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Children & LIBRARIES

the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children

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ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY SERVICE TO CHILDREN

Adapted Literacy and Squishy Books!
Cultural Humility: What Is It?
Service to All: On the Road, In Prisons

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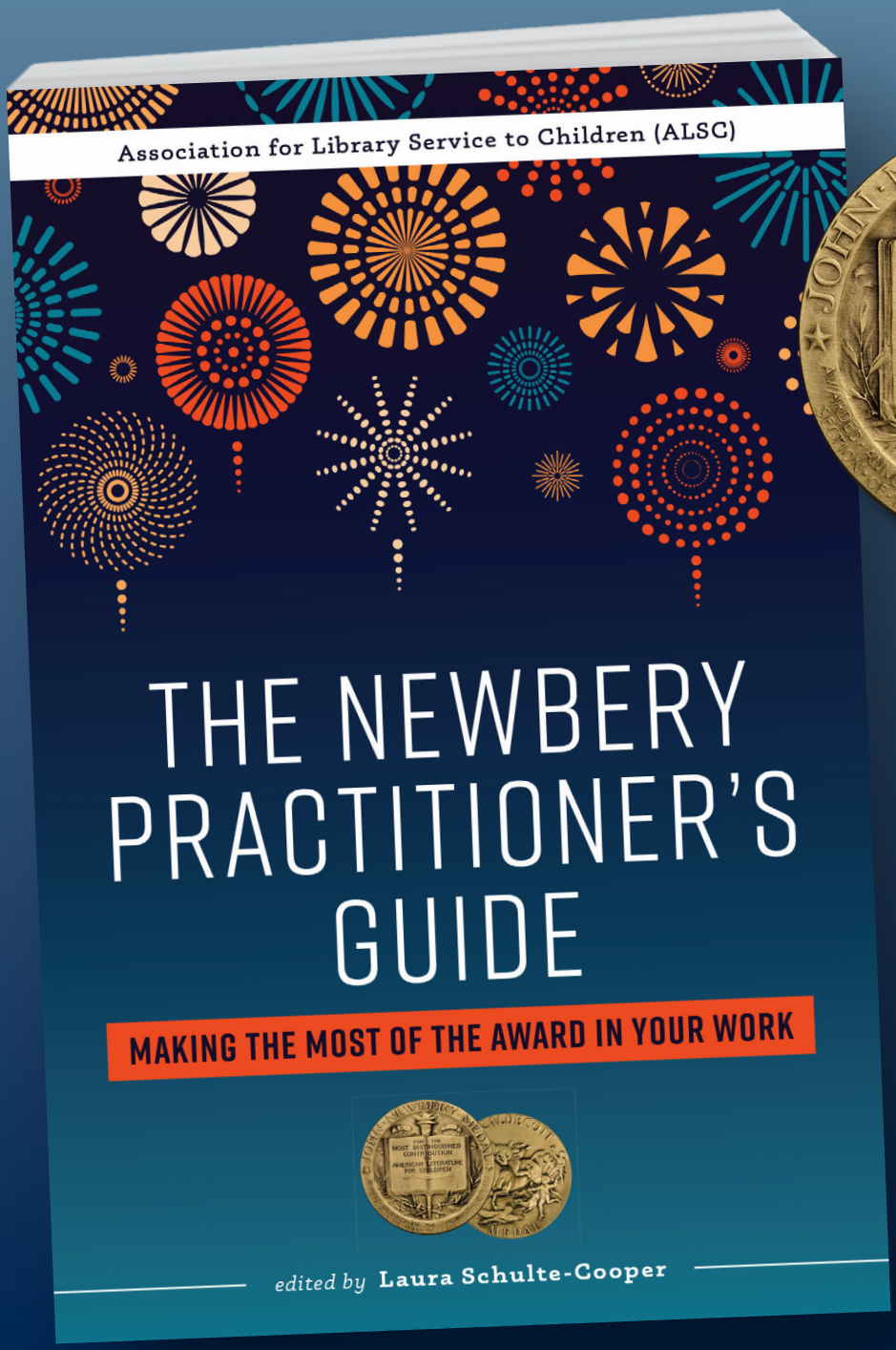

This book digs in and explores where the distinguished award intersects with library work in a range of areas such as collection policy, advocacy, programming, EDI efforts, and censorship. Recognized experts in the fields of library service to youth, children's literature, and education present strategies, guidance, and tips to support practitioners in making the most of the Newbery in their work.

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Charlie enjoys a squishy book at the Elizabethton (TN) Public Library. Photo by Brian Keith.

Editor's Note

The Many Emotions of Change

By Sharon Verbeten

Late last year, I left my twelve-year position as a part-time children's librarian to become full-time Youth Services Manager in another city.

It was a bittersweet move. On one hand, I looked forward to advancing in my career, taking on more duties, leading a team, learning a new community, and, possibly, ending my library career as a manager.

Conversely, having worked so long at one location, as you can imagine, friendships were formed—both with staff, patrons, and outreach partners. Of course, there were things I wouldn't miss—most tied to bureaucracy and budgets (and yes, I do realize you find those things in most libraries).

Coming to terms with all these mixed emotions and the dynamics of change was going to take some time; as I write this, I'm only seven months in and I feel the tide starting to shift. I feel more of a sense of belonging, and I'm definitely more confident in decision making.

The hardest changes have been those dealing with people. Personalities. Protocols. And the litany of "We've always done it that way." But I think with time, I'll be better able to navigate these changes in a more effective way.

I'm taking some leadership training and learning from the current managers on staff—several of whom have been there decades. I've welcomed having allies along this journey.

What hasn't changed is my devotion to providing excellent customer service and engaging families in promoting early literacy.

Stepping out of one's comfort zone is hard, but sometimes it takes a while to recognize and reap the rewards. And despite these being challenging times for librarians, I still feel blessed to be in a profession that provides me with so many of those rewards, both tangible and intangible. &

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Everyday Obstacles

Cultural Humility in Children's Library Services

DAVID A. HURLEY, SARAH R. KOSTELECKY, AND LORI TOWNSEND

Twenty years ago, David (one of the authors of this article) was the director of a community college library in a town with no public library. The college's teacher education program was excuse enough to maintain a strong children's collection, and kids from the nearby elementary school would often spend the afternoon in the library. Two in particular stand out: a sister and brother who were in the library nearly every day. They were shy with the library staff, but their enthusiasm was palpable as they excitedly showed books to each other and sat reading together for hours at a time, from when school got out to when their parents got off work. Their love for the library made the work seem worth it.

And then, suddenly, they stopped coming.

It was a small town, so it wasn't too long before David ran into their father in the community. In clear violation of patron privacy laws, he said, "I've noticed your kids don't come to the library anymore."

"Yeah," their father said. "They lost that privilege as a consequence for not returning their books on time." They had gotten an overdue notice in the mail.

David tried to explain that it was really no big deal, there were no overdue fines after all. Happens to everyone. But the father was adamant that his children needed to learn to be responsible for their actions. Everyone left that conversation unhappy.

The next time David got an overdue notice himself, he reflected on how it was designed to look like a past-due bill. The text of the letter, too, seemed intended to scare people into returning books. Inflated replacement fees, transcript blocks, and other dire consequences were listed as imminent outcomes. David could see why the father had reacted the way he had, especially since he wasn't much of a library user himself.

And, unfortunately, that is where this story ends. If it ever occurred to David to *change* the overdue notices, it was soon forgotten



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among his myriad day-to-day job responsibilities. As far as he knows, those same overdue notices are still mailed out today.

Insight to Action

A better ending is found in Carrie Valdes' chapter in *Hopeful Visions, Practical Actions: Cultural Humility in Library Work*. She tells the story of the moment, some years into her tenure as director of the Moab, Utah, public library, that she recognized that the barriers the library's policies and practices were creating for some people in her community were a bigger problem than the problems they were trying to solve. This realization led Valdes and her team to completely rethink everything the library does, from how equipment is checked out, to who is eligible for library cards, to how late or lost materials are handled. No aspect of the library's services was off-limits for an overhaul.[1]

As an example, one policy had prohibited people under twelve from entering the library on their own. But, like in David's story above, the library can be a place for children to go after school while their parents are still at work. Why should that be available for a twelve-year-old but not an eleven-year old? While there are potential problems for the library in having young people there alone, that policy created a very real barrier for children whose parents were unavailable to take them to the library. With a reexamination of its purpose, the policy became that if a child is too young to be asked to leave the library alone, they cannot be in the library unattended.

