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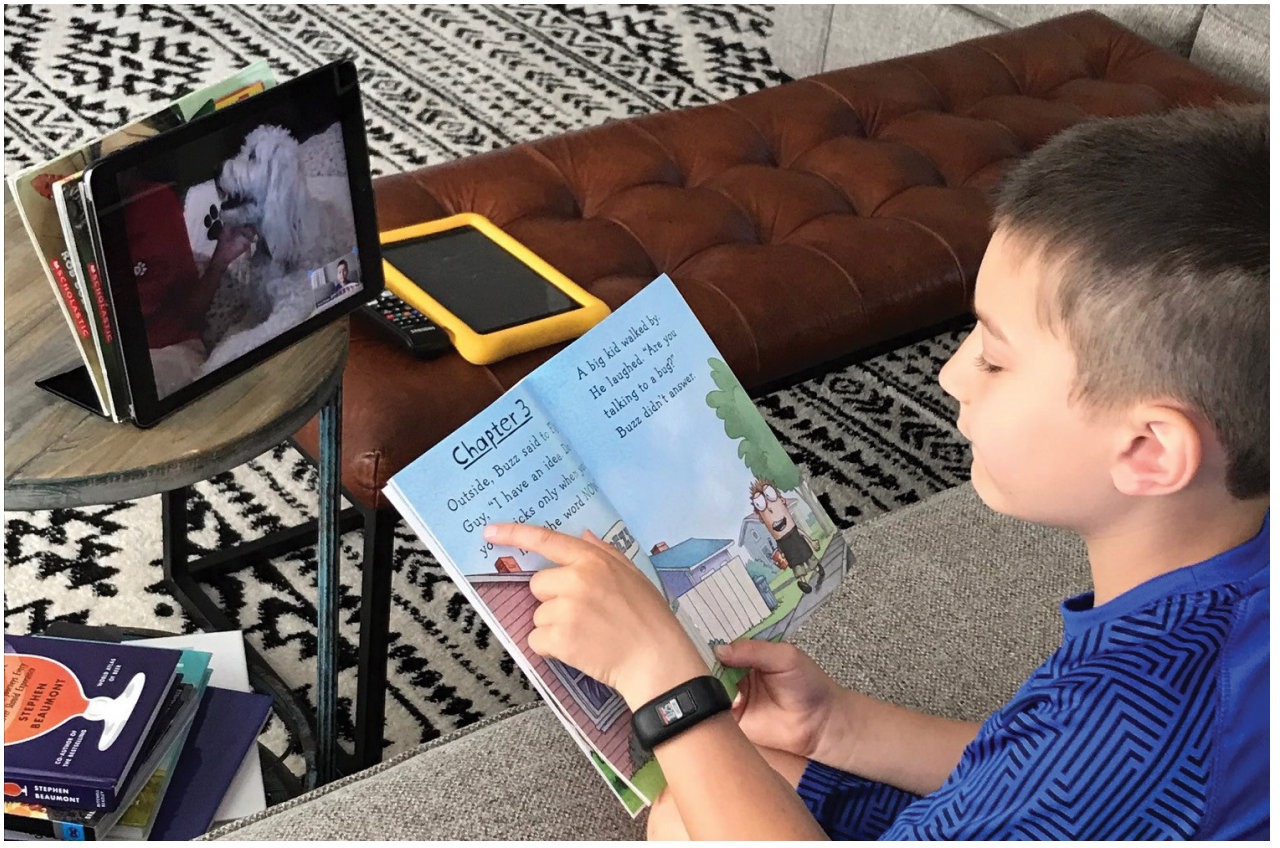

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Summer Learning in 2021: What Will It Look Like?

Graphic Novels Hit Their Stride

What Your ALSC Committees Are Up To

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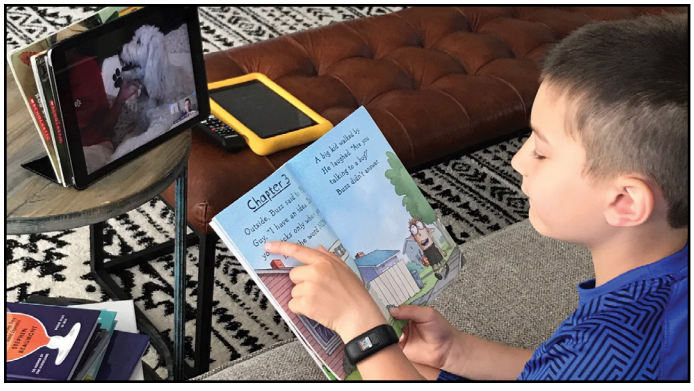

ON THE COVER: Even canines went online in 2020! Jacob reads virtually as part of the Therapaws Pet program at Thomas Ford Memorial Library in Western Springs, Illinois.

Editor's Note

The Year that Wasn't

By Sharon Verbeten

In February 2020, I was already planning the summer wall display in our children's library room—I was planning on having a large pair of glasses with "20/20 Vision!" You know, perfect vision looking ahead to what a great year it would be!

We know how that turned out. Over a year and a half ago, our library staff shut our doors and was told we would have to shelter in place for about two weeks. If only.

As I write this in May, and hopefully by the time you read this later this summer, the world will have started looking a bit more "normal," whatever that has become. I wish that wherever you are you'll be able to look forward to 2022 with positive vibes, a sunny outlook, and a maskless face.

Summer reading/learning will once again this year look different, but many kinks have been worked out making virtual programming a bit more seamless and enriching.

We hope CAL has been able to give you some ideas for your library during this challenging time. And keep sharing your library stories and photos with us; we'd love to continue hearing from you as you emerge from this unprecedented year.

Enjoy the many columns contributed by ALSC committees in this issue—I'm thrilled to have such engagement to show how hard our members are working. &

Youth Services Librarian Meagan Albright gets into the spirit filming a summer reading book trailer at the Alvin Sherman Library at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Photo by LeThesha Harris.

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Children and Libraries is the official journal of ALSC, a division of the American Library Association. The journal primarily serves as a vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with children, which showcases current scholarly research and practice in library service to children. It also serves as a vehicle for communication to the ALSC membership, spotlighting significant activities and initiatives of the Association. (From the journal's "Policies and Procedures" document adopted by the ALSC board, April 2004, revised, 2014.)

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What Will Summer Look Like?

Summer Learning Loss and COVID-19 Learning Gaps

MATTHEW BOULAY AND ELIZABETH McCHESNEY

Summer 2021 will likely look much different than previous summers due to the impact of the now more than one-year-long pandemic.

Here we share research about summer learning loss and overlap that with emerging studies illustrating how COVID-19 closures and remote learning have compounded learning loss, all of which disproportionately impacts Black children, indigenous children, children of color, and all children who live in poverty.

Summer's Impact on Academic Learning

Prior to COVID, much research had been compiled about both the deleterious effects of summer learning loss and the proven benefits of high-quality summer experiences. According to a 2020 study appearing in the *American Educational Research Journal*, more than half of US students between grades one and six experienced summer learning loss five years in a row. The study reviewed 200 million student test scores and found that the average student loses between 17 and 28 percent of school-year gains in English language arts during the following summer, depending on grade. In math, the average student loses between 25 and 34 percent of each school-year gain during the following summer.[1]

The most pronounced summer learning loss occurs among students in K-3 grades. Their skills are new and developing, and the time away from regular practice during schooling means they are more likely to forget. These summer setbacks are particularly worrisome because the early grades are the foundation for the achievement, work habits, and perceptions about self-confidence and schooling that impact performance for years to come.

Research also shows that summer learning loss varies by subject area. For instance, nearly all students slide backwards

Dr. Matthew Boulay *is the founder of the National Summer Learning Association, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Baltimore. A former elementary school teacher in New York City, Boulay earned a PhD in Sociology and Education from Columbia University's Teachers College and was recently named one of the 25 most influential people in out-of-school time learning. A former Marine and veteran of the war in Iraq, Boulay lives in Oregon with his wife and two children. Boulay recently published* How To Keep Your Kids Learning When Schools Are Closed*, an e-book that aims to provide practical advice to parents who are asking urgent questions about how best to support, nurture, and educate their children during periods of social distancing and quarantine.* ***Elizabeth McChesney*** *serves in several roles including Senior Advisor in Educational Equity Initiatives at the Urban Libraries Council. In 2015, she won the LJ Movers and Shakers Award for transforming summer reading to summer learning, starting a national movement in libraries. She went on to earn NSLA's First Founder's Award for Excellence in Summer Learning and the John Cotton Dana Award. She is the 2021 recipient of the ALSC Distinguished Service Award. Liz chairs the ALSC Task Force on Summer Learning and Out of School Time Learning and has co-authored* Summer Matters: Making All Learning Count *(ALA Editions, 2017);* Pairing STEAM with Stories *(ALA Editions, 2020), and* Keke's Super-Strong Double Hugs *(Archway, 2020).*

in math performance—on average, students lose about two months of math skills every summer.[2] Again, the loss is most severe for younger children, but older elementary/middle school students can also experience summer learning loss in math, most likely because math is deemed a subject for learning and practicing only in school. While reading is practiced outside of school, it's much less common to encourage math practice in the home.

When it comes to summer learning loss in reading, the research suggests that children in more affluent families do not experience much decline and some even make small gains during the summer. However, students from low-income families tend to experience significant summer loss in reading skills and reading comprehension. In fact, this class-based gap is a persistent finding in the research on summer learning loss: in all grades and all subjects, lower income kids fall farther and farther behind their wealthier peers every summer.[3]

Economic status is linked to opportunity—affluent children are more likely to attend summer camps and programs or have private lessons or access to a tutor and other adults who can support their learning. Children in poverty were keeping up during the school year, then falling behind in the summer, says Karl Alexander, professor emeritus, Johns Hopkins University, the original researcher of summer learning loss. By the beginning of middle school, the typical child from a low-income family was reading one or two grades behind grade level. At that point everything becomes challenging, which poses a serious problem in terms of their academic success and later life prospects.[4]

It's important to take a broad view of summer learning that incorporates a whole child approach, encompassing an understanding of children's physical, social, and emotional well-being. Today we understand that the body and mind are linked, and that daily exercise, good nutrition, and adequate sleep impact children's sense of optimism and self-confidence, their ability to persevere, and their learning.

The 2020 Absence of Schooling

The pandemic upended the conventional school calendar. When schools suddenly closed in March 2020, we became acutely aware of the absence of schooling and learned overnight that schools do so much more than simply teach academic skills and content.

Social and Emotional Development

Schooling provides an important connection for caregivers and children alike. During the school year, children and caregivers are connected to friends, neighbors, teachers, and other caring adults as well as referrals and resources that help families. In the absence of schooling, these connections often disappear, which can lead to a sense of isolation.

For example, the summer months can be a time when kids watch more television, spend less time in conversation, and are more socially isolated. Researchers have consistently found that watching excess television can be associated with increased boredom, higher levels of alienation, and lower levels of challenge, positive affect, and the ability to concentrate.[5]

Physical Health, Exercise, and Good Nutrition

While all of us would like to believe that summers are a time in which warmer weather and longer days allow children to increase their physical activity, the reality is that for many children, summers are time without daily exercise. In fact, researchers have discovered that summer can be a particularly unhealthy time of year for many children.

Poor nutrition and inactivity can lead to weight gain that puts children and youth at risk for health, social, and psychological problems including stigmatization, bullying, and poor self-esteem. All this can have major implications for learning.[6]

Couple this with the fact that many children experience hunger. Six out of seven children who qualify for federally funded meals at school don't have access to meals during the summer.[7] That means only one in seven of the low-income children who rely on school lunch during the school year participated in the summer meals program.

Emerging Data on COVID-19 Learning Loss

There has been widespread consensus that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to far-reaching learning loss, compounded by structural inequities that have kept children of color and those in poverty further behind than their peers from white and affluent families. Research by McKinsey & Company leveraged summer learning loss research and analyzed it to assess the potential impact of the absence of schooling and remote learning caused by COVID-19. McKinsey reported that the shift to remote learning set white students back by one to three months while children of color lost three to five months.[8]

While there has been significant improvement since spring 2020, children of color continue to be more likely to remain remote and less likely to have access to learning tools including devices and connectivity.[9] Likely, this gap will increase as this school year ends. McKinsey's analysis projected that a seven-month learning loss would occur by January 2021. This number rises to nine months for Latinx students and ten months for Black students.[10] John B. King, former education secretary and president of the Education Trust said, "I think we should be very concerned about the risk of a lost generation of students."[11]

Research from the Brookings Institute shows that when comparing students' median percentile rank between fall 2019 and 2020, there is some good news. Children in grades three to eight performed similarly in reading between the years. This may be attributable to the autonomy of older children in reading. However, the news about math learning is grim, with children in 2020 scoring 5 to 10 percentile points lower than same-grade children in 2019.[12]

It's important to take a broad view of summer learning that incorporates a whole child approach, encompassing an understanding of children's physical, social, and emotional well-being. Today we understand that the body and mind are linked, and that daily exercise, good nutrition, and adequate sleep impact children's sense of optimism and self-confidence, their ability to persevere, and their learning.

This summer and next are going to be unlike any other. As an extension of their core commitment to equity, public libraries can play an important role in helping children with learning loss, hunger, and beginning to build resiliency from trauma. Now is the time to assess your library's summer program to ensure it is targeted to help kids in need.

