates combining movement with early literacy practices actually boosts early literacy development as well.¹

The following resources provide concrete and practical information and activities for implementing elements of physical movement into your storytimes that are intentionally designed to support school-readiness development.

Three Principles for Intentional Movement in Storytime

www.alsc.ala.org/blog/2019/07/three-principles-for-intentional-movement-in-storytime

Post on the ALSC blog proposing, and briefly explaining, three guiding principles for making the use of movement in storytime intentional and effective.

Active for Life Lesson Plans

<https://activeforlife.com/lesson-plans-and-resources>

Active for Life is a Canadian nonprofit social initiative created to give children the right start in life through the development of physical literacy. Multiple free movement activities are described in detail and broken down by age.

A Hop, Skip and Jump: Enhancing Physical Literacy

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/05c80a_166260a29b374b3ab376b264419b5c4.pdf

An extensive resource created by students and professionals at Mount Royal University (Canada) to encourage active play in young children.

Cosmic Kids Yoga: A-Z of Kids Yoga Postures

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIj6qrCsgGE

A compilation of dozens of short video demonstrations of developmentally appropriate yoga poses and stretches for young children.

Let's Move in Libraries

<http://letsmovelibraries.org>

An international initiative that aims to support healthy communities by getting people of all ages and abilities moving in library spaces and programs. Find sample programs and connect with colleagues who are also working to share intentional movement activities within their communities.

SHAPE America Early Childhood Activities

www.shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/downloads-earlyChildhood.aspx

SHAPE America—the Society of Health and Physical Educators—is the national organization for health and physical education professionals. Find free, downloadable activity sheets for getting preschool-age children moving. Available in English and Spanish.

Brain Gym

<https://breakthroughsinternational.org/programs/the-brain-gym-program>

Using “educational kinesiology,” or learning through movement, the Brain Gym program consists of twenty-six activities and movement-based techniques that “awaken” children’s brains and synchronize body systems for optimal functioning. Each movement sequence targets a specific need, such

Reference

1. Deborah Callcott, Lorraine Hammond, and Susan Hill, “The Synergistic Effect of Teaching a Combined Explicit Movement and Phonological Awareness Program to

as being able to remember information before taking a test. *Brain Gym Teacher’s Edition* (2010) by Dennison and Dennison contains illustrations and easy-to-follow descriptions of all twenty-six Brain Gym movements.

Dancing to Learn

<https://sharpbrains.com/blog/2016/01/22/what-educators-and-parents-should-know-about-neuroplasticity-learning-and-dance>

The easily understandable explanations regarding the value of dance in this blog post provide scientific support for offering dance parties in the library. The information can also be used as developmental tips for parents and caregivers regarding the important benefits of dancing with their children.

Activity and Break Apps to Help You Move at Work

www.umsystem.edu/totalrewards/wellness/activity_and_break_apps

If you need reminders to get up and move throughout your workday, check here for the University of Missouri System’s annotated list of mobile-device reminder apps. Direct links to each app are included along with pricing information.

The Science Behind Exercise and the Brain

www.johnratey.com

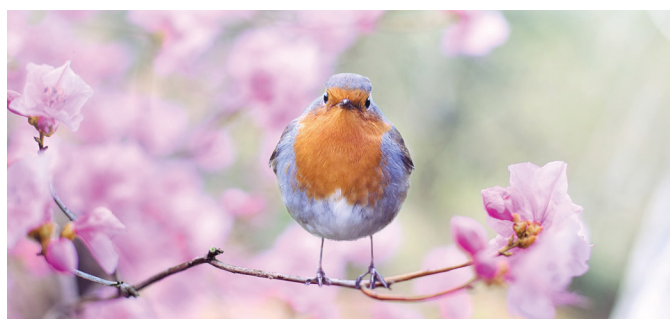
Dr. John Ratey, author of *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, is often quoted for his research regarding the transformative effects of exercise on the brain. His book is a fascinating read and his website contains his TEDx talk, “Run, Jump, Learn! How Exercise can Transform our Schools,” a Brain Grains video that introduces us to children whose lives have been turned around through exercise, and a Mr. H. “The Exercise + Brain Rap” video. &

Preschool Aged Students,” *Early Childhood Education Journal* 4 (May 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-014-0652-7>.

THE LAST WORD

Things to Do If You Are Spring: A Poem

Laura Purdie Salas



Former teacher Laura Purdie Salas believes reading small picture books and poems can have a huge impact on your life. She has written more than 130 books for children.

Rouse all trees from winter dreams.

Kiss icicles and snow families goodbye 'til next year.

Race rivers downstream.

Whisper, "Wake up!" to seeds buried deep underground.

Throw a big tantrum. Make it stormy and loud!

Throw birthday parties for kits and chicks and cubs.

Dance with kites in the clouds and wear lilac perfume.

Croon with a chorus of robins and frogs.

Tell stories of sunshine and the summer to come.

Fill the world with light, and new life, and love!

Download and print a free poster of this poem at <https://wp.me/P6Bicx-6TT>. © Laura Purdie Salas, all rights reserved.

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

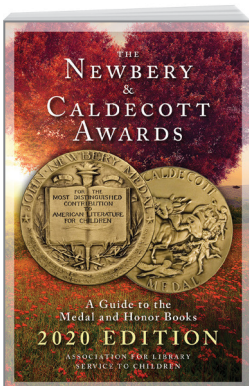
Highlight Newbery and Caldecott award-winning books in your library with these resources from



GRAB-AND-GO AWARDS PAMPHLETS

for readers are a great value and will help your library's users find their next favorite book!

- ✓ Help your patrons build their "want-to-read" list by encouraging them to **explore your collection**.
- ✓ Easy to distribute, and they're also **time-saving tools** for creating book displays.
- ✓ With picks for **every type of reader**, they'll keep your patrons coming back for more.



Featuring a new interview with two-time Newbery medal winner **Lois Lowry** and updated with the 2020 award and honor

books, this perennial favorite gathers together the books deemed most distinguished in American children's literature and illustration since the inception of the renowned prizes.



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

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

NEW Children's Books from Loyola Press

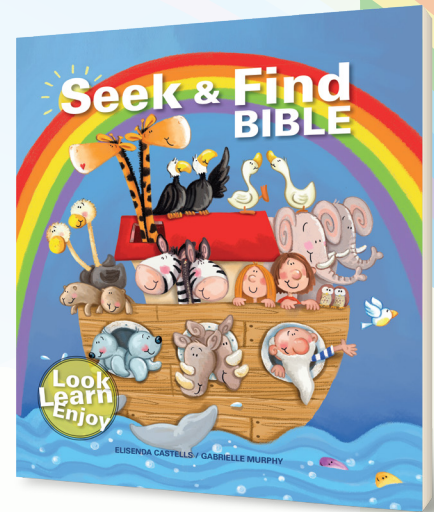
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SEEK & FIND BIBLE

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