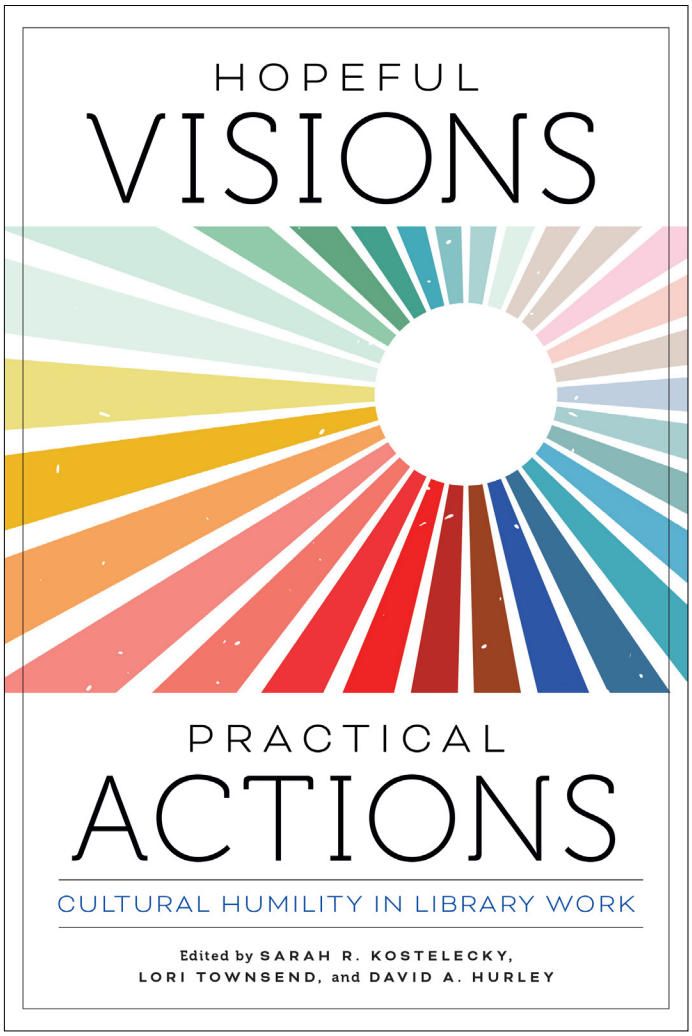
To us, this is an example of cultural humility in practice—seeing that something is causing a problem that has an outsized impact on people in one group, particularly ones in a position of less relative power, *and* taking steps to redress the problem.

It is a deceptively simple theme of Valdes' chapter—just because something isn't a problem for you doesn't mean it isn't a problem. This sounds obvious; surely, we all know of real problems that don't affect us personally. But this idea has power when we recognize that there are many real problems that, because they don't impact us, we don't even see.

When we are involved, unknowingly, in creating and perpetuating a problem, we can have a strong motivation to think that it isn't really a problem. It is learning to see *those* problems that can be transformative.

Why is it sometimes difficult to even recognize certain problems? Often, it is because people assume that their own values, expectations, and experiences are more universal than they really are. This leads to misunderstanding other people's motivations, the trade-offs they are making, and the barriers they face. When this assumption is shared by the people making policy or designing services, it can create structural problems that might be invisible to those who aren't affected.

This is a real risk in librarianship. Despite decades of efforts to diversify the profession, our workforce remains overwhelmingly

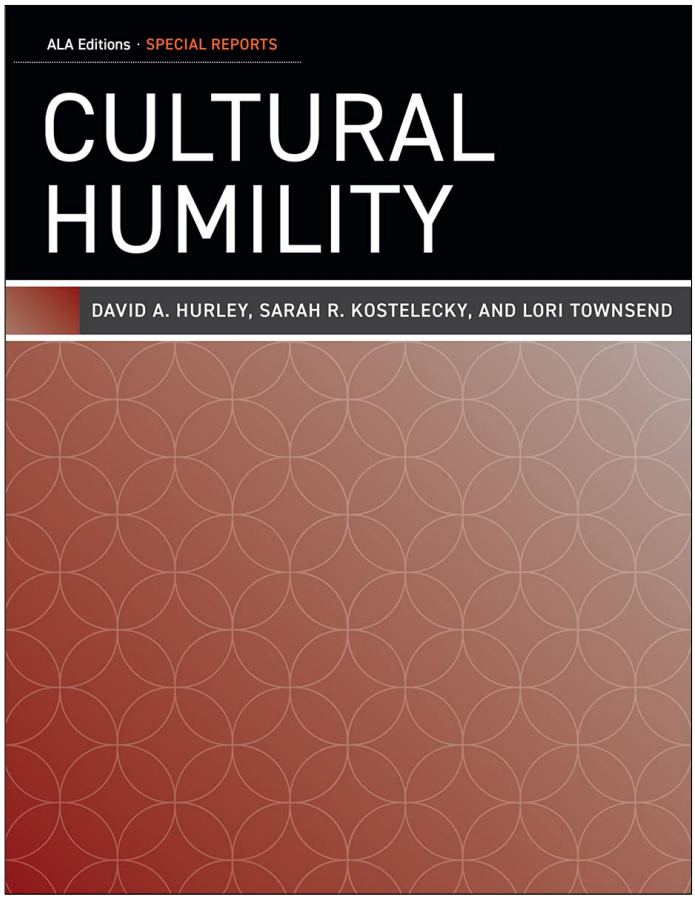


white, especially in higher-level positions. This can lead to an implicit assumption of whiteness as objectively normal—that the diversity of norms, values, and cultures of white communities (middle class, educated professional communities, specifically) in the US represents the full range of what is ordinary, commonplace, and unexceptional. Structural issues, including ones created by the library, facing the more diverse communities we serve, can easily be invisible to much of the library's workforce.

Children's Services Challenges

Children's librarianship presents an especially interesting challenge in this regard. Because of the different legal status of children and our societal expectations around the need to protect them, library employees working with children will be more used to seeing a policy's impacts from the perspective of a child or parent, and are well positioned to notice, and work to change, policies that negatively impact services to children. That is, children's librarians know that just because something isn't a problem for adult patrons doesn't mean it isn't a problem.

But at the same time, cultural norms around parenting can lead to very different interpretations of the same events. What might be considered a healthy way to foster a child's independence in



one set of parenting norms can look like neglect to people from a culture with different norms. Caring attention can look like smothering. Medical care can be misconstrued as abuse.

Medical professionals often learn the different health practices of their patients, but in libraries, we cannot know the identities of all the patrons who come through the door. This is especially true for children, who are themselves just learning the cultures of their parents, grandparents, neighborhood, church, school, peer-group, and so on, which may be in subtle (or not so subtle) conflict with each other. So, what can we do?

This is where we see a role for cultural humility.

What Is Cultural Humility?

For the past several years, the three of us, all currently librarians at the University of New Mexico, have been exploring how cultural humility can help libraries improve on issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. While we don't think it is a cure-all, we do think it can help reduce harm in day-to-day interactions, and help us find our way to bigger, systemic changes.

Cultural humility, according to the definition we developed for library contexts, "involves the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other oriented in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the other person, the ability to recognize the context in which interactions occur, and a commitment to redress power imbalances and other structural issues to the benefit of all parties."[2]

These are the key ideas of cultural humility:

- There is not one single objectively "normal" set of norms, even if our norms seem especially normal to us.
- People's cultural identities will affect interactions in ways that may not be predictable or easily articulated.
- The context of the interaction matters—whether that is institutional context, geographic context, historical context, or the context of how everyone's day is going.
- Power differentials, obvious or subtle, appropriate or not, can cause or exacerbate problems leading to poorer service.
- We should commit to recognizing and redressing these problems.

Taking these together, we see complexity. But there is some relief in the recognition of this complexity. None of us *can* know everything important that is affecting an interaction. We all *will* miss important details, sometimes making things worse despite good intentions. But cultural humility gives us the framework for recovering from missteps, for reminding ourselves to resist getting defensive, for recognizing as real the problems that we maybe didn't see, and for building relationships and ultimately reducing harm.

Practicing Cultural Humility

How does one put cultural humility into practice? There are three main behaviors that we associate with cultural humility.[3]

- *Make an effort not to be defensive.* This isn't to say you can never defend yourself when someone unfairly accuses you, or your library, of something. But listen first, be willing to consider what they are saying, and separate their larger point from any personal attack. Once you get defensive the conversation becomes all about you. It may not need to be.
- *Recognize others' perspectives.* This isn't limited to the perspective of the person in front of you. Consider also the perspectives implied in your library policies, services, physical spaces, and collections.
- *Self-reflect.* Critical self-reflection is a key part of cultural humility. Examine your own beliefs, values, and culture, and consider how your own identities influence how you see the world. If you find yourself getting angry or defensive about something, return to it later to understand your reaction. The goal here is to be able to recognize the part that your own cultural norms and expectations are playing in an interaction.

Our definition focuses on interpersonal interactions, but it isn't only front-line, public-facing work that benefits from a practice

of cultural humility. Back of the house can benefit, too. Sarah Kostelecky, one of the authors of this article, and Olivia Baca, the education librarian and manager of the children's collection at the University of New Mexico, are working on a project to incorporate cultural humility into the children's literature collection management practices. Looking at titles' subject headings, awards, and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) representation as well as circulation and other data, they seek to understand what a book's catalog record might communicate (or not) to patrons of different ages and expertise about the book and the collection. One early finding is that certain awards, such as Newbery and Caldecott, are much more likely to be represented in an item's metadata than others, such as the American Indian Library Association's Youth Literature Awards or the Stonewall Book Awards, reinforcing the power of the big-name awards.

When we are involved, unknowingly, in creating and perpetuating a problem, we can have a strong motivation to think that it isn't really a problem. It is learning to see those problems that can be transformative.

In their chapter in *Hopeful Visions, Practical Actions*, Silvia Lin Hanick and Kelsey Keyes also bring cultural humility to children's collections, in this case exploring how a practice of cultural humility affects children's book selection.[4] They acknowledge the relationships readers often form with books and explore the emotions they experience as professionals, mothers, and readers when they select children's literature.

They also reflect upon the way books can have power in the selection process—from the power of memories to the power that comes with having won awards or other recognition, and the power behind those awards themselves. The power of one's own norms comes into play here, too, with Keyes sharing her hesitation in selecting *How Mamas Love Their Babies*, a book that presents "dancing all night long in special shoes," i.e., at a strip club, as one of the careers a mother might use to support her children.[5] For the families who are supported by an exotic dancer, this work is normal, and having it presented alongside myriad other professions makes sense, even if it is uncomfortable for some people working in libraries.