Aaron Dworkin, CEO of the National Summer Learning Association says, "Public libraries are uniquely positioned to help all kids rise and to close these gaps. It's going to take the enormous energy and heart of us all, working together, to make a meaningful difference."[13]

The National Summer Learning Association's Annual Conference, Summer Changes Everything, is scheduled for November 10–13. For more information, visit www.summerlearning.org. &

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Recommended Reading

Comparing Elementary/Middle School Graphic Novel Collections to Recommended Reading Lists

ROBIN A. MOELLER AND KIM E. BECNEL

Booklists created by library and education professionals can be valuable tools for librarians as they develop collections. Based upon the perceived discomfort felt by many school librarians in selecting graphic novels, this research analyzes the extent to which a population of elementary and middle school libraries' collections in the Southeastern United States reflects the lists of recommended graphic novels annually produced by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC).

This study also examines trends among those books that are most and least collected and assesses the extent to which graphic novels that are frequently challenged are added to collections. Findings suggest that most of the books that appear on the ALSC lists are not found in this population of elementary and school libraries.

Given the appropriate resources, school librarians enjoy the exciting, and potentially overwhelming, opportunity to purchase materials for those who patronize the school library. Generally, materials are purchased to support the school's curriculum and to appeal to students' reading interests.

Robin A. Moeller *and* ***Kim E. Becnel*** *are both Associate Professors of Library Science at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina.*

Many school librarians have discovered that graphic novels are the most circulated material in their collections.[1] Gavigan noted, "The explosive growth in the publication of [graphic novels] has made it easier for school librarians to locate quality titles that support the curriculum."[2] Regardless of how easy it is to find certain materials, librarians often struggle to find balance between adhering to professional collection development practices, considering their communities' values, and possibly even their own subjectivity when determining which materials to purchase for their libraries' collections.[3]

The American Library Association's (ALA) interpretation of its own Library Bill of Rights as considered through the lens of the school library notes, "Students and educators served by the school library have access to resources and services free of constraints resulting from personal, partisan, or doctrinal disapproval. School librarians resist efforts by individuals or groups to define what is appropriate for all students or teachers to read, view, hear, or access regardless of technology, formats, or method of delivery."[4] The extent to which school librarians are able to resist those efforts, however, is largely determined by the extent to which they feel supported by their school community.[5]

For some librarians, the visual nature of graphic novels has created a sense of uneasiness, which might stem from what Cary called "the naked buns effect."[6]

"It's the rare student or parent who objects to the words 'naked buns,' but an image of naked buns can set off fireworks."[7] In our previous research, we heard from school librarians who indicated that they were not as familiar or comfortable with developing a graphic novel collection, compared to collections of traditional print materials.[8] Given school librarians' competing priorities of encouraging leisure reading and avoiding criticism from parents and administrators, we wondered to what extent elementary and middle school librarians were collecting graphic novels for their collections.

Conceptual Framework

The importance of visual literacy in education is becoming more established as technology becomes increasingly prevalent in students' lives. Educators have realized that literacy no longer includes traditional text alone, but that students encounter different modes of information in their day-to-day reading.

As such, it is imperative that school libraries provide opportunities for students to engage with various types of literacies, including visual. As Samet stated, "Even for strong readers proficient in English, visual materials promote representational (symbolic) learning, or what we refer to as 'visual literacy.' If a picture is worth a thousand words, as the saying goes, how much are graphic novels worth to students?"[9]

Friese noted that the inclusion of popular culture texts into the school library's collection reflects the librarian's understanding and response to the interests of students. It also provides support for new and traditional literacies.[10] Various studies have demonstrated the potential that graphic novels have for reading enjoyment,[11] intrinsic reading motivation,[12] literacy engagement,[13] reading comprehension,[14] and vocabulary development.[15]

Other research has uncovered additional educational advantages of student engagement in visual literacy. Boerman-Cornell found that second, third, and fourth graders' readings of graphic novels suggested that the students drew meaning from the format's use of intersection of word and image, which helped engage the students in interpretive activity and had the potential to encourage critical thought.[16] Sloboda, Brenna, and Kosowan-Kirk, working with students from grades 5 and 6 who needed reading remediation, used reading comprehension strategies with graphic novels to help students become more active and avid readers—readers who focused on their reading while other distractions were occurring.[17]

Likewise, Brenna found that the more that a group of fourth grade students became fluent in graphic novel reading, the more interested they were in reading graphic novels, including those students who had been previously identified as reluctant readers.[18] It is clear from this body of research that graphic novels are able to serve the interest and educational needs of students as they move through a multimodal world of information.

Literature Review

The market for graphic novels, particularly for youth, has grown exponentially in the past decade. Graphic novels have become such an important factor in the publishing market that many major houses now have their own graphic novel imprints. Imprints that publish graphic novels for youth, such as First Second, Toon Books, Graphix, and Papercutz, have experienced financial growth,[19] and the general market for graphic novels sales in North America has grown from about $805 million in sales in 2012 to more than $1 billion in 2017.[20]

Not only are graphic novels in demand for casual reading, but the Common Core State Standards also prescribe the use of graphic novels in the reading curriculum, specifically in analyzing visual images and comprehending meaning from combinations of visuals and text.[21]

The pleasure reading and curricular interest in graphic novels have been reflected in school library collections. Gavigan found that the school library graphic novel collections included in her study were small but the high graphic novel circulation was much larger than holdings suggested.[22] Similarly, the authors found that high patron demand placed considerable pressure on librarians to purchase more graphic novels for their collections.[23]

Added to traditional considerations that librarians keep in mind during material selection are selection criteria developed for graphic novel selection by Lavin[24] and Griffith,[25] which ask the selector to pay close attention to the artistic and visual literacy elements of the books. Our own research,[26] which examined elementary and middle school librarians' collection development practices, found that many librarians felt the process of graphic novel selection was very different from that of selecting traditional texts, and that their unfamiliarity with the genre led them to be less engaged in staying abreast of popular and quality graphic novel titles, authors, and trends.

Research suggests that school librarians rely primarily on professional journals, online resources, vendor catalogs, and patron recommendations to make selection decisions.[27] For example, in Gavigan's investigation of the graphic novel collections of six middle schools, she found that "recommendations by students and faculty played a significant role in purchasing decisions."[28]

What is lacking in the research is an examination of the extent to which school librarians utilize recommended booklists produced by professional associations such as ALSC or the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) to aid selection.

School community stakeholder misgivings about graphic novels may also make the collection development process more difficult. A bias against graphic novels, compared to traditional texts, has been found in research with preservice teachers,[29] teachers,[30] and parents and students.[31] It is reasonable to presume that school librarians may struggle with selecting materials with which they are unfamiliar, understanding that their school communities may not readily accept the educational legitimacy of those materials, despite the interest in those materials shown by their students. Recognizing that many school librarians may experience this kind of tension, we framed four research questions:

1. How does a population of elementary and middle school libraries' graphic novel collections in the Southeastern United States reflect a list of recommended graphic novels produced by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)?

2. Which books are most included in these school library collections? Which are least included?

3. Are there any patterns for those books that are and are not collected?

4. Are frequently challenged books less likely to be collected in these libraries?

Methods

Of the resources elementary and middle school librarians might use as a selection tool in developing their graphic novel collections, ALSC annual lists of recommended graphic novels is one of the most well-known, credible, and readily-available options. Every July, ALSC publishes three lists of recommended graphic novels: grades K–2, grades 3–5, and grades 6–8.[32]

These lists include "classics as well as new titles that have been widely recommended and well-reviewed, and books that have popular appeal as well as critical acclaim."[33] For this study, we combined the grades K–2 and grades 3–5 lists from 2018 into one larger list to represent elementary school selections, since these are the grades most commonly served in elementary schools in the United States. The combined list included fifty-eight titles, while the grades 6–8 "middle school list" included thirty-one titles.

Because most school library catalogs are not available for public viewing online, we reached out to school librarians and asked them directly how their collections matched the lists of recommended books.

Using convenience sampling, the two booklists were distributed in January 2019 to school librarians through Facebook and state school librarians' association listservs in the Southeastern portion of the United States. Our recruitment message read, "We are looking for school librarians who would be willing to help us in a research project. Specifically, we would like to understand if you have added specific graphic novels to your collection, where those graphic novels are housed, and the extent to which they are made available to students for checkout." All participants were asked to compare the relevant lists of graphic novels to their collections. Eighty-one school librarians responded to the elementary list survey, and fifty school librarians responded to the middle school list survey.

In our analysis, we examined how many recommended graphic novel titles each library had based on the responses to the elementary or middle school list. We also cross-tabulated the titles on the ALSC lists with those featured on the ALA's list of frequently challenged books to determine the frequency with which challenged books are collected.[34]

To determine if there were potential patterns in the most and least collected graphic novels, we analyzed the top 30 percent and bottom 30 percent of the results, looking specifically at the following characteristics of each book:

- Publisher
- Copyright date
- Library of Congress subject headings
- Popularity and familiarity of the author
- Gender of the protagonist(s)
- Whether the book was printed in color or black and white
- Whether the book had received any awards
- Additional information provided by professional book review sources and the publisher's description of the books

We defined "popular" as those books that were bestsellers or written by authors of other bestselling books for these age groups that children and school librarians may readily recognize, such as Dav Pilkey, Shannon Hale, and Raina Telgemeier. These characteristics are freely available and were identified as elements that may inform a school librarian's purchase decision.

Limitation

In this research, we relied on school librarians to have accurately reported on their holdings. The school librarians who participated in this study reported only on the titles we asked about. Since they were not asked to indicate what other graphic novels their collections held or to describe their overall collections, we cannot consider the samples in context of a library's full collection.

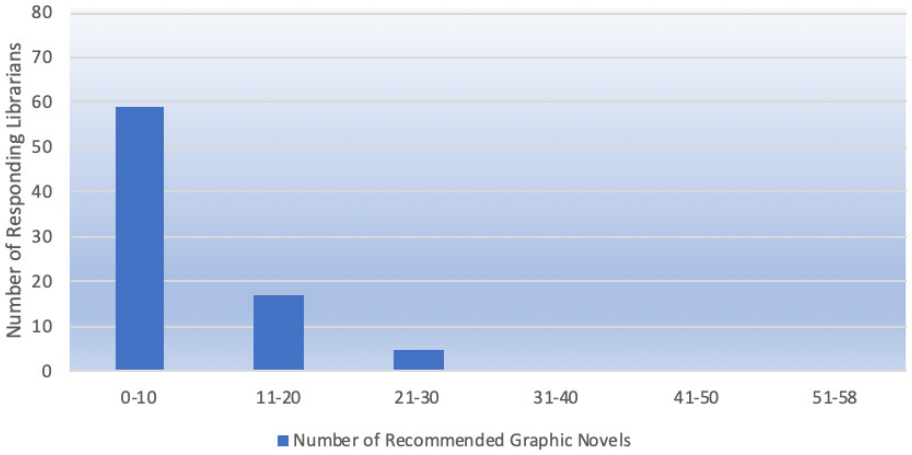


Figure 1. Elementary school library holdings of recommended 2018 ALSC-recommended graphic novel titles.

Although most states in this region require that practicing school librarians hold a master's degree in library science, the education of the reporting librarians in this study was not ascertained. This research is also limited to the responses of school librarians in the Southeastern portion of the United States and may or may not represent those of school librarians in other portions of the country; however, the questions asked of this research are relevant for any elementary school library collection. Additionally, the suggested reading ages of ALA's frequently challenged children's booklist is older than the suggested reading ages of the ALSC list; the former may not precisely reflect the extent to which books on the ALSC list are currently challenged.

Findings

How the Collections Reflect the Lists of Recommended Graphic Novels

Of the eighty-one elementary school librarians who responded to the survey that contained the list of ALSC recommended books for elementary-aged children, none of their libraries held all the recommended titles. Sixty-eight percent of the libraries had between zero to ten titles, less than a quarter of the libraries had eleven to twenty titles, and just 6 percent of libraries had between twenty-one and thirty of the recommended titles in their libraries (see figure 1).

The figures for middle school library holdings show very similar results, with 68 percent of the fifty participating librarians having zero to ten of the thirty-one recommended titles in their collections, about a quarter of libraries having eleven to twenty recommended titles, and 8 percent of libraries having twenty-one to thirty-one titles (see figure 2).

The Most and Least Collected Graphic Novels

Regarding which books were collected most frequently, the elementary school libraries' top five included *Dog Man*, *El Deafo*, *Sisters*, *Super Narwhal and Jelly Jolt*, and *Real Friends*. What's most notable in these top five selections, however, is the fact that the most collected book, *Dog Man*, was found in 96 percent (77) of the responding libraries, while the fifth most collected book, *Real Friends,* was found in only 40 percent (32) of the responding libraries. That means that only four titles (7 percent) of the total fifty-eight are found in at least 50 percent of libraries. Of the thirty titles that are held by the fewest libraries, none was held by more than two school libraries (4 percent of the sample).

As with the elementary school library collection results, the middle school library results reflected popular titles in the majority of graphic novels selected for collections. The top five titles include *Drama*; *Swing It, Sonny; All's Faire in Middle School; Awkward;* and *Anya's Ghost*. The results of the participants' responses suggest that seven (23 percent) of the thirty-one recommended graphic novels were held in at least 50 percent of the responding libraries. Within the data set represented the least collected items (the bottom 30 percent, or eighteen items), no library had more than six (19.35 percent) of ALSC's recommended middle school-aged graphic novels.