This brings up the important issue of book challenges. We see cultural humility as a way to make space for a wider set of cultural norms to ensure better services, and ultimately a more just society, for all. Typically, a practice of cultural humility helps someone who is in a position of relative power recognize and value the norms of people in positions of less relative power. Challenges to library materials or programs, on the other hand, often come from people or groups using their position of power to reinforce their own norms and exclude others. Understanding their perspective may be valuable, but it isn't necessarily an act of cultural humility.

Not Easy, But Important

This isn't easy work, and sometimes it isn't comfortable. Committing to seeing multiple perspectives, and committing to not being defensive, means committing to discomfort, both personal discomfort and institutional. Attempting to redress structural inequities is challenging, and you may face criticism both from those for whom the structures work well, and those who demand quicker and more comprehensive solutions. But if we, as library professionals, can improve our services to everyone in our communities, the work is worth it.

None of the three of us currently works with children directly. We do not have the expertise ourselves to understand exactly how cultural humility might manifest in library work with children. Instead, we provide a brief overview and a few examples so you can decide if this approach has potential for you. Our hope is that, if you think it does, you will apply it to your work in ways that we haven't considered.

For more inspiration for bringing cultural humility to your work, both *Cultural Humility* and our edited volume, *Hopeful Visions, Practical Actions: Cultural Humility in Library Work*, are available from ALA Editions. &

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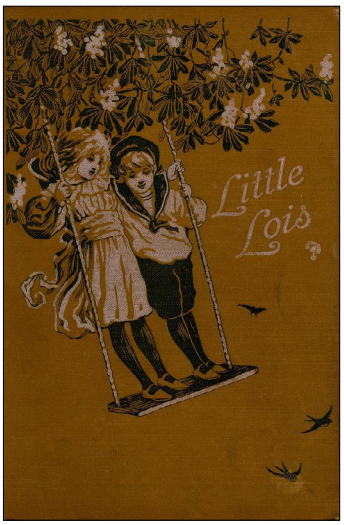
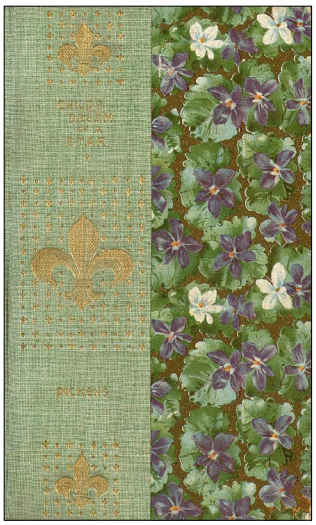
Weeping Bitterly

Death and Grief in the Baldwin Library's Collection

J. JOSEPH PRINCE





In autumn 2021, months after the vaccine had proven to be effective in combating the novel coronavirus outbreak and as the Delta variant was picking up speed, I found myself thinking about the catastrophic loss our nation had experienced and was continuing to endure. Mostly, though, my attention kept turning to the losses weathered by our nation's children. I thought of the grieving families and of the children who suddenly found themselves orphans.

The losses were indeed calamitous—an estimated two hundred thousand children in this country are now orphans *because of* the coronavirus. In fact, as of 2022, the pandemic alone was responsible for a little less than a tenth of all orphans under the age of 18.[1] As new variants emerge and as both resistance to and lack of access to vaccines continue to be societal barriers, that number will likely grow.

These concerns inspired me to apply for ALSC's Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship. I was interested in how both death and grief had historically been addressed in children's literature, specifically picture books. I wondered if there were parallels or diversions in structure, in vocabulary, and in presentations of death and grief.

This article will orient readers to my preparation for research during the Bechtel Fellowship, my experience at the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature, and my thoughts on what I discovered. I am by no means an expert on death, dying, grief, and loss; my observations are exploratory and specific to the Baldwin Library. My interpretations are just that—how I processed the experience and what librarians can gain from seeking out historic materials about the topic.

How the Literature Review Guided My Process

Plenty of scholarly research has been conducted on the topic of death and dying in children's literature. While preparing my application, I was drawn to articles that explored how teachers and librarians navigate this difficult subject with the children they serve. How can teachers and librarians dismantle the taboo of speaking openly about death and grief? How can they invite children to be vulnerable by modeling their own vulnerability? I was drawn to the research conducted by Nick Husbye and his colleagues in their article "Death Didn't Come Up at Center Time." It provided enlightening insight into why many educators struggle with talking to children about death and grief.[2]

Several of the articles in the literature review provided me with a solid framework from which I could evaluate the titles I read. I developed a spreadsheet partially using the criteria created by Angel M. Wiseman in her article "Summer's End and Sad Goodbyes: Children's Picturebooks about Death and Dying," specifically the guiding questions in table 1.[3] Equally important in this framing was Lisa Von Drasek's "Grief in Picturebooks: An

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Evaluative Rubric," which allowed me to tighten my focus while taking notes.[4] Although both Wiseman's and Von Drasek's focus is on picture books, the parameters they use can be easily adapted to both chapter books and middle grade titles.

During my research, I concentrated on the following components:

1. **The age and race of the protagonist (or the person who grieved).** With regards to age, I was initially interested in a child's perspective, but several titles had fascinating portrayals of parental grief. As for race, it was disappointing, though not truly surprising, that 100 percent of the titles I read featured white (or white as default) characters.

2. **The emotional arc of the person who grieves, including their acknowledgment about the finality of death.** Although it has been criticized for being inaccurate and fairly unhelpful,[5] Elizabeth Kübler-Ross' five stages of grief is a familiar model of how American society has thought about grieving. I wondered if these stages were captured in early writing, perhaps granting an historic prelude to Kübler-Ross' theory.

3. **The age and race of the person who dies and their relationship to the griever.** Initially I was interested in the child's navigation of losing a parent or guardian, but as the research deepened, my focus changed, as described later.

4. **The cause of death and the acknowledgment of the cause.** In the United States, we often speak quite specifically about the cause of death (e.g., "Nana died of lung cancer. Brad died of a brain aneurysm"). I wondered if that was a recent phenomenon, especially given the relative lack of medical technology in the 1800s.

5. **Vocabulary.** Often, writers will refer to death as anything *but* death. Florid language and euphemisms are gentle substitutes. I wanted to see if death was named or if it was communicated in alternate language.

6. **Coping strategies and the impact of death.** Social-emotional learning posits that children can more deeply navigate their own feelings and develop empathy by accepting and understanding the emotions of others.[6] I wondered if emotional navigation would be present in historic children's books.

Research Process at the Baldwin

Prior to visiting the Baldwin Library, I developed a list of possible subject headings to use as search terms in the catalog. I wondered if there was a wealth of children's literature written after the 1918 pandemic, seeking some strong parallels there.

The Baldwin's holdings, however, did not yield a substantial body of work reflecting this topic, so I returned to looking at death and grief more holistically. Further, the first handful of titles I read were from the 1800s, and I found myself drawn to both the writing style and sheer volume of published titles on the subject of death and dying. To tighten my focus, I decided to read only books published in the mid-to-late 1800s with a few outliers from the earlier years of that century.

Armed with subject headings, I encountered a substantial barrier on my first day of research—the online catalog. In the Baldwin's digital galleries, the linked subject headings don't unite books about the same topic. For example, in the record for *Little Lois*,[7] one of the linked subjects is "Youth and Death Juvenile Fiction (lcsh)" [Library of Congress Subject Heading]. Unfortunately, when that hyperlink is clicked, there are no further results. Separating the subject from the audience ("youth and death," "juvenile fiction") proved similarly fruitless, so there was no way to combine all the titles from the digital galleries into a neat, packaged returned result. However, in the catalog record for the physical copy of *Little Lois*,[8] the linked subject headings *did* work, uniting all titles about the subject. I shifted from exploring the digital galleries to using only the physical collection.

Well into my first day, it became apparent that I would not be able to limit my selections to just picture books or even illustrated books. The Baldwin Library's collection is arranged by size rather than by topic, genre, or audience. The catalog's records don't indicate intended audience/age or genre. Since my time was limited to two weeks, I broadened the focus of my research to general children's literature, adhering to the ALSC's definition of serving ages zero to fourteen. I began to examine *any* book that featured death and grief. Though I hesitate to impose modern-day terms on the books I read at the Baldwin, most of the titles fell within in the spectrum of early chapter books to middle-grade books.

The physical card catalog, though, turned out to be my greatest asset. It opened a huge door and allowed me to make far more discoveries than those in the online catalog. For example, the book *The Baby's Death*, which I hadn't found online but *was* in the physical card catalog, became a Rosetta Stone. After discovering this title, I cross-referenced it in the online catalog and found different variations of previous subject headings I'd been using. Suddenly, I had hundreds of books at my fingertips. To help winnow down this overwhelming number, I focused only on books where a death (and the inevitable grief of the characters mourning the loss) was the inciting incident of the book's plot.

Observations

Early in my reading, I began to notice patterns—specifically that most of the deaths I encountered were those of *children*. This shouldn't have been surprising since life expectancies were lower, very few vaccines had been invented, and there was little understanding of how viruses and bacteria operated. Still, I was alarmed by the sheer volume of titles that featured the deaths of children and how indelicate the discussions surrounding the deaths were; that is, there was a bluntness to how death was written about that is quite shocking to modern sensibilities. I soon turned all my attention to these books, largely ignoring any book where an adult passes away.

Most of the books featuring the deaths of children were of a religious nature. Organizations such as the American Sunday-School Union seemed to regularly publish collected biographies of children who had died. These stories, often relayed through anonymous witnesses or priests years after the death had occurred, rarely came across as authentic recountings, but rather lurid cautionary tales. Therefore, the purpose of these books is straightforward—impress upon young people the importance of being a good Christian, doing right by your parents, and putting God before all else in life. When the time comes—and it will come—salvation is paramount. The children in these collected biographies die gruesome deaths, often rendered in excruciating detail. Throughout the ordeal, however, they are pious, eager to die and meet their Maker. To that end, the books seem to encourage martyrdom.

A curious lack of characterization is prevalent throughout many of the titles. The protagonists lack an interior landscape, and often come across as empty vessels. This makes sense, especially in the religious tracts; the child character is meant to be *all* children so that the child reader could see themselves as the main character—ailing, suffering, and dying, and being a good example of piety for those they left behind. This is in stark contrast to the modern biography, which tends to highlight the lives of people who have had a significant impact historically, culturally, or politically.

Modern children aren't necessarily expected to see themselves as the *subject* of the biography. Perhaps they may be expected to relate to the person, but not to *be* them. Overlaying a modern understanding of biographies on these "death biographies" (for their really is no better term that I can think of for them) is an exercise in futility. They are curious and fascinating relics of a bygone era.

There was often a refreshing lack of euphemisms for death employed in the books. Perhaps this was because the death of children was so commonplace, almost expected, that there really was no need to sugarcoat the finality of death. The language was often stripped of emotion; this lack of tone is in stark contrast to how modern literature might deal with the topic:

> There came no breath from the baby's lungs. . . . Herbert had never looked upon death before; and, as he stood there in the darkened room with his mother and the dead baby, he asked some questions that made his mother's tears flow fast and fall down upon the pillow of the little bed in the coffin.—*Little Ernest, or, The Land Beyond the River*[9]

Some books, however, did use flowery language—characters "expire," "[fall] asleep in Jesus," and have spirits that "[take their] flight into the eternal world."

Grief is similarly stark in its portrayal. Although many characters are cartoonishly reduced to "weeping bitterly" (a description I read so often it became mordantly humorous), there's a startling humanity imbued in most of the characters reeling from the deaths of their loved one. This is made even more interesting because the lack of character development tended to remove this reader from the mourners' emotions.

Authors (and when authors were not explicated, I assumed publishers) seemed to draw upon their own experiences with grief to render the gut-wrenching tides of emotion. The choice of words was so exacting that they pointed to an acute understanding of death's aftermath. *Little Lois* acknowledges the dizzying disassociation that accompanies an unexpected death:

> She had gone about with a strange, stunned feeling, as though part of her brain were numb, and only half of it really awake.[10]

The Baby's Death shows a striking spectrum of grief.[11] Some of the children cry at the loss of the infant, but others remark about the costumes of the girls in the funeral procession. In an emotional sequence, the brother of the deceased baby cries out to stop the coffin from being lowered into the ground. He is consumed with both fear and anguish and has to be reminded that the child's soul is no longer on Earth. After the funeral, an exchange between the parents is marked with sadness, but points to an unyielding acceptance of the finality. They admit there is little they could have done for the sick baby and resign themselves to the loss. It's an alarmingly stark moment.

Five Titles of Note

[*The Life and Happy Death of Anna Emery*], George Goodwin & Sons, 1821[12]

This title started me on my journey of finding supposed biographies of dying children. The first nine pages outline, in intense detail, the titular character's suffering before the jaws of death ensnare her. The level of detail isn't all that different from the clinical gruesomeness found in books like Gail Jarrow's contemporary nonfiction Medical Fiascos series. The difference here, of course, is that the character is a child.

The Sad Mistake [American Sunday-School Union], 1854[13]

This was the first title I encountered from the American Sunday-School Union, but unlike their collected biographies, this book is most certainly a work of fiction. Of particular note is the curiosity of the child protagonist, Allie, whose peer, Jennie, has died. Interestingly, Allie's parents speak quite frankly of Jennie's death, reminding Allie of her pet kitten that had died. It's an equivalence that helps Allie understand the finality of Jennie's death. Because Allie's parents have not impressed upon Allie the importance of religious devotion, this title takes a decidedly dark turn at the halfway point.

Thoughts on the Death of Little Children, Samuel Irenæus Prime, 1865[14]

Samuel Irenæus Prime wrote the most shockingly frank book I read at the Baldwin (*The Little Burnt Girl*), but this title is more analogous to the modern self-help book. Prime walks bereaved parents through the avalanche of emotions that accompany the loss of a child. Using his own experiences as an anchor, Prime's book is notable for acknowledging both emotional vulnerability and the capsizing feelings of loss—the days, months, and even years of grief on the horizon. His observations often feel quite ahead of their time:

> To shut ourselves up in the dark to brood over our sorrows, is the worst of all remedies for grief.[15]

Agnes and the Little Key, Nehemiah Adams, 1870[16]

This title came incredibly close to hewing to the arc of the Kübler-Ross model. It follows two parents who have lost their baby, Agnes, and are unmoored by their grief. More so than any other title I read, the loss is written about viscerally, centering the narrative on the peaks and valleys so common in the healing process.

> There will be a time when this will cease to be an affliction.[17]

A Child's Dream of a Star, Charles Dickens, 1871[18]

Dickens' brief story most closely resembled the modern-day picture book, in that text and images are married in a recognizable way. Following the joyful early days of two siblings who delight in philosophical musings, the sister, in true Dickensian fashion, begins to "droop" and soon dies, leaving her brother to cope with the loss. Readers follow the boy into adulthood; his life is riddled with tragedy, but he endures each day, knowing that he will eventually be reunited with his sister.

Closing Thoughts

When I was a middle school librarian, I never felt particularly equipped to talk to children about death, about the grieving process, or even to open myself up to talking about my own grief. In fact, those topics seemed taboo, even though I knew that being open and even vulnerable about these topics would make me a *better* educator, not a weaker one. I would have benefitted from *more* books that addressed death candidly, that avoid euphemism, that explore the emotional landscapes of grief.

Librarians have a lot to gain from exploring how death and grief were tackled in historic literature. Most of us are familiar with death in the classic chapter books and middle-grade books and how characters process the grief. Anne sacrifices her future while revisiting her fond memories after Matthew's gut-wrenching death in *Anne of Green Gables*; Cassie grapples with the racism and systemic inequity when she learns of T. J.'s unsettling, implied fate in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. There are plenty of contemporary titles with children grieving the deaths of other children: *Lolo's Light* by Liz Garton Scanlon; *The Shape of Thunder* by Jasmine Warga; *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes.

Exploring older books, like those from the nineteenth century, adds another layer of meaning, particularly in how we talk to children about death. The general lack of euphemisms in literature from this time, though quite unsettling for modern readers, offers a refreshing perspective and an unflinching guide to navigating the topic with children. After all, according to an article in *The Journal of Palliative Medicine,* authors Marina N. H. Arruda-Colli, Meaghann S. Weaver, and Lori Wiener cite that by "age seven years, most children understand death as irreversible, inevitable, and universal."[19]

I believe, then, that we owe it to children to speak openly and candidly about death, grief, and loss. Having looked at historic books that address grief and loss, I believe there is a space between two extremes in which contemporary children's literature can communicate these ideas in a nuanced way. Though the lurid accounts of yore have aged poorly, they are quite remarkable in their honest, mostly euphemism-free approach to death. Furthermore, the bone-shaking grief rendered in the writing, while often melodramatic, is admirable in its fearlessness. Grief is life-changing. Loss is forever. We can talk about these things with children in meaningful ways.

The experience of researching at the Baldwin Library has sharpened my sensitivity toward death and dying in children's literature. Children benefit from honest depictions of death and unfaltering affirmations of grief. Parents, guardians, teachers, and librarians should consider sharing contemporary literature that attends to a child's curiosity or need to understand these difficult topics. &

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Growing Book-Based Partnerships

NSU Alvin Sherman Library and PBS KidVision

MEAGAN ALBRIGHT

Miss Penny joins staff at the NSU Alvin Sherman Library for their annual Trick or Treat Storytime (2018).

This is the story of how a small seed planted in 2019 with a single short video grew into a veritable garden of virtual video collaborations between KidVision and the Nova Southeastern University (NSU) Alvin Sherman Library. For more than ten years, Penny Bernath, education director and host of South Florida PBS KidVision Pre-K, has partnered with the Alvin Sherman Library, a unique joint-use library serving the Broward County community as well as the students, faculty, and staff of NSU.

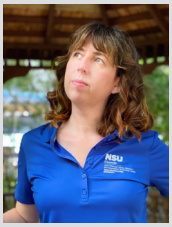
Affectionately known as Miss Penny by children in the South Florida community, she has been a special guest at storytimes for the library's special events, including Summer Reading, trick-or-treat storytime, Jumpstart Read for the Record, and the library's signature annual literacy festival StoryFest! These projects provided rich soil when it came time to plant the next crop of collaborations—online programming.

2019

Penny reached out to youth services librarians at the Sherman Library for I Spy 360°, a KidVision series visiting locations in South Florida with a special camera to film short (three- to five-minute) videos that encouraged children to play iSpy games in 360° environments to find and learn new words. Together they created KidVision iSpy 360° Library, where the audience joined KidVision Pre-K on an adventure to the NSU Alvin Sherman Library to explore the children's section and learn important library vocabulary. This partnership promoted awareness of the library and let children explore the children's section virtually and learn important book- and library-related vocabulary. As of January 2023, this video had 2,013 views.

2020

The library pivoted to virtual programming to support the recreational, cultural, and educational needs of children and families during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. KidVision Pre-K also expanded their online videos, adding programming via Facebook Live series including KidVision Storytime with Miss Penny and KidVision Fun Field Trip Friday. KidVision and the



Meagan Albright *is Youth Services Librarian at the Alvin Sherman Library at Nova Southeastern University in Florida, where she leads a team of Youth Services/Young Adult librarians in developing diverse, engaging programming to meet the cultural, recreational, and educational needs of children and families.*

library partnered to simultaneously premiere the library's storytime and KidVision's across both organizations' Facebook pages.