Patterns Apparent in the Most and Least Collected Graphic Novels

The strongest trend in the data seemed to be that in both elementary and middle school libraries, items by established and popular authors are acquired more frequently than those by new or less well-known authors. In the elementary data set, one-third of the items in the least collected list were authored

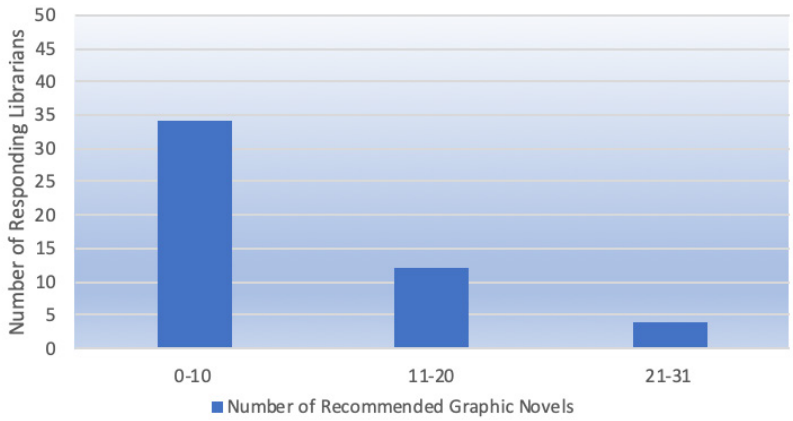


Figure 2. Middle school library holdings of recommended 2018 ALSC graphic novel titles.

by new authors, while the remaining two-thirds were produced by established authors. In the most collected data set, only one item was written by a new or less well-known author, with the remaining items associated with established and/or popular writers. In the middle school data set, all of the items in the most collected list were written by solidly established and/or popular authors, while only one of the ten least collected items was authored by a popular or established writer. Those items identified as "popular" were 48 percent of the middle school data set and 19 percent of the elementary school data set.

A few less significant trends were also observed. In the elementary school library list, the set of most collected titles included slightly more companion or series titles (eleven items; 61 percent) than did the least collected list (seven items; 39 percent). The gender configuration of main characters was a bit different as well, with the most collected list including four items with female protagonists only, nine items with male protagonists only, and five items with both male and female main characters. In comparison, the least collected list includes seven books with female protagonists, eight with male protagonists, and two with female and male protagonists. This suggests that elementary school libraries are slightly more likely to collect items that feature male or a combination of male and female main characters than they are to collect titles that feature female protagonists only.

In the middle school data set, slightly more items in the most collected list (three items; 30 percent) had earned a starred review from a major professional publication than those in the least collected list (zero). Also interesting to note is that the most collected list included just one nonfiction title (10 percent), while the least collected list included three nonfiction selections (30 percent).

No discernable patterns or trends were found in either the elementary or middle school data set based on publisher, copyright date, awards given, or whether the book was printed in color or black and white, suggesting that these characteristics do not strongly influence selection.

The Collection of Frequently Challenged Graphic Novels

The only two graphic novels from the ALSC recommended lists found on the ALA lists of most frequently challenged children's books were *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier and *This One Summer* by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki.

Drama was identified as the fifth most challenged book in 2018 for "including LGBTQIA+ characters and themes."[35] This book was also awarded the 2013 Stonewall Book Award "for exceptional merit relating to the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender experience."[36] *Drama* was the most frequently found graphic novel in middle school library collections, included in forty-two (84 percent) of the responding middle school libraries.

The other frequently challenged book in this sample, *This One Summer*, was identified as being a "frequently challenged book with diverse content,"[37] and it was the seventh most challenged book in 2018 for reasons related to "profanity, sexual references, and certain illustrations."[38] *This One Summer* was also the recipient of the 2015 Caldecott Honor.[39] This book was found in only seven (14 percent) of the middle school libraries from our population.

Discussion and Implications

Our first research question asked how a population of elementary and middle school libraries' graphic novel collections in the Southeastern United States reflect a list of recommended graphic novels produced by ALSC? The data suggests that library collections in this population did not closely reflect the ALSC lists. In fact, 68 percent of elementary libraries and 68 percent of middle school libraries held zero to ten titles in their libraries' collections.

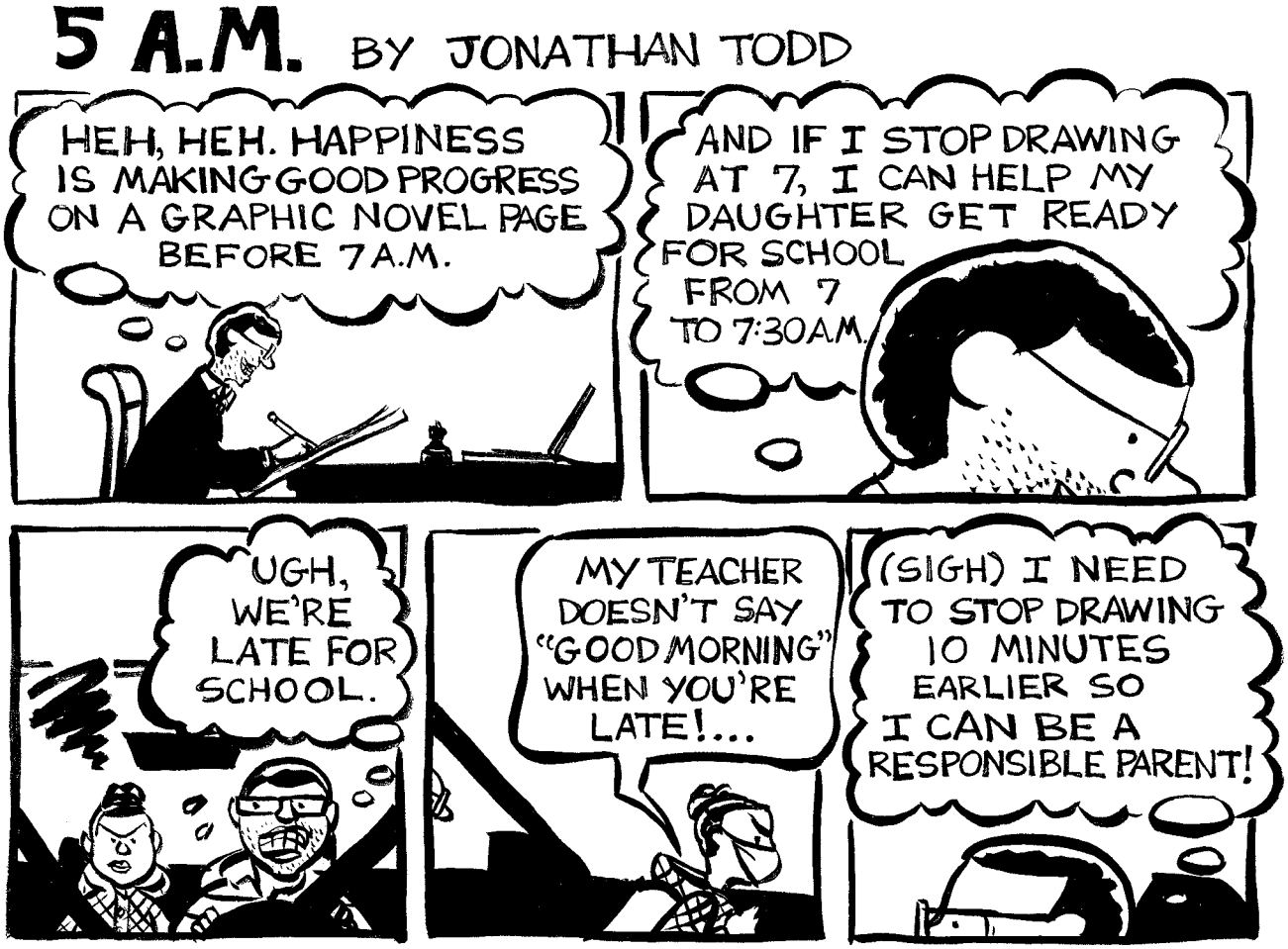
Next, we examined which graphic novels were most and least included in these school library collections. Best-selling graphic novels such as *Dog Man*[40] and *Dram,*[41] were among the most collected graphic novels. Best-selling titles are neither difficult to identify nor locate, so the fact that these are among the most collected graphic novels neither confirms nor refutes the idea that librarians are using the ALSC lists.

Also, literature suggests that patron recommendations are a top consideration in selection, so titles of which students are aware and want to read, such as best sellers, are understandably purchased more frequently.[42]

With just two books to consider, *Drama* and *This One Summer,* it's difficult to answer the research question focused on whether frequently challenged books are less likely to be collected than other similar titles. The popularity of Telgemeier's other graphic novels for youth may have led to the inclusion of *Drama* in more collections. School librarians might be relying not only on the author's popularity, but also on the fact that the items they already own by Telgemeier have had relatively high circulation and no complaints or challenges.

Generally speaking, popularity may have held more sway in selection than consideration of a book winning an award, like the Caldecott Honor. Indeed, author popularity was a prevailing factor that emerged in our analysis of patterns in the most and least collection graphic novels, with popular and established authors' books appearing frequently in the most collected graphic novels for both elementary and middle school data sets.

Our overall findings suggest that elementary and middle school library collections in this population do not reflect the ALSC lists of recommended graphic novels. Their selection sources—students, teachers, online resources, professional



reviews, or vendor catalogs—do not seem to provide the same recommendations as the ALSC lists.

Alternatively, these libraries have not used any professional selection tools for graphic novels at all because they have not had a budget that allowed them to add many, or any, graphic novels to their collections or they have added only those items specifically requested by students or teachers. Similar research that examines this issue in school libraries in other geographic locations would help develop a clearer picture to prove or disprove these findings.

In discussing the reasons for a particular graphic novel being banned at a high school, Mastricolo described a lack of professional reviews as "a common problem graphic novels face."[43] Whether because of a lack of sufficient professional reviews or librarians' uncertainty about how to locate and use these reviews, librarians seem to find selecting graphic novels a challenge.

Use of the ALSC lists may help librarians find less popular but high-quality, high-interest graphic novels which, once added, would help to balance a library collection intended to appeal to the interest and curricular needs of students and teachers. Further research is required to understand the extent to which school librarians are familiar with ALA-associated lists, like those developed by the ALSC.

Perhaps library science master degree programs need to make a more concerted effort to introduce these lists to students as resources for quality collection development selections. Conducting similar research that examines the extent to which traditional book and audiobook lists are utilized as well as the role of ALA-associated book lists in librarians' collection development decisions may be helpful for ALA to determine if and how it might better market these tools to school librarians. &

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PEER-REVIEWED

Drag Queen Storytimes

Public Library Staff Perceptions and Experiences

SARAH BARRIAGE, VANESSA KITZIE, DIANA FLOEGEL, AND SHANNON M. OLTMANN

Since their first appearances in public libraries, drag queen storytimes[1] (DQS) have frequently been featured in news stories and professional literature. These events feature drag performers leading various aspects of otherwise typical storytimes, including reading books, singing songs, and leading crafts and other activities with young children and their families.

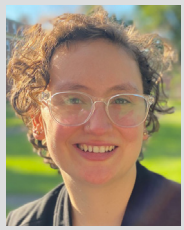
Michelle Tea and RADAR Productions are credited with initiating this phenomenon with the establishment of Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH) in 2015.[2] Since then, similar events, often but not always under the DQSH umbrella, have been held in bookstores, schools, museums, and public libraries across the country and beyond.[3]

According to the DQSH website, these events "[celebrate] learning and play, encouraging kids to celebrate gender diversity and all kinds of difference, while building confidence in expressing themselves."[4] Library staff who have hosted DQS view them as providing representative and inclusive programs for "rainbow families" (families with LGBTQ+ parents/caregivers and/or children), as well as encouraging diversity, acceptance, gender creativity, and individuality.[5]

Unlike other children's programs in public libraries, DQS have garnered significant amounts of attention from individual patrons, community groups, local politicians, and the media. This attention ranges from strong support to vehement opposition, sometimes within the same community.[6]

Given the potential benefits of these programs and the protests they can spur, it is imperative to better understand whether, how, and why they are implemented in libraries, as well as how library staff perceive them. DQS function as an important context that contributes to literature on the relationship between libraries and LGBTQ+ communities, given that said relationship has historically been fraught.[7] Understanding library staff motivations for and perceptions of hosting DQS also provides insight into larger conversations about the field's values, power, and decision-making, such as whether libraries can or should be neutral.[8]



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While some professional and scholarly works have addressed DQS,[9] they have focused almost exclusively on libraries that have hosted or have planned to host such programs. Missing are the accounts of those who have not hosted DQS, including those who may have considered but ultimately decided not to host a DQS event.

Current Study

This study explored public library staff perceptions of and experiences with DQS, including those who work at libraries that have and have not hosted DQS in the past.

Data Collection

We developed a survey with both closed and open-ended questions to capture library staff experiences with and perceptions of DQS. We piloted the survey with a small group of participants to test its reliability and revised as needed before dissemination. We collected data via Qualtrics, an online survey tool.

We engaged in a two-prong recruitment strategy. The first prong was a stratified random sample of three public libraries in each US state and territory. To collect email addresses for the survey invitation, we conducted stratified random sampling on a list of public libraries inventoried by the most recent IMLS Public Libraries Survey.[10] We then located the library websites for each selected institution and identified the email address of either a children's librarian or the director if the former was not available.

In case email recipients were not actually involved in their libraries' children's services, we asked them to forward the recruitment email to appropriate library staff members. We determined that three libraries per state was an appropriate recruitment number based on study time constraints. We also recruited participants purposively by email invitations sent to professional and institutional listservs, including those affiliated with the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), Intellectual Freedom Roundtable, and the Public Library Association (PLA).