2021

In 2021, KidVision added Full STEAM Ahead, a series exploring science, technology, engineering, arts, and math via thirty-minute videos, to the shared line-up. This added benefit to our partnership came at the perfect time as it allowed patrons to engage and interact with the library in an online format during a time of *exceptionally* high demand at the start of the pandemic and expanded the reach and audience of both KidVision and the library. Total views for KidVision/Library shared programming as of January 2023: 7,220.

This added benefit to our partnership came at the perfect time as it allowed patrons to engage and interact with the library in an online format during a time of exceptionally *high demand at the start of the pandemic and expanded the reach and audience of both KidVision and the library.*

Building upon the success I Spy 360° and pandemic programming, Penny once again reached out to the Alvin Sherman Library, partnering with me to film an episode of KidVision Mission. This new series has a mission to educate and inspire young children to be the best they can be by visiting many places in South Florida so children can learn about their communities and develop their vocabulary and a host of other skills through virtual experiences. Penny and I collaborated via email, phone, and Zoom to develop a concept and script for a special episode entitled "KidVision Mission: A Day with a Children's Librarian," which was filmed on location at the library in September 2021. The total views for the two airdates of this episode are 5,895.

In this ten-minute episode, Penny visited the library to discover what a children's librarian does. While helping me prepare for and rehearse a storytime, Penny and the audience learned that a children's librarian needs to know a lot about all different kinds of books and really likes to help people. The episode invited children and families to experience how libraries are a magical place to learn and explore!

Promotional materials for this episode included shared posts on KidVision and the library's social media accounts, and the episode premiered simultaneously on the library's and South Florida PBS' YouTube channels in November 2021. As of January 2023, this video has 11,002 views.

2022

When the opportunity arose for KidVision to develop new episodes to appear not just online, but also on the South Florida PBS television channel, Penny once again reached out to her friends at the library to include "A Day with a Children's Librarian" as part of a thirty-minute KidVision Mission episode: "Learning About Books!" The audience joined Miss Penny and her mascot, Shiny the Star, on this KidVision Mission to learn all about their friends' unique careers: children's librarian, comic book-store employee. This episode premiered on YouTube in June 2022; as of January 2023 it has 1,450 views.

The KidVision crew consistently receives praise and positive feedback from local teachers, parents, and youth for their on-demand videos supporting the needs of families and classrooms in the community. One viewer noted that KidVision offers an excellent opportunity to create dialogue between her and her son. They watch the various field trips, such as the visit to the library, and construct visuals based on the activities provided, and the academic support helps her son develop classroom readiness skills.

Another viewer commented, [*sic*] "Miss Penny I enjoy and love all of your kidvision prek videos so much. My favorie flied trip the most is the children's librarian." With Miss Penny and her mascot, Shiny the Star, as friends of the library, the future for collaboration is bright! &

Tips from Miss Penny on Partnering with Your Local PBS Station!

PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) stations are community-based media organizations. We are encouraged to form relationships and get out and meet people. We are tasked to discover the needs of our community and to try to fill those needs as best we can. One of the ways we can do this is to provide entertaining and educational content that will support connectivity and growth. The library was a genuine place for me, as the education director of South Florida PBS, to reach out to make a connection. Once there, I loved it! The staff was cooperative, supportive, and fun to work with. And, as PBS is a trusted place for early education content, I felt safe to use the library as a partner to help serve our community's young families and children. Libraries that have not connected to their local PBS station should invite them to participate in an event. PBS stations that have funding can provide familiar characters like Daniel Tiger that draw families in. Then brainstorm on other ways to work together. Libraries are free and so is PBS, so we can reach the most in need in our communities.

PEER-REVIEWED

Gender Nonconforming Boys in Picture Books

Using Protagonists to Examine Social Roles and Stereotypes

DAVID CAMPOS

As I was exploring the children's literature section at my community library, I spotted the picture book *Williams' Doll* by Charlotte Zolotow (1972) standing upright on a bookshelf. I picked it up and reminisced about reading it to my students when I taught second grade in the early nineties. At that time, I noticed a pattern in some of my students' conversations that caused me concern because of some of their comments:

> "Those sneakers are for girls."
>
> "Boys don't play house."
>
> "Girls aren't supposed to play soccer."
>
> "Cars and trucks are for boys."

I shouldn't have been troubled with what they were saying. After all, the ideas that young children have about gender often reflect traditional views about social roles and gender stereotypes. In fact, by first grade, children have strong ideas about what is appropriate or acceptable for either gender,[1] including associating toys, clothing, games, jobs, colors, and behaviors with one of the sexes.[2] Psychologists have found that children are more likely to believe that math and computers are for boys, draw a man to represent a scientist or mathematician, and use the term "brilliance" to describe men but "nice" for women.[3] Even in modern times when children may be exposed to an increasing number of persons in nontraditional gender roles (e.g., female firefighters, male nurses, mothers doing yard work, fathers doing housework), it seems that children still cling to gender stereotypes. One study even found that five- to seven-year-olds were less likely to choose a girl as a teammate when they were told a game was designed for "really, really smart" children, which suggested to the researchers that both sexes have a bias against girls' abilities.[4]

Children develop these perceptions from direct and indirect messages from parents and family members, peers, media, and personnel and instructional materials.[5] These messages are in the form "of gender-based behavior towards children or children's exposure to gender discrimination against other people and gender-attributed evaluations of certain behaviors."[6] Psychologists explain, "Gender stereotypes conveyed to the child by the parents [and others] through explicit or implicit messages reinforce the gender inequality in the child's mind, and the consequences deepen in this direction."[7] They point out that young children accept these norms and expectations and seek out same-sex peers to socialize with, who in turn reinforce the norms and behavioral styles. Consult the work of Albert Bandura (social learning theory),[8] Lawrence Kohlberg (theories of cognitive and moral development),[9] and Margaret Signorella and Lynn Liben (gender

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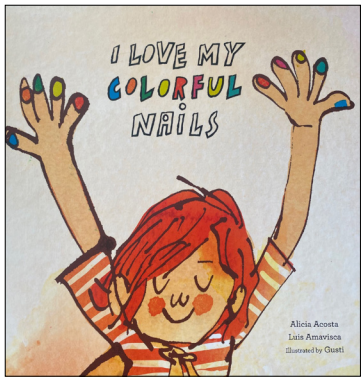

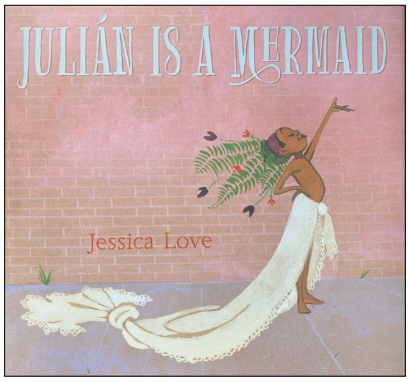

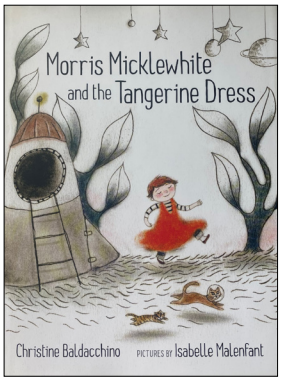

schema processing theory)[10] to learn more about other theories on how children form gender perceptions.

But when I was teaching my second graders, I was distressed when I observed how their statements might have influenced their behaviors and caused some students to conform to the gender roles or stereotypes they were hearing. A classroom of boys and girls learning alongside each another, coexisting peacefully, slowly began to splinter when some students expressed gender stereotypes and others began repeating them. I intervened when I heard a few students make defaming remarks about their peers who acted in ways that clashed with their ideas about gender roles. The insults were about boys.

Librarians can devote instructional time to explore gender roles in the early grades so that a school culture is cultivated that is inclusive of boys who show individuality in their thoughts and actions, such as a boy who enjoys wearing a princess outfit, playing with dolls, or carrying a purse. Such lessons can protect gender nonconforming boys from being targeted for harassment and bullying in later grades.

Moreover, children's perceptions of gender stereotypes can be altered through instructional lessons. Psychologists assert, "When children are taught that not people's gender, but their abilities and interests determine how well they can do an activity, children move from the idea of the 'constancy' of traditional gender roles, and they can think much more egalitarian."[11]

Why Focus on Boys?

Of course, gender nonconforming girls exist in school populations, but boys tend to be treated more harshly when they do not adhere to gender roles, seem effeminate, or exude a feminine sensibility. In fact, research finds that boys who do not fit masculine stereotypes are often ridiculed,[12] excluded,[13] and bullied in schools. One 2017 study of 9,300 students found that boys who were appraised as effeminate reported the highest risk of being bullied when compared with heterosexual boys and girls and sexual minority girls.[14] See *The 2017 National School Climate Survey*,[15] the Human Rights Campaign *2018 LGBTQ Youth Report*,[16] and the CDC *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2017*[17] for data that suggest that the prevalence of bullying is highest among gay and bisexual males (or those perceived to be) than other groups of students.

These kinds of reports have led psychologists to speculate that boys have much greater social pressures to conform to gender stereotypes than girls,[18] and suppressing their "natural emotions and pressuring them to behave according to a specific stereotype negatively affects their emotional growth and self-esteem."[19] In one study specific to children's reactions to *William's Doll*, the researchers concluded

> the emotional price paid by boys who choose non-traditional toys and activities causes damage that can be devastating and long-lasting. . . . Being taunted for behaving like a girl can be a potent lesson and may lower self-esteem and contribute to negative attitudes toward females, which in turn may interfere with healthy relationships.[20]

Other psychologists have noted that gender nonconforming children who are subjected to social pressures to conform risk developing serious mental health problems, such as chronic sadness and anxiety.[21] Indeed, boys who do not fit the traditional boy model pay a heavy price for not being likeminded: emotional pain and loneliness.[22]

Using picture books for lessons on gender roles and stereotypes can be beneficial for gender nonconforming boys. When boys can identify with the protagonist's predicament and learn there *are* others with relatable tendencies, they may feel less isolated, less marginalized, and less atypical. Moreover, they can learn how similar characters effectively deal with similar conflicts they have experienced. These positive outcomes can contribute to better mental health and well-being in their current and subsequent schooling, especially when other students have learned to examine their own attitudes and beliefs and are accepting and supportive of their peers.

For all the other boys (and girls), they learn that it is perfectly acceptable that some boys may be drawn to toys, play, or fashion traditionally attributed to girls or that some boys prefer to read or write poetry rather than pursue athletic sports or play with hypermasculine action figures, for example. Such books can also help children understand that "there are many ways to manhood and that some paths look very different from traditional ones."[23]

With instruction and guidance, they can learn to resist judging and mistreating boys who do not behave in ways that align with their ideas of boy roles. Reading one or two books featuring gender nonconforming boy protagonists may not drastically or radically alter some children's views on gender roles and stereotypes, especially when they receive counter messages elsewhere. But doing so is a step toward children having positive experiences about such boys, learning to respect and appreciate differences, and understanding that people function and work in diverse communities.

Picture Books about Gender Nonconforming Boys

In my efforts to teach my students about gender roles and stereotypes and suppress some of the troublesome behaviors I was witnessing, I set out to find a picture book that could help me spark a discussion on the topic. At the time (early 1990s), the only picture book I could find was *William's Doll* by Charlotte Zolotow, published in 1972. Picture books about gender nonconforming boys simply did not exist then. In the story, William desperately wants a doll to play with, but his father, brother, and the boy next door balk at the idea. His grandmother buys him the doll he covets, so that he—as she explains—can practice being a father.

As I read the title and the first few pages, one student raised her hand to inquire if the protagonist was indeed a boy even though William is a boy's name, William is referred to as he (and his), and he is illustrated in traditional boy clothes. When I confirmed that William was a boy, some of the students protested their disbelief in him. Their seven-year-old minds had a difficult time reconciling that a boy would rather play with a doll than with a train set or basketball, as revealed in the story.

I later found out that some of my second graders' opinions aligned with other children's when I read the study, "William's Doll Revisited." The authors of the research noted favorable and unfavorable responses to William in two groups of children, one in 1975 and the other in 1997. But the researchers had expected a more positive attitude toward William from the latter group given the children's exposure to the rich diversity in modern day. They explained, "There is strong evidence that children are still biased [twenty-two years later] in their gender-related attitudes and these biases place unfair limitation on both boys and girls."[24] And, emphasized accordingly, "Since literature affords students the opportunity to talk about issues in other people's lives while maintaining distance from their own, teachers may want to seek out children's books and develop conscious-raising activities."[25] (It would be interesting to see how children today—twenty-six years later—perceive William and his desire for a doll!)

In the meantime, I continued reading the story wishing there were additional books that my students could read about other gender nonconforming children because this story told one boy's account, perspective, and reality. My wish came true three decades later because the number of picture books on gender nonconforming children has increased dramatically over the years.[26] This is great news considering that some literacy experts had worried that nontraditional girls were getting more attention in children's literature than were boys who do not fit the traditional masculine stereotype.[27] Stories range from those focused on children (and animals) who do not act in accordance with social roles or expectations to stories that candidly address children who have an indisputable understanding of their gender identity that does not align with their sex they were assigned at birth.

Of these, the picture books that feature nonconventional boy protagonists can serve as a valuable resource to influence children's perceptions of boy gender stereotypes.[28] Librarians can use these to kickstart lessons that help students understand a child's unique perspective, learn to appreciate the assets he has, and build empathy for others who are socially marginalized or vulnerable. The stories can be used as teaching tools to raise awareness about boys who like to sparkle (*Angus All Aglow*; *Dazzling Travis*; *Sparkle Boy*), wear feminine-associated apparel (*The Boy & the Bindi*; *I Love My Colorful Nails*; *I Love My Purse*), play with dolls (*Clive and His Babies*; *Teddy's Favorite Toy*; *Big Bob, Little Bob*), and dance (*Dancing in Thatha's Footsteps*; *Henry Holton Takes the Ice*; *Harrison Dwight, Ballerina and Knight*). The stories can also be used to cultivate conversations on how to deal with intolerant views, beliefs, and behaviors.

Some of the books I recommend for lessons feature positively portrayed protagonists who are honest, courageous, and determined, but also affectionate, gentle, and warm-hearted. They are depicted as coveting toys or in play traditionally associated with girls or showing little to no interest in sports or common boy toys. Without being didactic and moralizing, the narratives reveal boys who are not ashamed of who they are or embarrassed to express what they enjoy. And, in the face of conflict, they react to characters in realistic ways (e.g., Ben is sad and cries when he is teased in *I Love My Colorful Nails*; Morris gets a stomach ache when he is shunned in *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*; Julián is speechless when his grandmother finds him playing dress-up in *Julián Is a Mermaid*). Many of the stories offer positive messages about acceptance, getting along, and friendship despite differences, which will come in handy when some children are resistant to the morals or intolerant of the protagonists. To ease their misgivings in such cases, conversations can focus on being kind, standing up for others, practicing inclusivity, and so forth.

Let's look at three examples to see how some of the stories evolve from normative assumptions to acceptance:

- *Big Bob, Little Bob*. It seems the only commonality two neighbor boys have is their name. Interest wise, they are polar opposites. Little Bob likes to play with dolls, Big Bob likes to play with trucks. Little Bob likes to play school, Big Bob likes to play catch. More of the same continues as Big Bob reminds Little Bob of how boys are supposed to play, dress, and act. When a girl moves into the neighborhood, she similarly proclaims boy stereotypes. Big Bob, however, quickly comes to Little Bob's defense and insists, "Boys can do whatever they want!" The ending depicts the three children harmoniously playing together, each at their pleasure. Big Bob's attitude about boy

gender roles changed largely because he got to know and spent time with Little Bob.

- *Henry Holton Takes the Ice*. Redheaded Henry does not fit in his own family, who are hockey fanatics. Even his mom drives a Zamboni to work! As expected, they all predict that he is going to become the finest hockey player ever. But despite all the fervor, Henry wants to figure skate instead, much to his father's and sister's chagrin. "Ice dancing is for girls," his sister argues. When his grandmother comes to visit, she gives him her old figure skates, which he uses at the ice rink and shows his family what he can do. After watching his stunts, his father has a change of heart and buys Henry his own figure skates and hires him a coach. Through his determination and practice, Henry starts to master some complex dance moves as his family cheers him on. The family's notion that girls figure skate and boys play hockey was refuted when they saw how talented (and determined) Henry was at ice dancing.

- *I Love My Colorful Nails*. Ben loves to paint and marvel at his nails. But one day while wearing bright red nail polish, two boys tease him with jeers, "Painting your nails is for girls." And add, "You're a girl! You're a girl!" Understandably, he becomes dejected. So, his father paints his own nails to cheer him up. But when Ben is ridiculed again, he decides to paint his nails on the weekends only, when other children can't see them. His father, on the other hand, continues to wear his painted nails proudly. In the end, all his classmates surprise Ben with a birthday party where they all showcase their painted nails. When others saw how normal it was for Ben's father—a man—to paint his nails, the boys' stereotype about their roles was broken.

While there are many stories that involve personified animals as central figures (e.g., *The Sissy Duckling*; *Willy the Wimp*; *Max, the Stubborn Little Wolf*) that can be read to the students, I find it is easier for students to identify with child characters who are similar in age and struggle with relatable, real-life issues (e.g., an overbearing sibling). Not to mention, empirically based research has found that children's books with human characters tend to have greater moral impact on children than animals. One study suggests that stories with human characters rather than anthropomorphized animals lead children to behave more generously.[29] The psychologists of the study noted, "Books that do not present animals and their environments accurately from a biological perspective may not only lead to less learning, but also influence children to adopt a human-centered view of the animal world."[30]

Lessons on Gender Roles and Stereotypes

The ideas presented below are based on research that supports how children who are taught to challenge gender stereotypes are more likely to be aware of their influences than children who learn to accept them.[31] Indeed, reading books to children that show boys and girls in different roles, having a wide range of emotions, and expressing themselves in diverse ways can position them—with some instruction—to recognize stereotypes and how influential they are.[32]

Begin the lesson by reading the stories (examples listed in the sidebar on the next page) and asking questions that encourage children to share their opinions and converse with the group. A Think-Pair-Share can help them contemplate the story and characters and discuss their ideas with a partner before reporting about them to the whole group. This strategy allows the children to express what they know and feel about gender roles and stereotypes and explore what is gender appropriate by listening to what others have to say, explaining and defending their ideas, responding to feedback, etc. They can be guided to consider how the protagonists are entitled to their individuality, have inherent assets that make them contributing members of their communities, and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

Students can reflect on the protagonists and their circumstances through questions such as:

- What do you like about ___?
- How is ___ like (different than) boys you know?
- How would you feel if you were told you could not play as you wanted?
- Why is it acceptable that ___ wants to ___ ?
- What would happen to ___ if people continued to be mean to him?