The survey was open for responses for two weeks in August–September 2019.

Data Analysis

Once the survey closed, we imported the data into Excel and generated pivot tables summing responses across question categories for closed-response questions. We then performed statistical tests to determine whether responses varied among respondents from institutions that have hosted DQS and those that have not hosted DQS. If we found a significant variation, we also determined the magnitude of the variation.[11]

We analyzed qualitative responses to open-ended survey questions using the constant comparative method, progressing from open to focused coding.[12] We engaged in peer debriefing to increase the trustworthiness of our analyses.[13]

Participants

Four hundred and fifty-eight library staff members responded to the survey. Respondents were primarily middle-aged, ages 31–50 (n = 260, 57%) and 51 or over (n = 109, 24%). Almost three-quarters of participants reported having very liberal (n = 211, 45%) and liberal (n = 124, 27%) personal political views. While slightly more than half of participants did not consider themselves to be LGBTQ+ (n = 234, 51%), a significant minority identified as LGBTQ+ (n = 149, 33%) or unsure (n = 44, 9%). Respondents represented all major regions of the US, with respondents' libraries located in the Northeastern (n = 180, 39%), Midwestern (n = 100, 22%), Western (n = 110, 24%), and Southern (n = 54, 12%) US regions. Five (1%) respondents were from Canada. Two participants (>1%) did not respond and seven (2%) preferred not to answer.

Nearly half of respondents (49%) indicated that they worked directly in children's services, either in staff or supervisory positions, and 13% of respondents indicated that they worked in library administration. Most respondents reported being in a position to make programming decisions for their library (n = 387, 84%).

Key Findings

The majority of respondents work at a library that has not hosted a DQS in the past (n = 341, 74%; referred to hereafter as "non-hosts"), and the remaining 117 respondents (26%) work at a library that has hosted at least one DQS event (referred to hereafter as "hosts"). Included among the non-hosts are five respondents who noted that their libraries were currently in the planning stages of their first DQS and four respondents who reported that their library had "scheduled a DQSH, but it was canceled due to complaints."

Most respondents (n = 447, 98%) indicated previously seeing news stories about DQS. Exposure to news stories did not significantly differ between hosts (n = 115, 98%) and non-hosts (n = 332, 97%).

Of all respondents, 125 (37%) indicated personally attending a DQS. There was a significant difference between hosts and non-hosts, with a greater number of hosts reporting personally attending a DQS (n = 100, 85%) than non-hosts (n = 25, 7%). This difference is likely due in part to the fact that many hosts attended the DQS that was held at their own libraries.

Hosts' Experiences

Frequency of DQS

Half of hosts indicated their library hosted a one-time DQS event (n = 59, 50%). Thirteen respondents (11%) reported that their libraries hosted DQS annually, eleven respondents (9%) reported that they host DQS multiple times a year, four respondents (3%) reported that their libraries host DQS monthly, and one respondent (1%) reported that their library hosts DQS every other week. Eighteen respondents (15%) reported that their libraries have hosted DQS multiple times, though not always on a set schedule and sometimes as "an occasional 'special' program." Four respondents (3%) indicated that their library has hosted DQS once at multiple branches of their library systems. Six respondents (5%) reported that their library has hosted DQS once but has plans to do so again in the future. In addition to reporting the frequency with which their libraries have hosted DQS, five respondents noted that their library hosts DQS in conjunction with Pride month.

Initiators of DQS

In most cases, library staff initiated the storytime held at respondents' libraries (n = 90, 74%), followed by local LGBTQ+ organizations (n = 20, 16%), and national organizations like DQSH (n = 7, 6%). Others reported to have initiated DQS include library patrons (n = 3), local politicians (n = 3), individual drag performers from the community (n = 2), a local organization (n = 1), and library administration (n = 1). Six respondents were unsure who had initiated the DQS at their library.

Funding of DQS

Over half of hosts (n = 63, 54%) indicated that they did not receive financial support for DQS. Twenty-six percent of hosts (n = 31) reported receiving financial support, and 20% (n = 24) reported being unsure if their institution received such support. The most commonly reported source of financial support was the library's Friends of the Library group (n = 17), followed by private donations (n = 8), grant funding (n = 3), local government (n = 2) or organizations (n = 2), and the DQSH organization (n = 1). Only five respondents indicated that their DQS was supported by their programming or library budget.

Most hosts (n = 91, 78%) reported that their libraries did not face financial barriers to hosting DQS or were unsure about these barriers (n = 18, 15%). Only eight hosts (7%) reported that their libraries faced financial barriers. Seven respondents reported budgetary constraints as a barrier, with one respondent noting, "There is only so much programming money. Hosting drag queen storytime more often would reduce other offerings." Four respondents reported concerns about using "tax dollars to pay for the program."

Promotion of DQS

Almost all (94%) hosts reported that their libraries promoted the event. In an open-ended question, hosts were asked to describe the ways in which their libraries promoted DQS. The most common methods of promotion included print flyers, posters, bookmarks, and brochures (n = 75, 68%); social media (n = 73, 66%); library calendar (n = 37, 34%); library website (n = 39, 35%); library newsletter (n = 22, 20%); word of mouth (n = 14, 13%), and local media (n = 12; 11%).

Several hosts noted that they promoted DQS "the same way that all of our programs are promoted." Other hosts articulated differences due to anticipated and/or experienced reactions. For example, one respondent noted, "We did not put our event on our social media pages, as that was how local protest groups found similar events in our area to protest." Another reported that their library promoted the event "briefly on Facebook (until online pushback caused us to stop promoting the events there)."

One respondent noted that community backlash actually helped promote the event at their library. "The library director was interviewed by several local news outlets, and protest groups (unwittingly) spread the news further."

Support for DQS

Hosts indicated a variety of ways in which their libraries provided support for DQS. Nearly all hosts provided a room/reading space for the event (n = 116, 99%) as well as publicity/advertising (n = 110, 94%). Other common types of support included physical books that were read during storytime (n = 91, 78%), suggestions for books to be read during storytime (n = 82, 70%), financial compensation for the performer who led storytime (n = 76, 65%), suggestions for activities (songs, crafts, etc.) to be used during storytime (n = 73, 62%), materials needed for activities that were used during storytime (n = 71, 61%), security in and/or around the library during the storytime (n = 50, 43%), and tips or training for performers on storytime best practices (n = 50, 43%).

In addition, several hosts noted that drag performers did not have total responsibility for the events held at their libraries. Four respondents stated that library staff helped in leading the DQS along with the drag performers, and six respondents reported library staff involvement in planning the events.

Three respondents reported that the drag performers who lead storytime at their libraries did not need training from library staff due to their preexisting knowledge and experiences. One respondent noted that "Our queen has a background in early childhood education/literacy," while another said, "Our queens were elementary school teachers and did not need 'training'."

Non-hosts' Experiences

Contacted about Hosting

Among non-hosts, more than half reported never being contacted about hosting DQS (n = 191, 56%), while 28% (n = 94) of non-hosts were unsure whether their library had been contacted. Sixteen percent (n = 53) of non-hosts reported that their libraries had been contacted about hosting a DQS, specifically by local LGBTQ+ organizations (n = 14), library patrons (n = 9), national organizations such as DQSH (n = 4), community members (n = 4), drag performers (n = 7), staff from their own and other libraries (n = 7), as well as the state library (n = 1). It is important to note that not all non-hosts were contacted by those in support of DQS. For example, one respondent reported being contacted by a community member who was opposed to the library holding a DQS, and one respondent reported being contacted by a conservative group who was also opposed.

Financial Supports and Barriers

Non-hosts were asked if they had been offered financial support for DQS. Most (n = 239, 71%) reported not being offered support, 27% (n = 93) reported being unsure as to whether their institution had been offered this support, and 2% (n = 7) indicated being offered support. Such support was reported to have been offered by potential performers (n = 3), Friends of the Library groups (n = 2), private donations (n = 1), and a local LGBT+ organization (n = 1).

Most non-host respondents reported that their institutions do not face financial barriers to hosting DQS (n = 229, 68%) or reported being unsure as to whether their institutions faced these barriers (n = 80, 24%). Only thirty respondents (9%) indicated that their library faces financial barriers to hosting DQS. The most frequently reported barrier was budgetary constraints (n = 20). Other barriers included administrative resistance (n = 5), lack of grant funding (n = 3), and concerns related to using tax dollars for what some perceived as "programming that is seen as condoning an alternative lifestyle" (n = 1).

Likelihood of Future Hosting

When asked if they thought their library was likely to host a DQS in the future, more than half of non-hosts either indicated that this was unlikely (n = 89, 27%) or extremely unlikely (n = 83, 25%). Almost one-third of non-hosts reported their library being neither likely nor unlikely to host a DQS event (n = 96, 29%). A small number of non-hosts reported feeling that their library was likely (n = 47, 14%) or extremely likely (n = 20, 6%) to host a DQS in the future.

Perceptions of DQS

We asked all respondents a variety of questions to gauge their perceptions of DQS and the intersection of LGBTQ+ issues and libraries. In this section, we compare responses between hosts and non-hosts based on whether there is a statistically significant difference between responses, as well as the size of this difference, which is referred to as an "effect size" and can be small, moderate, or large. The larger the effect size, the bigger the difference between host and non-host responses.

Stakeholder Support

Respondents were asked to indicate how supportive they felt the following stakeholders in their library's location were of DQS: library staff, library administration, library board of trustees, community members, local government, and local religious organizations. Response categories participants could choose from were "not at all supportive," "somewhat supportive," "moderately supportive," "very supportive," "extremely supportive," and "not sure". The majority of responses (defined as more than half of responses) by both hosts and non-hosts indicated that library staff, library administration, and the surrounding community ranged from being "moderately supportive" to "extremely supportive" of DQS. Perceptions of support from board of trustees, local government, and local religious organizations were mixed.

These mixed responses could be explained when comparing host and non-host responses. For all response items save "moderately supportive" and "not sure," significant differences with moderate effect sizes were present across all stakeholder groups. Specifically, non-hosts typically reported a perceived lack of support from stakeholders across the board, while hosts reported that all stakeholder categories with the exception of religious organizations were very to extremely supportive. The proportion of hosts and non-hosts reporting each stakeholder group as "moderately supportive" did not vary across respondents for all stakeholder categories with the exception of local government and religious organizations. When it comes to these two stakeholder groups, both hosts and non-hosts reported low levels of support, with hosts indicating slightly larger levels of moderate support or being uncertain of support levels.

Alignment with Library Mission

Respondents were asked if they think DQS align with their library's mission and values and with other programs and services offered by their library. Response categories for this and subsequent questions were "strongly disagree," "disagree," "agree," "strongly agree," and "undecided." The majority of respondents from each group agreed or strongly agreed that DQS aligned with their libraries' mission and values and with their libraries' other programs and services. However, this agreement varied between hosts and non-hosts. There was a significant difference with a large effect size between respondents who strongly agreed to both questions, with hosts more often reporting strong agreement as compared to non-hosts. However, non-hosts still agreed with both statements, which suggests that differences in agreement varied only slightly by degree. In other words, both groups agreed with the statement, but hosts tended to strongly agree whereas non-hosts tended to agree.

Among both groups, there also were significant differences with moderate effect sizes among respondents disagreeing with both survey items. Specifically, non-hosts more often disagreed with both statements as compared to hosts. For the question that asked whether DQS aligned with the library's mission and values, there was a significant difference with a moderate effect size between non-hosts and hosts regarding being "undecided," with non-hosts more often reporting this indecision.

Library Safety and Budget

Next, respondents were asked if they think DQS affect library safety and are feasible within the library budget. Perceptions regarding library safety were mixed among both groups; there were no significant differences in the number of respondents when comparing hosts and non-hosts. The majority of respondents across both categories either strongly agreed or agreed that DQS was feasible within the library budget. There were significant differences with moderate effect sizes among hosts, who more often indicated strong agreement regarding budget feasibility and indicated less indecision of whether DQS was feasible within the library budget as compared to non-hosts.

Community

The next series of questions addressed respondents' perceptions of DQS among their communities. Specifically, respondents were asked if they perceive DQS as: aligned with their community's demographics; supported by their community; and reflective of mainstream religious beliefs of their community. In all cases, responses to categories were mixed.

The majority of responses to the question regarding community demographics from both groups indicated indecision. However, responses exhibited significant variation with moderate to large effect sizes across responses from hosts and non-hosts. Specifically, hosts more often indicated strong agreement and agreement to this question, whereas non-hosts more often reported strong disagreement, disagreement, and indecision.

There are significant differences among all responses for hosts and non-hosts regarding whether DQS reflects the mainstream religious beliefs of their communities. Moderate to large effect sizes denote that non-hosts more often disagree and strongly disagree with the statement, while hosts are more likely to agree. A small effect size is present for the difference in strong agreement with this survey item; however, the n-values or number of responses in this category are small (under 10) for both hosts and non-hosts. There is also a moderate effect size in the difference between undecided responses; specifically, hosts express more indecision than non-hosts.

Both hosts and non-hosts express similar rates of indecision related to whether DQS reflects the mainstream political ideology of their communities. However, all other survey items indicate significant differences in the amount of responses with moderate to large effect sizes. Namely, hosts more often strongly agree or agree with this statement, while non-hosts more often disagree or strongly disagree.

Child Development

The next series of questions asked respondents for their perceptions of the relationship between DQS and child development. The majority of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed that DQS supports healthy child development and positively influences children's understanding of gender and/or sexuality; however, there were significant differences with small to moderate effect sizes between hosts and non-hosts.