Afterward, the discussion can be augmented with anchor charts that feature the definitions of gender roles and stereotypes with key points, such as the following:

- Gender roles are expectations for how boys and girls should act, dress, and play.
- They are expectations for "what boys are supposed to do" and "what girls are supposed to do."
- These expectations come from adults, children, TV shows, commercials and social media.
- Some children act, dress, and play like they "are supposed to" (they fit gender roles).
- Some children do not act, dress, and play like they "are supposed to" (they do not fit gender roles).

Follow with examples of stereotypical gender roles and emphasize how these can be fulfilled by boys or girls, such as the following:

- Girls like to play house.
- Boys like to play rough and wrestle.
- Girls like to play school and being a nurse.
- Boys like to play at being firefighters and police officers.

- Girls play with dolls, tea sets, and jewelry.
- Boys play with action figures, trucks, and sports equipment.

At the same time, the students can be taught to challenge these expectations by asking them to contemplate: How are these expectations problematic? How could these expectations hurt someone's feelings or make someone feel left out? How are these expectations formed? Why would some people believe these expectations? What happens when we follow these expectations? What happens when we do not? What harm can happen when a boy or girl does not follow the expectations? Keep in mind that some boys may be reluctant to express how they feel about the topic. In such cases, use inclusive language about the protagonists, the other characters, the setting, etc.[33]

To continue the lesson, pair the anchor chart with one on gender stereotypes. Important points can include the following:

- Gender stereotypes are ideas that people have about boys and girls that come from beliefs that narrowly define what children can and cannot do.
- Some people believe these ideas and treat boys and girls unfairly.
- Some people believe these ideas and spread them, sometimes unknowingly.
- Gender stereotypes can be insensitive, negative, and excluding.
- Gender stereotypes can lead to harmful behaviors, like name-calling or fighting.

Using the examples below, gender stereotypes can be examined with questions such as, how does the stereotype make you feel? How might it affect the choices you make? How might children who do not fit the stereotype feel? How might it be harmful to children who break the stereotype? How are some of our beliefs based on stereotypes? What stereotypes have you heard, and how did they make you feel?

- Girls like to play at cooking and cleaning because they are home-oriented.
- Boys play rough and wrestle because they are tough and strong.
- Firefighters and police officers are perfect jobs for boys because boys are brave and strong.
- Boys who play with dolls, tea sets, and jewelry are wimps.
- Girls who wrestle are tomboys.

Steer the conversation toward gender nonconforming boys by emphasizing these ideas:

- Boys and girls can choose to act, dress, and play in different ways.
- Gender stereotypes can lead some children to believe it is wrong when boys do not act, dress, and play the same as other boys.
- It is acceptable that some boys enjoy playing with dolls, carrying a purse, or painting their nails.
- Boys who do not act, dress, and play the same as other boys should be respected.
- No boy should be bullied or harassed because he does not act, dress, or play the same as other boys.

After the reading and discussion, students can write texts of encouragement to the protagonists or advice for their persecutors, create classroom proclamations on inclusivity, start a schoolwide campaign to honor human diversity, to name a few instructional activities. While the goal of this article is to support gender nonconforming boys and promote inclusivity in learning communities, future lessons can focus on other damaging stereotypes (race, for example) to further affirm that individual differences are valued and to reassure students that all are welcomed and accepted.

Conclusion

While all students deserve to be respected for their individuality, gender nonconforming boys are at greater risk of being bullied or harassed in the upper grades than other groups of students. To create welcoming environments inclusive of all children—especially boys who resist gender norms, librarians can read picture books about boys who do not act, dress, and play like other boys. Reading these books won't eradicate children's tendencies of gender stereotyping, but it is a step toward affirming that boys who do not act, dress, and play like other boys are worthy of acceptance and respect just as all the other valuable, contributing members of their learning community. &

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Behind Bars, But Ahead of the Game

Making Reading Memories with Parents Who Are Incarcerated

SHARON VERBETEN

When a parent is incarcerated, that situation brings challenges not only to the parent in jail, but also to the family left at home. A program of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension is hoping to not only reconnect families but also to bring an element of literacy to their interactions.

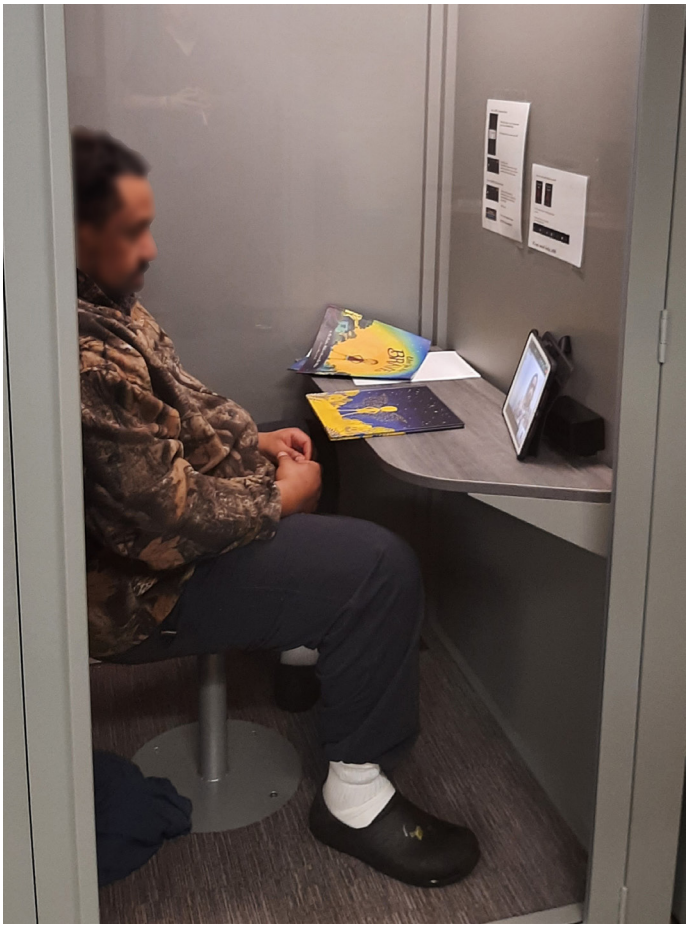
County jails in a dozen counties in Wisconsin have partnered with UW-Madison Extension to connect children and their incarcerated parent or caregiver through a literacy-rich experience called Making Reading Memories, which is one of several strategies of The Literacy Link.

To launch their program, Brown County Jail Administrator Captain Heidi J. Michel met with Brown County Library and the UW-Madison Extension about the program, which Brown County Jail launched in July 2022.

As part of the program, each parent in jail was offered the opportunity to take a workshop where they learned the benefits of creating a close bond with their children through reading. Parents learned how to make reading fun and strategies to connect with their children through books they love.

The workshop was led by the program's coordinator at UW-Madison Extension via Zoom, and four men participated. Once they completed the workshop, they chose a book and were video recorded reading the book to their child. Jail administration reviewed the videos and then sent the link and a copy of the book to the child; funding for the books and mailings was provided by a research grant from UW-Madison.

Based on a report compiled by UW-Madison Extension, parents noticed an improvement in the parent-child relationship and felt like their video strengthened their bond to their child and/or family.



Incarcerated parents can bring literacy to their children in this program.

One participant noted, "It helped me open up as a father to really understand more about literature and more [about the] importance of reading books to them. I can do more as a father to help them learn . . . and a big part of them learning is wanting to . . . follow in my footsteps. And if they see that I think it's cool to read, they'll read also."

Sharon Verbeten *is Youth Services Manager at the Manitowoc (WI) Public Library; this is her twenty-first year as editor of* Children and Libraries.

Learning about the Making Reading Memories program.

Leaning into Literacy

Pajarita Charles, assistant professor in social work at UW-Madison, in partnership with UW-Madison Extension, and Julie Poehlmann, professor of human development and family studies, received a two-year grant to further evaluate and expand Making Reading Memories. Their research study includes implementation in a second location: Polk County. They intend to develop a sustainability plan to help meet the demands of the program around the state. Making Reading Memories is now implemented in fifteen counties in Wisconsin.

Charles said, "My sense is that there is growing interest in this program," although she was unaware of similar programs around the nation.

Why doesn't this exist elsewhere? Charles posits, "Jails and prisons in this country have limited capacity to adequately prepare parents before they are released back to their home communities. We know from research that building sustaining relationships between people who are incarcerated and family members can be helpful to both children and parents behind bars. However, evidence-based programming and significant resources are needed to deliver such services in partnership with corrections systems."

Charles hopes her work will continue to build evidence and provide the rationale for replication in other communities.

She said, "I often convey . . . incarcerated parents are similar to most other parents—they want to be connected to their children and families."

Since 2016, Mary Campbell Wood, founding member of the Literacy Link at the UW-Madison Extension, has worked at strengthening bonds between parent and child, increasing literacy capability and opportunity, and focusing on supporting caregivers; Making Reading Memories is just one of these strategies.

"In general, in our country, children have really been overlooked; it hasn't been paid attention to," she said. That, she added, is because of a huge incarceration rate and an overload in systems. "Their families and children are not even second or third thought."

This program aims to remedy that—one book and one interaction at a time. And parents behind bars are meeting the call.

One participant said, "My child was like, 'Dad, that's awesome. Like, I never thought they'd let you do that.' And I just—I was speechless. I didn't really expect my child to be as excited as he was, how happy he was, and my wife too, it was just like, I don't know."

"It just made me feel like even though I'm gone, everything will be OK." &

For more information on The Literacy Link and Making Reading Memories, visit https://theliteracylink.extension.wisc.edu/.