Specifically, there was a moderate difference between hosts who strongly agreed that DQS positively influences children's understanding of gender and/or sexuality and supports healthy child development as compared to non-hosts. Non-hosts instead had a slightly higher likelihood of either

disagreeing, strongly disagreeing, or exhibiting indecision with both statements.

Social Inclusion, Diversity, and Acceptance

The next question asked respondents for their perceptions as to whether DQS encouraged social inclusion, diversity, and acceptance. Most respondents either strongly agreed or agreed. There was a significant difference with a moderate effect size between hosts and non-hosts, with hosts more likely to indicate strong agreement with this statement than non-hosts. However, non-hosts indicated agreement with the statement slightly more than hosts, suggesting that both responses across both categories exhibited agreement, but that it varied in degree from agreement (non-hosts) to strong agreement (hosts). There were significant differences with small effect sizes among non-hosts and hosts in responses exhibiting disagreement or indecision—with non-hosts slightly more likely to report both.

Intellectual Freedom

The next question asked respondents for their perceptions as to whether DQS support intellectual freedom. The majority of all respondents reported strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement. Significant differences with large and moderate effect sizes were present and reflected degree of agreement, with non-hosts tending to agree with the statement as compared to hosts, who indicated strong agreement. There were also significant differences with small effect sizes among the proportion of responses indicating disagreement and indecision to the question, with non-hosts more often indicating both. However, the overall proportion of responses indicating disagreement and indecision across both groups were relatively low as compared to those indicating agreement and strong agreement.

LGBTQ+ Inclusive Spaces, Collections, and Services

A final series of questions asked respondents to indicate their degree of comfort offering a variety of spaces, collections, and services that are LGBTQ+ inclusive. Response categories were "uncomfortable, and would not do it," "uncomfortable, but would do it," "moderately comfortable," "comfortable," and "not sure."

The majority of respondents across both categories indicated feeling comfortable engaging in the following activities: adding materials to their children's collection containing positive representation of LGBTQ+ topics, letting an LGBTQ+ organization hold a meeting at the library, and addressing a reference request from a child pertaining to or discussing LGBTQ+ content in a way that supports LGBTQ+ communities. In each case, there was a significant difference with a small effect size between reported feelings of comfort, with hosts slightly more likely to indicate comfort with each activity. The two questions dealing with children also exhibited significant differences with small effect sizes in the proportion of "uncomfortable, but would do it" responses, with this response more common among non-hosts.

Most respondents also indicated feeling comfortable having an affirmative LGBTQ+ book display in the children's section and letting drag performers rent meeting space to put on a DQS at the library. However, the distribution of these responses was more variable when comparing hosts and non-hosts. For both items, there was a significant difference with moderate effect size between the larger proportion of responses indicating comfort with the aforementioned activities among hosts as compared to non-hosts. For the survey item related to having an affirmative LGBTQ+ book display in the children's section, there was a significant difference with a small effect size between non-hosts reporting being moderately comfortable with the activity or uncomfortable and not engaging in this activity.

For the survey item related to letting drag queens use library meeting space to host a DQS,[14] responses were mixed among non-hosts. Specifically, the proportion of responses from this group indicating moderate comfort, being unsure, being uncomfortable but willing to do it, and being uncomfortable and unwilling to do it, were slightly higher, as evidenced by a significant difference with a small effect size, when compared to host responses.

The lowest response rates indicating comfort across both groups were for the following activities: hosting and/or sponsoring a DQS at the library and promoting and/or marketing DQS. Still, slightly over half of all respondents indicated being comfortable with both activities. However, there were variations between hosts and non-hosts. Specifically, hosts indicated that they felt more comfortable putting on a DQS, while non-hosts more frequently reported feeling discomfort or unwillingness to host. Similarly, hosts reported feeling more comfortable with promoting and/or marketing DQS than non-hosts. Non-hosts more often indicated that they felt discomfort and subsequent unwillingness to promote and/or market a DQS.

For Further Discussion

The results address our research aim to investigate public library staff experiences with and perceptions of DQS by offering several important observations, areas for future work, and emergent suggestions for public libraries currently or considering hosting DQS.

Library Staff Experiences with DQS

First, findings demonstrate that most respondents do not have experience hosting or attending a DQS. This large representation of non-hosts, who comprised 74 percent of all respondents, represents a major contribution of this study to the literature on DQS, which has centered on host experiences

and perspectives. Despite most respondents reporting not hosting or attending a DQS, awareness seems to be high as evidenced by almost all respondents having seen news stories about the event. Therefore, one avenue for future work is to explore possible connections between exposure to DQS media and perceptions of DQS. Further, 20 percent of non-hosts indicated a strong likelihood of planning a future DQS, indicating a potential need for more work on how to best plan for such an event.

Among hosts, there was a split in responses indicating that DQS was a one-time event versus a more consistent form of programming. This divide in responses may reflect larger perceptions of whether DQS is considered a "trend" or a "fad," or has the potential to be integrated into library storytimes in the long term.

Overwhelmingly DQS was initiated by library staff rather than bodies outside of the library, such as local LGBTQ+ organizations. This was also reflected by non-hosts, who mostly indicated that they were not contacted about hosting a DQS. This finding suggests the importance of library staff perceptions regarding DQS; specifically, if DQS generally is staff-initiated, then it is likely that the event will not occur if library staff are not on board. It also denotes the potential for increased collaboration between local LGBTQ+ organizations, national organizations like DQSH, and library staff. Staff may not recognize there is a need for DQS unless they are reaching out to and engaging with LGBTQ+ individuals in their communities.

Perhaps surprisingly, hosts did not report high levels of promoting DQS among local LGBTQ+ organizations, at Pride events, or via word of mouth. Instead, most event promotions came from in-library brochures and social media posts. Given the aim of DQS to include "rainbow families," and some respondents' qualitative reports of unwanted social media visibility, one suggestion would be to enhance targeted promotion efforts within local LGBTQ+ communities. This targeted promotion ties into the prior suggestion of enhanced outreach and engagement with LGBTQ+ communities during the initial planning stages.

Regarding findings related to library staff experiences with DQS, quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that most host libraries assist drag performers in terms of book and activity suggestions. This finding, coupled with qualitative data describing hosts that work with performers who have experience with early childhood education, suggests that many libraries are centering DQS within established storytime and literacy best practices.

Library Staff Perceptions of DQS

Results show that most respondents (both hosts and non-hosts) are supportive of DQS and, more broadly, LGBTQ+ representation in libraries. This finding is particularly evidenced when survey items allow for differences between "strong agreement" and "agreement" among respondents who have and have not hosted; both groups are often in agreement, though they may vary in the degree of agreement. Such broad support for DQS cannot be generalized to all library staff given the non-representativeness of the survey sample, yet it is nonetheless encouraging to see support for various forms of LGBTQ+ inclusion in libraries as well.

Although we did not specifically ask respondents to indicate or explain the reasons for hosting or not hosting DQS, comparisons between hosts and non-hosts can allow us to identify differences and provide some insight into various factors that may be important considerations when deciding whether to host DQS. Based on the format of our survey, we cannot claim that these factors were causative, but they may be related to such decision-making.

The first salient factor is alignment of DQS with the library's mission and values. While the overwhelming majority of hosts perceived DQS as aligning with their library's mission and values, reports from non-hosts were more fraught with 20 percent reporting indecision. This suggests that clarifying how DQS aligns with the library's mission and values could constitute one of the ways to make the case for DQS, particularly given that non-hosts reported less support from library staff, administration, and the board of trustees for DQS as compared to hosts.

Stakeholder support thus constituted another key difference in perceptions between hosts and non-hosts. Outside of the library, hosts also reported more perceived support from their community for DQS than non-hosting institutions, though it is difficult to know if perceptions of support (or lack thereof) match actual support levels.

In other words, non-hosts may fear a lack of community support where there is, in fact, some such support present. Furthermore, this begs the question of who is included in perceptions of "community," particularly whether LGBTQ+ persons are recognized as members of one's community. For instance, another significant finding is that hosts and non-hosts differed in their perceptions of whether DQS aligned with their community's demographics, religious beliefs, and political ideology. Hosts were more likely to report agreement or strong agreement of this alignment as compared to non-hosts, who were more likely to disagree, strongly disagree, or be undecided. This perceived lack of alignment again may not reflect reality, as it is important to recognize that LGBTQ+ individuals reside in all types of communities, and they may be erased by those who perceive a lack of community support for DQS (though it is also true that not all LGBTQ+ individuals unreservedly support DQS). These observations relate to the need for library outreach and engagement to LGBTQ+ communities in general, as they may have needs that currently go unaddressed or unadvertised by the library.

Interestingly, lack of outreach and engagement to community organizations may also be working in an inverse fashion when it comes to religious organizations. Specifically, hosts report more indecision related to whether DQS is supported by religious organizations, whereas non-hosts report a higher proportion of perceived lack of support. Given the mixed results of this survey item, it would be worthwhile in future research to further tease out the relationship between libraries and religious organizations when it comes to hosting DQS or offering LGBTQ+ services, spaces, and collections more generally.

An additional potential contributing factor to decision-making relates to concerns about the impacts of DQS on child development and perceived comfort and willingness with the respondent's library hosting and promoting DQS. Non-hosts were more likely to disagree, strongly disagree, or be undecided regarding whether DQS supported healthy child development and positively influenced children's understanding of gender and/or sexuality than hosts. However, these concerns were prevalent in a little less than half of respondents, with the other half reporting agreement or strong agreement with both statements. These findings are particularly interesting when coupled with host and non-host reporting of perceived comfort with various LGBTQ+ related services, spaces, and collections geared toward children.

Across both groups, most reported support of these services, spaces, and collections when related to LGBTQ+ topics more generally, but there were significant and large differences in perceived comfort when it came to the library's direct involvement in hosting and promoting DQS, with non-hosts indicating less comfort with these activities. Interestingly, a majority of non-hosts reported agreement or strong agreement with statements connecting healthy child development and children's positive understanding of gender and sexuality to DQS, as well as comfort with hosting and promoting DQS.

This finding therefore suggests a potential disconnect between library staff perspectives of DQS and comfort with visibly hosting one. Future work can explore this connection with qualitative interviews that ask direct questions about this relationship.

There were also some factors present in which host and non-host perspectives were undifferentiated and/or mixed. Few respondents reported experiencing or perceiving financial barriers to hosting DQS. Although this suggests that financial barriers may not be a key constraint to hosting DQS, further investigation is needed to determine the prevalence and importance of arguments connecting DQS to taxpayer dollars, particularly if this connection is a misperception as evidenced by the survey data, which indicates that DQS funding among hosts tends to come from outside of the library's budget.

In addition, it would be worthwhile to follow up with hosts providing security for DQS to determine if any relationship exists between the presence of security and/or police and financial barriers. On this related topic of whether a relationship between library safety and DQS exists, responses across both groups are mixed and undifferentiated, suggesting the need for further qualitative investigation to elicit some of the nuanced contextual and situational elements likely at work in shaping perceptions of this relationship.

Most respondents noted that DQS supported intellectual freedom. This finding suggests that advocating for DQS at one's library may be bolstered by making this connection visible. However, this item requires further investigation given that simply because a program supports intellectual freedom does not mean that library staff will necessarily want to offer it, particularly if it is considered controversial. Therefore, issues related to self-censorship should be explored as they relate to DQS in further work.

Limitations

As with all research, there are limitations in our study. For example, those library staff who chose to participate were likely to feel strongly about DQS, either positively or negatively. This means that our survey findings may not be reflective of the perspectives of those who feel less strongly or are ambivalent about these programs.

Another limitation is that not all library staff who responded to the survey are in a position to make decisions about library programming; therefore, their responses might not be reflective of the actual decision-making processes that happened at their libraries. Additionally, a minority of respondents reported having actually attended a DQS; this indicates that, for those who have not attended a DQS, their responses are based on second-hand information rather than personal experience. Relatedly, this survey elicited perceptions of DQS, meaning that these perceptions may not reflect what is actually occurring within libraries. This observation is illustrated in survey items with a sizable proportion of "unsure" responses. Future work can attend to this shortcoming by using additional methods, such as analysis of DQS media coverage and semi-structured interviews with hosts and non-hosts.

Conclusion

The results of this survey give much needed insight into the perspectives and experiences of public library staff who work at libraries that have and have not hosted DQS. Each of the factors outlined in this survey, either on their own or in combination with other factors, may play a role in any given library's decision to host a DQS.

By comparing the perspectives and experiences of hosts and non-hosts, we can begin to understand the factors that may impact a library's decision to host a DQS. The perceptions

and experiences of each group are not homogenous; there is not a one-size-fits-all approach nor a singular point of view. The experiences of each library may be as diverse as the communities they serve.

Future work will explore these perspectives and experiences in more detail. Currently, the research team is conducting interviews with library staff who have and have not hosted DQS to learn more about the factors influencing decisions to host or not host these storytimes, the supports and challenges encountered when hosting them, strategies used to address these challenges, and how DQS may relate to existing library programs and services.

We are also conducting interviews with drag performers who have participated in DQS, and we plan to conduct an analysis of news coverage of DQS from its inception in 2015 to the present.

Especially in comparison to other children's storytimes, DQS spur debates between supporters and detractors of the programming on an international scale, and such debates highlight the role these programs play in wider conversations around LGBTQ+ visibility and inclusion in public institutions such as libraries. We hope that the findings of this study, as well as our future work, will better position library staff to make informed decisions regarding whether to include DQS in their program offerings. &

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Digital Literacy

Elissa Hozore and Betsy Diamant-Cohen

Elissa Hozore *is the Computer Science Education Specialist at the Maryland State Department of Education. She is a former elementary instructional technology teacher.* ***Betsy Diamant-Cohen*** *is a children's librarian with a doctorate, trainer, consultant, and author. She enjoys translating research into practical information for children's librarians, designing and offering online courses, and presenting webinars to children's librarians. With many libraries incorporating STEM into the programs and services that they offer, Betsy invited Elissa Hozore to share some of her favorite resources.*

Computers are a fact of life in the twenty-first century. Reading and math literacy have long been considered essential, and technological literacy is emerging as equally important to children's (and adults') ability to understand and engage with their world. However, just as it is crucial to learn to write as well as to read, it is crucial that children engage as programmers, as creators, and not only as consumers, of technology.

Dr. Marina Bers, a leader in early childhood technology education, believes that developing the skills necessary to create with technology promotes new ways of learning and expression while teaching children to think critically and collaborate with others. Digital technologies can enable "a sense of mastery, creativity, self-confidence, and open exploration" and should foster the same spirit of self-directed play that children experience in a playground. This does not occur when children passively play computer games or even when they copy instructions to make a robot work. It happens when children wonder about how to make a robot do something new, when they set a goal for themselves and learn how to accomplish it, and when they persevere, iterate, and "debug." It occurs when they learn how to program a computer.

Bers and others have created developmentally appropriate tools to foster programming literacy in young children. Dr. Annette Vee, an English professor at the University of Pittsburgh, says, "Just as textual literacy helps us navigate a world full of texts, programming literacy can help us navigate a world full of code—which is the world we now live in."

Resource: The DevTech Research Group
https://sites.tufts.edu/devtech/

The Developmental Technologies Research Group, directed by Professor Marina Umaschi Bers at the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development, Tufts University, aims to understand how new technologies that engage in coding, robotics, and making, can play a positive role in children's development and learning. The research involves theoretical contributions, design of new technologies, and empirical work to test and evaluate the theory and the technologies. Bers has written several books including *Blocks to Robots* and *Coding as a Playground: Programming and Computational Thinking in the Early Childhood Classroom*.

Two articles by members of the DevTech Lab include:

What Learning Python Taught Me about Computer Science Education for Young Children
https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-06-16-what-learning-python-taught-me-about-computer-science-education-for-young-children

Madhu Govind, a doctoral student in the DevTech Lab, discusses three compelling reasons for computer science education for all, especially early learners: computer science education can support social emotional development, can foster complex cognitive processes, and can empower individuals in much the same way textual literacy can.

Hybrid Learning to Support Children's Positive Technological Development: Communication
https://www.csteachers.org/Stories/hybrid-learning-to-support-children%E2%80%99s-positive-technological-development-communication

One of a series of blog posts about supporting children's Positive Technological Development during remote and hybrid learning. In this post, Emily Relkin from the DevTech Lab describes a research project called Coding as Another Language. There are suggestions for encouraging students to communicate creatively by using technology and by using activities that are unplugged—that do not require electronics.

Articles by Annette Vee

Is Coding the New Literacy Everyone Should Learn? Moving beyond Yes or No
http://www.annettevee.com/blog/2013/12/11/is-coding-the-new-literacy-everyone-should-learn-moving-beyond-yes-or-no/

In this blog post from 2013 Dr. Vee makes the case that learning computer programming is not only a literacy, but that if everyone learns to code there are significant implications for society.

Understanding Computer Programming as a Literacy
http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/21695/1/24-33-1-PB.pdf

This is an academic article that discusses many of the ideas in the blog in greater depth. In it Vee argues "that programming and writing have followed similar historical trajectories as material technologies and explain[s] how programming and writing are intertwined in contemporary composition environments. A concept of 'computational literacy' helps us to better understand the social, technical, and cultural dynamics of programming, but it also enriches our vision of twenty-first century composition."

Other Resources

Computer Science in Early Childhood Education
https://k12cs.org/pre-k/

This is an excerpt from a chapter of the K-12 Computer Science Framework. The authors describe how computer science education can easily be consistent with play-based pedagogy. The concepts of patterns, problem solving, representation, and sequencing, all elemental to computer science, are also the powerful ideas of literacy, math, and science. Computer science can serve as "a natural extension that builds on what educators already do in their daily practice."

Linking Literacy and Computer Science in Elementary School
https://www.edutopia.org/article/linking-literacy-and-computer-science-elementary-school

This article describes how literacy and computer science were taught simultaneously in a project of Los Angeles Unified School District.

Synthesis Blog: Integrating CS (Computer Science) and CT (Computational Thinking) in the Pre K-8 Grades
https://stemtlnet.org/theme/june2020-synthesisblog

This article has recommendations for teacher leaders, researchers, policy makers, and administrators about integrating computer science and computational thinking, making them widely accessible to young children, and the importance of all students learning these essential skills to educational equity. &

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Early Childhood

Shelby Deglan and Anthea Leung

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This list features freely accessible links to research and resources on social-emotional learning (SEL) in early childhood. The resources can help children's librarians and early childhood practitioners expand their knowledge and equip them with practical skills to promote SEL practices at libraries and/or other childcare settings.

SEL and Dialogic Reading

This article argues that SEL and emergent literacy can be developed simultaneously through *dialogic reading*. When reading a book to a group of children, dialogic reading is when practitioners engage children by asking questions, talking, and listening.

For example, a practitioner might ask what a character's motivation is in a story, or how they might be feeling. With this approach, Doyle and Bramwell recommend small groups and repeated readings so that children can learn narrative structures, vocabulary, and more fully comprehend the story's social-emotional content.[1] Social-emotional skills include sharing, cooperation, getting along with others, and solving conflicts. Doyle and Bramwell[2] recommend selecting books with social-emotional content, such as narratives that solve conflicts between characters or include emotional vocabulary (i.e., grumpy, excited, frustrated, etc.).

Learning emotional vocabulary helps readers to describe their feelings and feelings of others. This article is aimed at teachers, but the research and implementation tips on conducting dialogic reading during storytime can be applied to librarians. The article urges practitioners to be intentional and strategic with book reading and asking questions that enrich children's understanding of social interactions and emotions.

Promoting Emergent Literacy and Social-Emotional Learning through Dialogic Reading
https://readitonceagain.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Promoting-early-literacy-and-social-emotional.pdf

SEL Life Skills

Mind in the Making (MITM) is a training program for practitioners and caregivers of young children. The program is based on seven Essential Life Skills that MITM recommends that young children develop:

- focus and self-control
- perspective taking
- communicating
- making connections

- critical thinking
- taking on challenges
- self-directed, engaged learning

All seven skills incorporate social, emotional, and cognitive learning. Aside from the actual training modules, this website has many quick resources for skill-building activities that answer common parenting questions. For example, when asking how to get a young child to play with others, MITM recommends talking about feelings, talking about others' perspectives, playing pretend, and asking questions about the feelings of characters in books and stories. These recommendations mainly build on perspective taking, related to empathy, and encourage children to understand others' motivations and point of view to reduce instances of conflict.

Mind in the Making
https://www.mindinthemaking.org/

Skill-Building Opportunities: Playing with Others
https://assets.ctfassets.net/uztpv7pl0j6m/5UNPZQJe5YilGBKUrT2DD9/42ab684f3766c5b79256f469c4e158c9/MITM_Preschool_Socialization_2019.pdf

SEL and Heart-Mind Well-Being

Heart-Mind Online is an online repository of evidence-based SEL resources that support children's positive development of social and emotional well-being. Heart-Mind Online introduces the concept of heart-mind well-being and identifies five heart-mind qualities:

- is secure and calm
- gets along with others
- is alert and engaged
- is compassionate and kind
- solves problems peacefully

The website features many resources on the heart-mind well-being theme as well as activity guides for parents and educators to help young children develop prosocial and emotional competencies.

The resources are based on and support the nurturing of the five heart-mind qualities. They can be searched by themes, such as conflict resolution, friendship, and resilience, as well as by developmental ages. For example, the website features an introductory guide to *Feelings First Aid*, filled with easy-to-follow and engaging activities that help children to overcome negative triggers and regulate their emotions in stressful situations. Caregivers and practitioners can follow step-by-step instructions to identify the type(s) of emotions a child is experiencing and to incorporate the corresponding child-friendly meditation practices, such as *hot chocolate breathing* and *snack attack*.

Heart-Mind Online Resources
https://heartmindonline.org/resources

Resources: Feelings First Aid
https://heartmindonline.org/resources/feelings-first-aid

Public Library Storytime Resource: SEL Kits

Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries (NLPL) have curated a collection of six social-emotional learning kits, aimed to assist families, caregivers, and early childhood educators with teaching SEL concepts to young children through storytelling and other literacy activities. The kits cover a wide range of SEL topics, such as practicing mindfulness, celebrating diversity, dealing with death and grief, etc. Each kit includes eight nicely illustrated picture books and an activity guide. For example, the *Anxiety and Worries Social-Emotional Learning Kit* features age-appropriate titles such as *Breathe* by Scott Magoon and *The I'M NOT SCARED Book* by Todd Parr and introduces two activity suggestions—*Worry Box* and *Breathing Exercises*—that connect well with the themes of the books. This resource guide would be useful to children's librarians who are interested in curating SEL-themed resource kits and/or delivering SEL storytimes for young children and families at their libraries.

NLPL's Story Kits to Share with Kids: Social Emotional Learning Kits
https://guides.nlpl.ca/c.php?g=713536&p=5085022

Social Emotional Learning Kits Printable List
https://guides.nlpl.ca/ld.php?content_id=35022833

Empathy Day Early Years Toolkit

The Empathy Lab creates an Early Years Toolkit to assist public librarians with planning and delivering SEL-themed library programs to celebrate Empathy Day in the UK. The toolkit includes innovative and developmentally appropriate empathy-building activity guides to engage, entertain, and inspire young children. The activities are designed to help young children understand how themselves and others think, feel, and behave.

The Empathy Lab stresses the importance of utilizing stories to build empathy skills, so a large part of the toolkit is dedicated to book activity suggestions related to some of the recommended picture books, such as *Lulu Gets a Cat* by Anna McQuinn. Caregivers, librarians, and educators download

resources, such as the empathy-themed book list and emotion rhyme cards, to help children learn to recognize, understand, and respect other people's feelings and emotions.

Early Years Toolkit for Empathy Day
https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/b2f3fbc2/files/uploaded/01%20Early%20Years%20Toolkit.pdf

Read for Empathy Guide
https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/b2f3fbc2/files/uploaded/Empathy%20Guide%20A4%20landscape_oK1oB43TVapUSdcg0pBk.pdf

SEL Empathy Booklist

An updated 2020 booklist of preschool picture books that model empathy and compassion has been created by Brightly, a Penguin Random House Company. These books can help caregivers and practitioners approach children's emotions and empathy development in ways that are relevant to today's social and political climate.

For example, the first book on the list is *Come with Me* by Holly M. McGhee. It features a child who is anxious about the news on television and is cheered up by spreading kindness in the neighborhood with her parents. Other topics include loss, friendship conflict, perspective taking, bullying, kindness, being different, and peace.

Twelve Books that Model Empathy and Compassion for Young Readers
https://www.readbrightly.com/books-that-model-empathy-compassion-young-readers/ &

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1. Brooke Graham Doyle and Wendie Bramwell, "Promoting Emergent Literacy and Social-Emotional Learning through Dialogic Reading," *International Reading Association* (2006), 554–64, https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.59.6.5.
2. Doyle and Bramwell, "Promoting Emergent Literacy," 554–64.

It Takes Two (Or More)

Developing Partnerships to Serve Marginalized Populations

Melody Leung and Marika Jeffery

Melody Leung *is a Children's Librarian with the Whatcom County (WA) Library;* ***Marika Jeffery*** *is a Youth Services Librarian with the San Diego Public Library.*

This student-edition column features the work of students in a course taught by Dr. Tess Prendergast at the School of Information, University of British Columbia.

As our name suggests, the Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers (LSUCTC) committee seeks to help library staff better serve children and families who are often marginalized and overlooked by traditional library programs and services. A significant part of our committee's work is focused on developing toolkits that provide resources and ideas for assisting a variety of these overlooked demographics,[1] and we encourage readers to visit our toolkits here: tinyurl.com/lsuctc toolkit.

One major difficulty in reaching underserved populations is due to our own ignorance.

- How can we serve marginalized communities when we don't see them inside our buildings and/or have little knowledge of their needs and concerns?
- How can we ensure authentic connections where we are not forcing our personal values or making assumptions about whole groups of people?
- How does our personal understanding and our organization's understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) help us to evaluate our current programming and evaluation methods?[2]

One answer is to create partnerships with those who have a strong knowledge base of these underserved communities and can guide library staff in best practices for outreach. Whether you reach out or the organization approaches you, it's vital to plan and design outreach with your partner to find common values.[3] This relationship will help both groups feel fully invested in the partnership and desired outcomes.

Research Your Community

Consider demographics, but also connect with individuals outside the library. Survey your landscape to see what organizations are in your vicinity—schools, religious institutions, homeless shelters, agriculture, specialty stores, and local businesses. Remember that underserved communities are likely not your regular visitors. If possible, connect with staff or community members who are either familiar with or a member of these underserved communities. Ask yourself:

- Who is the library not serving? What barriers are preventing these groups from accessing library services?
- Do the library's values overlap with this community's values? If this answer is no, analyze how the library's culture may need to change or if this underserved community actually doesn't benefit from current library services.

Community Partnership Example: Reluctant Readers

Melody Leung

From demographic research, I knew my community was at least 10 percent Hispanic, and I learned that there were even more Latinx families who were not counted toward the census due to a migrant community that changed every summer and sometimes throughout the year.

I connected with a local English Language Learner-focused teacher who wanted to find a way to partner with the library to help her students. This teacher also had experience previously teaching English to farm workers. We discussed the needs of the school and came away with a plan to help the students facing the biggest hurdles—third graders from diverse backgrounds who were reading far below grade level.

During weekly lunch recess, I brought books for the kids to check out; read picture books about self-esteem, dreams, and feelings; and provided beginning readers that the kids could practice reading in small groups. The kids who participated felt safe in this space and shared more often than they did in front of their other peers.

Through surveying the kids and their teachers before and after the program, most kids felt more confident reading and showed greater enjoyment in books. Most importantly, they connected to me at the end of the series, when I shared that I too didn't start reading English until second grade and was behind in school for a few years before catching up.

Community Partnership Example: Children on the Autism Spectrum

Marika Jeffery

In 2017, the Mission Valley Library, a branch of the San Diego Public Library system, realized that its typically crowded, loud summer reading program events were not friendly to families with children on the autism spectrum.

Since staff had little knowledge of how to best assist this community, we sought help from Autism Society San Diego. Thanks to their input, the library discovered that most diagnosed children had robust weekday routines with scheduled classes and therapies, so a special library event catering to these kids would best be held on a weekend day.

The Autism Society also advised the library to host a program during hours when the building was only open to families with children on the spectrum. This meant that if a child had a meltdown or didn't conform in other ways to generally accepted library behavior, the family wasn't subjected to glares and complaints from additional library users.

The Autism Society provided many other helpful suggestions and would attend every autism event the library hosted to offer their support, guide the program as needed, and advertise their services to attendees unfamiliar with their mission and work. Both the library and the Autism Society were mutually committed to helping children on the spectrum access library resources and programs and increase their access to the Autism Society's information and services.

When you've found a potential partner, determine a common outcome based on shared values.

- What goals or values do you each have and where do they overlap?
- What impacts and outcomes do you both hope to achieve?
- What do you each bring to the table and how can you complement each other?

Evaluate

Programs and events have a start and an end, but outreach is flexible. If the first idea isn't successful, the community will still be there. It's easy to get discouraged when a program loses traction or the library's relationship with a community partner changes. When planning and conducting outreach, it's important to think of the work as a cycle with the only unchanging element being the community you aim to serve. When evaluating your outreach, keep these questions in mind.

- What type of casual feedback did you obtain? Were there any barriers that prevented those families or others from participating?

- What impacts and outcomes did you achieve? Were they the same as what you had originally planned?

- If attendance was low, did you put enough effort into marketing in places where your underserved community frequents or trusts? Remember that attendance numbers aren't equal to success.

We encourage you to check out our committee's toolkits (particularly the "Professional Resources" and "Community Resources") at http://www.ala.org/alsc/sites/ala.org.alsc/files/content/professional-tools/lsspcc-toolkit-2015.pdf. If you have questions, ideas, or would like our committee to focus on a particular underserved group, please email lsuctc@gmail.com. &

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3. Project Voice, "Project Voice Training Series Webinar 2 Designing Community Outreach Using Value-Centric, Outcomes-Based Planning and Assessment," May 7, 2020.

Taking, Making . . . Advocating

Take-and-Makes to Build Awareness

Jackie Cassidy

Jackie Cassidy *is the Senior Assistant Manager at the Abingdon Branch of Harford County Public Library (MD) and a member of the ALSC Public Awareness and Advocacy Committee.*

While your library may have done take-and-make programming in the past, the term has gained expanded meaning during the pandemic. Now many libraries have adopted take-and-makes as a staple of pandemic programming, bringing joy and creativity to families and librarians.

At a time when many libraries have limited connections to their customers, these creative activities keep them coming back. They can also build awareness of all the wonderful ways libraries positively impact families in your community. Let's explore how you can use take-and-makes as a powerful advocacy tool.

Bagged and ready to go, these activities are the perfect package for bundling up information and collecting customer feedback. When assembling activities, include flyers for your library's summer reading challenge and programs. Does your library have an eNewsletter? Include the link for customers to subscribe to it. You can also generate QR codes with sites like QR-Code Monkey or QRStuff to direct customers to library information. Those grab customers' attention and can even provide analytics.

Use them to link to take-and-make instructional videos, browsing videos of your newest children's books, or customer feedback forms. Also, as part of your package, ask customers to post photos of their creations and tag your library on social media.

The photos and comments that your library has been collecting tell a story. Library value in the community is shared when parents tag your library in a photo of their child holding up a completed take-and-make project. Their joy is a powerful visual record of your library's impact.

One of our customers shared the compounding success of their experience by saying, "Take-and-makes were perfect for a visit to Grandma's. Grandma learned about the take-and-makes for adults, too. She can't wait to pick one up!" Post these photos and comments to your library's social media pages.

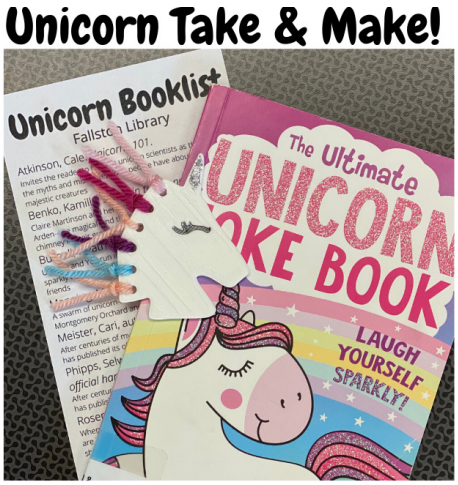
Capture all your valuable customer impact stories, and share how library services affect people in your community every day. Tell these stories to library administration, so they can use them in advocacy campaigns and when communicating with stakeholders. Creating an easy-to-use form for staff can increase collaboration and organize stories for improved access. Additionally, recording statistics according to audience age and programming categories, such as STEM, creation, or literacy, can help frame your narrative.

Use take-and-makes to reach out directly to local decision makers and build awareness about your library. First, identify who in your community has the ear of the public. Are they on your Board of Directors or Friends of the Library group, elected officials, sponsors, teachers, or community group leaders?

Put together take-and-make packets with extra incentives and your ask of registering and talking about the library's summer reading program. Can they share at meetings and post on social media? In addition to supplies, include a summer reading T-shirt, program flyers, bookmarks with a QR code for a registration video, and an infographic.

Summer reading infographics use bold graphics to share impact. Create an infographic that supports your ask with statistics from last year's summer reading success or with what is planned for this year.

These brothers enjoyed the butterfly take-and-make project.



Unicorns are always popular!

We created special packets to highlight take-and-makes, as well as summer reading. If your library is using the 2021 Collaborative Summer Learning Program (CSLP) Tails and Tales, with art by Salina Yoon, here's an idea all ages will enjoy.

Create a DIY shrink film summer reading badge. Provide a sheet filled with Yoon's artwork, shrink film, a square of sandpaper, and a bar pin. Makers can design their own badge using the artwork, trace the design onto the shrink film with permanent markers or colored pencils to form their custom badge. Follow the instructions on the shrink film to bake and harden. Then finish with a layer of clear hot glue or epoxy and glue the pin on the back.

Alternatively, makers may choose to punch a hole before shrinking to make a keychain pendant. As the final step in your instructions, write something like, "Show off your new badge. We love seeing your creations!" Include any handles/tags makers should use.

Now, it's your turn! Share how you build awareness at your library with #alscadvocacy. &

Out of School Time

Inspiring Engagement in Children's Programming

Kimberly Grad

Kimberly Grad *is Coordinator, School Age Services, Brooklyn Public Library and Co-Chair of ALSC's School Age Programs and Services Committee. The 2020–2021 ALSC School Age Programs and Services Committee also includes co-chair Sierra McKenzie, Cincinnati and Hamilton County (OH) Public Library; Heather Love Beverley, Cook Memorial Public Library, Libertyville, Illinois; Valerie Byrd Fort, University of South Carolina; Connie Hollin, K-6 Library Media Specialist in Gillette, Wyoming; Laura Lutz, Corlears School, New York, New York; Emily L. Nichols, New York Public Library; Stephanie C. Prato, Simsbury (CT) Public Library; and Cynthia Zervos, Bloomfield Hills Schools, Farmington, Michigan.*

Programming for school age children has experienced a radical shift in the last year due to the pandemic. Out-of-school time or "after school" has taken on a different tone as some children learn at home and some are back at school.

And yet, with virtual programming libraries continue to provide a bridge between home and school. Children's librarians are digging deeper into the well of programming ideas to provide engaging library related activities. In our first column, we offer some concrete program ideas that can be utilized throughout the year when school is in session or during summer reading programming.

One of the School Age Programs and Services committee's main projects in 2020 focused on supporting literacy programming for children ages 6 to 10 through celebrating the joy of reading and encouraging children to develop critical thinking skills and to make connections to the stories they read. The committee hosted a three-part webinar series, Building Literacy in Every Library, and were joined by guest speakers.

With an eye toward inspiring curious readers, Jed Dearybury, educator and co-author with Julie P. Jones of *The Playful Classroom*, offered tips for programs for older children, reminding us to plan ahead, rehearse, extend the experience beyond the read-aloud, use diverse books, find and address universal themes, act out the story, dress up or use props, and to smile and have fun. He stressed, "Reading shouldn't have constraints."

Dearybury shared his passion for pairing children's literature with activities that encourage children to keep reading. For example, Shel Silverstein's *A Giraffe and a Half* becomes the inspiration for creating silly rhymes or a costume to help in retelling the story (an effective way to build fluency skills).

Mollie Welsh Kruger, advisor and course instructor at Bank Street College of Education in New York, helped us unlock the learning process in developing critical thinking skills. Among the numerous metacognition and comprehension strategies to employ when offering a reading program for children, Kruger's favorites include activating readers' background knowledge to make connections to the story.

Asking questions as the story progresses also helps readers delve deeper into the content. Evaluating or drawing conclusions from information in a text is essential in making inferences and predicting what may happen next. It's helpful to guide children's understanding of the story to identify the characters, setting, problem, and solution, and to discuss the specifics of the beginning, middle, and end of a story. One of the best ways to process a story is to create a visual representation of ideas that helps in processing the information by rethinking it in a different way. Doing something creative in response to a book helps to reinforce a child's curiosity.

Kruger also suggested teaching vocabulary strategies such as building meaning from context and illustrations, making connections to similar words, identifying root word clues, looking up the word in a dictionary, or asking a friend for help.

In all three webinars, we stressed the importance of intentional book selection. Shelley Diaz, reviews manager for *School Library Journal,* offered a selection of picture books, early readers, and nonfiction that are especially fun choices for read-aloud programs. They included picture books *Out the Door* by Christy Hale and *Magnificent Homespun Brown: A Celebration* by Samara Cole Doyon; non-fiction *The Honeybee* by Candace Fleming and *The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read* by Rita Lorraine Hubbard; and early readers *See the Cat: Three Stories about a Dog* by David La Rochelle and *Ty's Travels* by Kelly Starling Lyons.

Krista Aronson, professor of psychology at Bates College, spoke about the research that led to the founding of the Diverse BookFinder with author and illustrator Anne Sibley O'Brien. The Diverse BookFinder is a comprehensive collection of children's picture books featuring Black and indigenous people and people of color (BIPOC). It's also an online searchable database to help in locating and exploring children's picture books published since 2002 that feature BIPOC characters.

Members of the School Age Programs and Services committee recommended programming ideas and strategies for enriching literacy programs for children. Connie Hollin, K-6 library media specialist in Gillette, WY, suggests creating a language-rich environment in the effort to build vocabulary. Introducing challenging and unusual words can only produce favorable results that surprise and delight students in their discovery.

Cynthia Zervos, librarian at Way Elementary School in Bloomfield Hills, MI, has observed through engaging students virtually that children are resilient and flexible. She regularly utilizes Flipgrid (https://info.flipgrid.com) to discuss books with her students. This educational tool allows learners to record and share short videos. She also finds that students enjoy collaborating with Jamboard, an interactive whiteboard system included in Google Workspace.

Brooklyn Public Library regularly provides Team Up To Read virtual literacy programs on Zoom where program leaders interact directly with children, parents, and children's librarians. For more information, visit bklynlib.org/TeamUpToRead.

Archived videos may be found in the e-learning section of the ALSC website at http://www.ala.org/alsc/elearning/webinarchive.

For more ideas, check out regular posts on the ALSC Blog by members of the School Age Programs and Services committee (https://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/category/bloggers/blogger-school-age-programs-and-services-committee/), typically releasing on the fourth Saturday of the month. &

Expanding Representation

ALSC's Equity Fellows Program

Nicole Rawlinson

Nicole Rawlinson *is a teen and youth serving librarian, focused on supporting youth and communities through equity-building approaches to programming, services, and professional development. She serves as a Washington state trainer on the YALSA Transforming Teen Services project and is a member of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion within ALSC Implementation task force, which also includes co-chairs Danielle Jones and Sophie Kenney, Ayn Reyes Frazee, Sierra McKenzie, Kelly-Ann Smith, and Vicky Smith.*

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within ALSC Implementation task force exists to heighten visibility, increase opportunities, and eliminate challenges to participation within ALSC for BIPOC library workers.

The task force supports ALSC's charge to implement EDI practices while diversifying membership and future leadership. It aims to mitigate the impacts to participation associated with costs, perceived accessibility, and lack of diversity, while developing pathways to ALSC membership and leadership opportunities. Through the task force's work, one of the main initiatives to increase BIPOC representation within the organization was realized through the development of the Equity Fellows program.

In the pilot proposal, the EDI task force asserted its purpose and mission, affirming its commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion by engaging new generations of racially and ethnically diverse library professionals.

The Equity Fellows program, now in its second round, aims to grow BIPOC leadership representation within ALSC through a relationship and project-based approach. The program offers one-on-one mentorship, professional development, and networking opportunities to selected fellows throughout their experience, coupled with ALA and ALSC membership, conference registration, and a travel stipend to eliminate costs to participation. These opportunities not only develop leadership skills and encourage future participation, they also facilitate important connections to organizational leaders, other BIPOC members, publishers, and book creators.

Through a competitive application process, fellowships are awarded to BIPOC library workers who demonstrate a strong desire and commitment to children's services, equity, service within ALSC, and a capacity for future leadership within the organization.

The First Fellows

In the program's pilot, six fellows—Eiyana Favers, Ayn Reyes Frazee, Evelyn Keolian, Star Khan, Sierra McKenzie, and Jocelyn Moore—were selected to participate in the fellowship program. Throughout their experience, they engaged in the development and execution of a large-scale project while participating in regular meetings, networking opportunities, and mentorship activities. This year, the EDI task force welcomed five new Equity Fellows for its second cohort—Eboni Dickerson, Erika Lehtonen, Natassia Schulz, Melissa Stovall, and Mai Takahashi.

Favers explained that her decision to apply came at a time when she considered ALSC membership but didn't know where to start. She wanted to learn more about ALSC while also connecting with other professionals working in early literacy in urban communities like her own.

Current fellow Dickerson shared mentorship as her motivation for participation. She explained that the organization felt "too vast" and welcomed the opportunity to have guidance from someone who is already integrated into the organization.

Takahashi, a current Equity Fellow, explained that applying to the program was an extension of her commitment to equity within her own library system. Working with an urban Native community in Seattle, she was genuinely interested in learning about how other library systems implement EDI practices and expand her own professional network through the equity, diversity, and inclusion lens.

Equity Fellows at the 2019 ALA Midwinter Meeting include, left to right, Evelyn Keolian, Sierra McKenzie, Ayn Reyes Frazee, Jocelyn Moore, Eiyana Favers, and Shahrazad "Star" Khan.

For both inaugural and current fellows, the opportunities for professional development and mentorship were reasons to apply. Another commonly identified consideration was the costs associated with membership and participation. The Equity Fellowship is one of the only no-cost pathways to both membership in ALSC and conference attendance; the cost of membership coupled with conference registrations and travel costs incurred had previously made active participation simply unattainable. While a variety of motivating factors were shared, a consistent thread among the fellows was the encouragement from colleagues and supervisors that gave them the confidence to submit an application and follow through the selection process.

Many of the inaugural fellowship cohort looked forward to the mentorship opportunities developed to support their navigation through the program and the organization. Looking back on the experience, McKenzie shared, "The fellowship gave me an instant network that I could lean on when I needed it and offered guidance on how to proceed. I think it would have been overwhelming and difficult to navigate without their tremendous support."

Keolian described the ways in which the equity fellowship shaped her perspective of ALSC as a true inside look of how ALSC functions, "from how the committees work, to applying, appointment, actual service, and to other opportunities that exist for children's librarians."

She reflected on the experience compared to prior years as a member of ALSC without a mentorship component and identified stark differences in the experience. "While I had attended ALSC 101 and other sessions in the past, I never seemed to go beyond that. I filled out the volunteer application and heard nothing. It seemed like it was impossible, but the fellowship changed all of that for me."

While the fellows were paired with EDI task force mentors, they also worked together as a collaborative team to complete a project that increased their knowledge of the organization and supported the increased effort to recruit a more diverse membership within ALSC.

Presented with the opportunity to create a project that supported ALSC's commitment to EDI, the fellows developed a graphic guide to navigating ALSC as a new member. Throughout this project, they were encouraged to collaborate as a team and seek out guidance from both their mentors and ALSC leadership, leading to formative relationships and deeper understanding of the organization and its mission.

Since participating in the fellowship program, many inaugural fellows have deepened their commitment to service in ALSC. They have gone on to participate in both process and awards committees and have been selected for educational opportunities such as the Morris Seminar. One fellow is currently co-chairing a process committee and was on the ballot and elected to the 2023 Newbery selection committee. Two of the pilot fellows have joined the EDI within ALSC Implementation task force, and several of the inaugural fellows feel that the experience has prepared them to become leaders within ALSC and within their own communities. Leadership opportunities within ALSC are seen as plentiful by past fellows, and the more members are open to new experiences the more likely they will be to find their niche within the organization.

The current cohort has joined with great expectations for a year of growth and preparation for leadership. As a new fellow, Takahashi hopes to gain program management skills, network, learn more about ALSC, and most importantly, work to develop collaborative solutions to promote the power of literacy through anti-racism and anti-bias work.

The EDI task force hopes to continue the Equity Fellows program into the future, and encourages prospective applicants to consider the opportunity. After one complete fellowship cycle and a current fellowship in progress, it is clear that this opportunity can continue to affirm ALSC's investment in and commitment to a more diverse set of leaders and a more equitable organization. While the Equity Fellowship has created new pathways to participation for BIPOC library workers and engaged a new pool of potential leaders, ALSC's investment in equity does not end with the fellowship or even the work of the task force. Equity, diversity, and inclusion work must be woven into the very fabric of the organization. &

ALSC Member Profiles

Allison Knight

__Allison Knight__ is Branch Manager, MidPointe Library System in Ohio.

Michelle Ng, Youth Services Librarian, San Mateo (CA) County Libraries

Why did you join ALSC? I noticed the ALSC website and saw the wealth of resourses available, and I joined as a library school student. I checked the blog frequently and was blown away by the imaginative, innovative, and passionate posts. If this was available for free, who knows what information I could get if I became a member?

What's your best ALSC memory? Many, including working with passionate librarians across the nation, checking out Guerilla Storytime at ALA Annual, and serving on the 2020 Caldecott committee. I think one of the most visceral memories I have is attending the Youth Media Awards announcements for the first time. As I stepped into the ballroom it was a GIANT PARTY! The energy and excitement were palpable. Every time a winner was announced, the energy shot through the roof! I recommend that every librarian attend the Youth Media Awards in person at least once.

Why did you want to be a children's librarian? I get to use creativity and imagination when developing programs, and I love showing our community that libraries extend beyond books. The library is really a place to cultivate lifelong learning and exploration, and I'm not sure everyone knows that yet!

As a former struggling reader, I don't know where I would be if it weren't for my childhood librarian recommending engaging books that captured my imagination. Being a children's librarian means I can potentially hand a child a book that sparks them on their journey to being a lifelong reader.

Rebecca Ballard, Children's Librarian, Oconee County (GA) Library

Why did you join ALSC? I am passionate about working with children, and I love getting kids excited about the library. I knew instantly that this was the group for me. I wanted to learn from other children's librarians and to see if I could collaborate and contribute, too!

What's your best ALSC memory? Attending the ALSC 2020 Virtual Institute and sharing my experiences as a guest blogger. All of the Institute presentations were simply amazing, and I learned so much, and even though the event was virtual, I felt like I met people and made connections. I can't wait until the next in-person Institute.

What makes you want to be a children's librarian? Children's librarianship is the best part of library-ing. I love that I get to interact with children of all ages and educate, encourage, and entertain them. I can't think of any other job where I can do so many things that I love all at once! &

Lockdowns and Lobby Service

Partnering in Time of Pandemic

Katie M. Cerqua, Uma Nori, and Kristin Williamson

***Katie Cerqua**, ALA Council member, is Youth and Family Services Manager at the Virginia Beach Public Library. Library Journal chose her as a 2016 Mover & Shaker in the Change Agent category for her work fighting "summer slide." **Uma Nori** is Head of Youth Services at Thomas Ford Memorial Library, Western Springs, Illinois. She serves on the AISLE (Association of Illinois School Library Educators) The Monarch Award: Illinois' K–3 Readers' Choice Award steering committee. **Kristin Williamson** is the Children's Services Manager for the Metropolitan Library System in Oklahoma County, Oklahoma. She has fourteen years of experience working with families and children birth to age 12. She is part of the ALSC Mentoring Work Group. All three serve on ALSC's Managing Children's Services committee.*

As libraries closed physical doors to protect the families we serve, collaborations and partnerships to meet the needs of children and families took on an even greater importance.

Libraries scrambled to ramp up virtual programming, grew digital collections and resources, and built outdoor story walks, all while facing the very real concern that many families continue to lack access to these important services. The ongoing lack of equitable access, further exacerbated by the pandemic, left staff with the need to do what we do best—get creative.

One of the most impactful results of this creativity can be seen in the growth and strengthening of partnerships. Libraries looked outward to find where families were receiving services, identified organizations who maintained a clear line of communication with children and students, and worked to align service delivery models to meet users where they were.

Summer Reading Challenge To-Go

Virginia Beach (VA) Public Library (VBPL) strengthened existing partnerships with local public schools. The library provided to-go programming kits and books to children at ten elementary school meal sites across the city. These partnerships allowed both participants to better meet the needs of children at a time when they were most vulnerable. To reach vulnerable teens, VBPL looked to their on-going partnership with Seton Youth Shelters. Through this collaboration, sixty age-appropriate outreach kits were delivered to shelters. And, following a similar service model, the library's annual partnership with Virginia Beach City Public Schools Title I office, free books and four virtual field trips were provided to more than thirteen hundred elementary students.

READ to the Pets Virtually

Thomas Ford Memorial Library (TFML) in Western Springs, IL, in partnership with Hinsdale Humane Society (HHS), has been offering a very successful READ to the Pets program since 2009. When the pandemic hit, HHS approached TFML to offer the READ Program virtually.

HHS staff observed the library's virtual storytime and collaborated on how to offer this program virtually—and the Virtual Read to a Therapaws Pet program was born. In this virtual program, since there was only one volunteer team of an owner and their pet, reading time per child was decreased so more children could participate in an hour.

Due to the success of this program, it became the model for other libraries in the area.

Neighborhood Arts

The Metropolitan Library System (MLS) in Oklahoma County, OK, partnered with the Arts Council Oklahoma City (ACOKC) on a grant to offer performing arts summer programs in libraries across the service area, from urban to suburban to rural communities. Neighborhood Arts performances include musicians, dance, opera, plays, improv, storytellers, and puppets. Performers are local artists and the program is aimed at families with school-aged children.

Normally artists would do ten performances in one week at libraries across the county. With the shift to virtual programming, the ACOKC and the performers held brainstorming sessions to discuss how to provide performances in a way that was accessible to patrons, allowed the artists flexibility to tailor their shows to what best fit their individual style and needs, and also respected the artists' intellectual property.

We prerecorded several performances in May: some artists recorded and edited their own videos; other artists opted to do live streams of performances or tours of their studios, and others came to either the library or the ACOKC offices where we could live stream their performances. Live streams at the library or ACOKC had the added benefit that staff could monitor comments to share with the performer and make the performances more interactive.

The virtual format not only expanded the audience to include people from out of state, but these performances had significantly more views compared to in-person attendance in a week's worth of shows. MLS decided that moving forward, at least one virtual performance will be included each week, in addition to regular in-person performances.

These examples are a small snapshot of the positive impact of library collaborations during the pandemic. The benefits of added virtual programming and community-housed services will undoubtedly impact the future of library services long after lockdowns and lobby service ends. &

THE LAST WORD

Localizing ECRR

Alaska Wildlife Touts Five Practices

By Samantha Blanquart

When we think of storytime, we think of sharing a love of books with children, having a good time, and modeling early literacy behaviors for caregivers. We share early literacy tips and demonstrate activities, but we also display early literacy posters on the walls of the storytime rooms.

In fall 2019, at the Anchorage Public Library, we noticed that several of the posters in the story theater of our main library branch were looking a little tattered and dated. So we created fresh and attention-getting graphics that would reflect the individuality of Alaska.

Samantha Blanquart with her customized early literacy posters.

With the help of Ready to Read Alaska, which helps families learn early literacy techniques and lends out free storytime kits, we created a locally inspired poster for each Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) practice. Each colorful poster features a different Alaska animal—a grizzly bear for "read," a humpback whale for "sing," a wolf for "play," a raven for "talk," and a moose for "write."

Because we know that many families cannot attend storytime or library programs, we also created another version of the poster that lists all five practices together, to post in community locations where families spend time, such as local WIC clinics, pediatrician's offices, and laundromats.

As with most libraries, we haven't been able to offer in-person storytime since March 2020, and many of our outreach plans have been put on hold, but when the world is ready again, we'll be ready to spread the early literacy message throughout our community. &

Samantha Blanquart *is the Early Literacy Outreach Librarian at the Anchorage Public Library. She also coordinates Ready to Read Alaska, sponsored by the Alaska State Library.*

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

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RESEARCH AGENDA GRANTS

Libraries are constantly evolving and changing. This pilot ALSC Research Agenda Grant will offer seed funds to help develop, conduct, and disseminate emerging research that aligns with priority areas outlined in the ALSC Research Agenda.

Applications for this grant opportunity are being accepted through July 20, 2021.

Learn more and apply by visiting: http://bit.ly/alscresearchagenda

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