Why This Matters

Parents who are incarcerated and their families may be often overlooked for many reasons; here are reasons why the Making Reading Memories program is important, based on research from UW-Madison Extension.

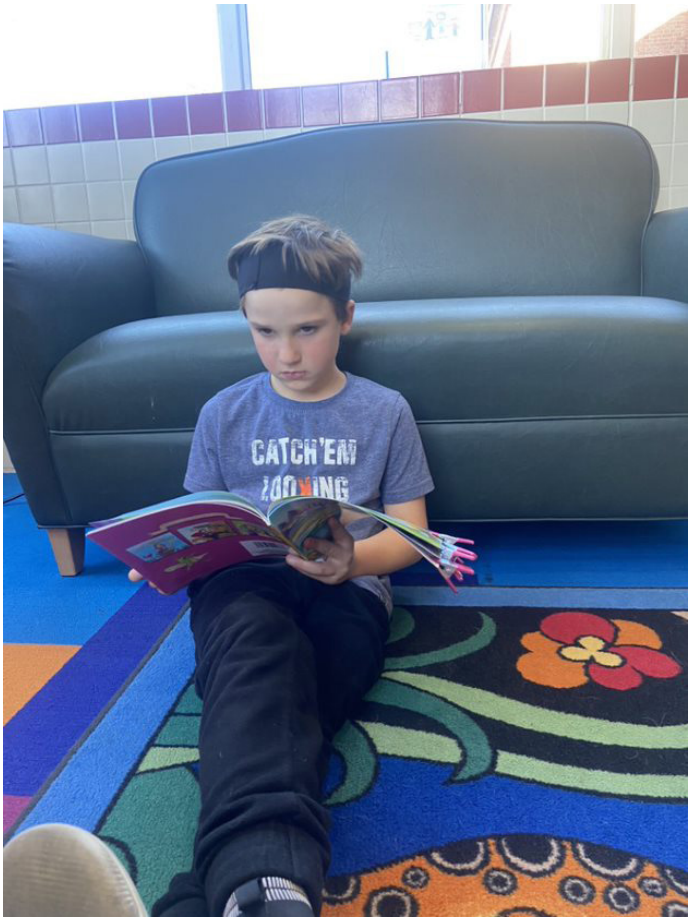
- Reading and looking at books together helps maintain the parent/child bond.
- Contact between parent and child may increase a successful transition back into the child's life upon the parent's reentry.
- A smooth reentry leads to better outcomes, including lower recidivism rates.
- Consistent contact with parents may reduce trauma for children during this stressful time.

Source: The Literacy Link, "Making Reading Memories at The Milwaukee House of Correction," preliminary report, September 2022, https://theliteracylink.extension.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1200/2022/08/Making-Reading-Memories-Parent-Interview-Report.pdf.

Access for All

Adapted Literacy Through Low-Tech Assistive Technology

CATHY L. GALYON, KIM K. FLOYD, AND COLLEEN WOOD-FIELDS



Just chillin' out with a book.

Ms. Nesbitt is the librarian in a small town, where she hosts a popular children's storytime. While families enjoy it, three children have difficulty listening to the stories and do not choose books to check out. There are other children she would like to engage more who have little interest in, and experience with, books. Some of the children are hard to engage, while others need extra support.

Nesbitt would like to develop or further the love of books and literacy skills of all the children, and she would like to create a children's area on the principle of universal design for learning (UDL). Because of budget restraints, however, she has little additional money. Below is a description of the children she is most concerned about.

Three-year-old Kasey has cerebral palsy (CP) with seizures. He often pushes books away, putting his head down instead. Kasey is learning preliteracy skills and enjoys manipulating objects but has great difficulty with fine motor abilities.

Kasey's twin, Kolby, also has CP. He enjoys having books read to him. He will often seek out books during check-out time, but he cannot interact with them on his own because of fine motor

Cathy L. Galyon *has an EdD in Early Childhood Special Education from University of Kentucky and is an associate professor at East Tennessee State University in the Educational Foundations and Special Education Department. She teaches students how adapt books and has a research interest in assistive technology for young children.* ***Kim K. Floyd*** *has a PhD in Early Childhood Special Education from Old Dominion University and is an associate professor at West Virginia University in the School of Counseling and Well-being. She coordinates the Collaborative Assistive Technology Education (CATE) Lab at WVU which features an interactive workspace and mock classroom design supporting the integration of assistive technology (AT) into the home, school and work environment.* ***Colleen F. Wood-Fields*** *has a PhD in Special Education with an emphasis on Severe/Profound Disabilities from Old Dominion University and is a teaching assistant professor at West Virginia University in the School of Education. She teaches courses in the Early Childhood Special Education and Multicategory Special Education programs and teaches students how to support children's educational development by embedding the use of assistive technology within classroom instruction.*

difficulties. His strengths include enjoying the computer with an adaptive switch, and he has the ability to understand key concepts in a story.

Chandler is an active four-year-old with language delay, who often engages in imaginary play where he fights with ninjas during storytime. He seldom initiates looking at books, and when he does, he folds the pages, bends the corners of the book, or even tears the pages. During sensory activities such as playing in sand, finger painting, and playing with play dough, he is very attentive and will not leave that area. His strengths include his sustained attention to the sensory area and manipulatives table, his imagination, and his understanding of simple plots.

Nesbitt begins the next storytime by reading Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*; the children appear eager and ready to listen to one of their favorite books. She begins by asking for someone to help her turn the pages. Kolby indicates he would like to help, but given his motor challenges, he is unable to turn the pages. He is discouraged and begins to disengage.

Nesbitt keeps an eye for other opportunities for him. She passes out felt representations of the food the caterpillar eats in the story to everyone in the class and reminds the children to shake their item when she reads about it. However, Kasey cannot grip the felt and shake in time with the reading of the story. He now joins his brother in focusing on items around the room rather than the story being read. The read-aloud continues with several children now watching Chandler as he is making funny faces and not listening at all. Nesbitt becomes frustrated and reads the book more quickly than she planned.

Due to a lack of exposure to books, many children in the storytime still need the pre-literacy skills of reading, writing, talking, singing, and playing. Nesbitt believes in the concept of UDL and wants to use the concept to provide multiple means of engagement, and she has heard that books can be adapted or modified so that children can turn the pages of a book or be more interested in the content. She is eager to try to make literacy more accessible to all children.

This article will offer readers easy-to-adapt, low-cost, low-tech strategies to create books that all children can access. These simple strategies can enhance the written words and allow children who have difficulties interacting with books to interact with them more.

Most importantly, students gain access to books, which is the first step to improving preliteracy and early literacy skills. Using these strategies can increase the amount and types of books in a typical classroom.

Universal Design for Learning

Adapting books can support a universally designed learning (UDL) environment. UDL includes three principles to prepare a library for all readers:

- multiple and flexible means of representation of content
- multiple ways to engage students
- multiple ways for students to express what they know[1]

For example, a child with visual impairments—who might miss the pictorial or visual cues—might have difficulties understanding the story. Therefore different versions of a book will be beneficial to typical children as well as children with disabilities. In the scenario above, the books can be adapted to have multiple means of representation, the students can engage in multiple ways, and Ms. Nesbitt can use the materials to assess the children's knowledge in ways that are meaningful to them.

Developing Literacy

"There is no such thing as a child who hates to read; there are only children who have not found the right book."[2] The vignette above is a familiar story for many librarians. How do you get children interested in books? Interaction with books during early childhood enhances the development of social and neurological development,[3] and early literacy skills have a high correlation with a child's achievement in middle and high school.[4] A lack of literacy development with preschoolers often leads to disparity in educational achievement in all school subject areas later in life.[5] Adolescents who struggle with reading often lack the foundational skills of literacy (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) that are often acquired through engagement with books at an early age.[6] Developing literacy skills with young children both with and without disabilities may be challenging but can become easier using the UDL principle to adapt books in a variety of ways. If a child is unable to interact with books or literacy activities, librarians can create needed modifications and adaptations. In the scenario above, if page-turners (e.g., tongue depressors) had been added to the book, when Kolby wanted to be the page turner, he could have used the tongue depressors to turn the pages, experienced success, and remained engaged in the literacy activity.

Some children with disabilities have deficits in reading comprehension and vocabulary that require ongoing support and instruction.[7] Young children gain more expressive and receptive language skills when their interests were considered when choosing toys and books.[8] It is important that children can find books that align with their interests.

However, finding an appropriate book for *any* student, regardless of ability, can be challenging. For example, lack of engagement with materials is often a challenge for children with autism,[9] and adapted books can make reading more pleasurable for them, as well as for other readers who do not engage with traditional books. Such engagement is the initial step for students of all ages to acquire pre-literacy and literacy skills.[10]

Children with physical disabilities may not be able to turn pages to access a book independently or may not have access to books in special formats (e.g., books with interactive elements, e-books).

This animated book was created with PowerPoint.

In this case, an adapted book would support the child's ability to interact independently with a book. Further, children with autism might have aversions to traditional books or may not interact with written text in traditional ways needed to promote pre/literacy skills,[11] thereby making it even more important to have books available in a variety of formats.[12] Further, children with and without disabilities simply may not relate to printed material and have no interest in engaging with traditional books.

Research has found that children can increase literacy skills with adapted books. Broemmel, et al. found that animated electronic books (e.g., e-books, Wonderbooks, Tumblebooks) could positively increase the literacy development of preschoolers.[13] Additionally, a moderate, but not a high level, of visual stimuli in animated books scaffold imagery for young children can increase the language network in a young child's brain comparable to the effects of traditional children's books with illustrations.[14] Studies found that adaptations to books, such as adding picture symbols and tactile objects, improved the reading comprehension of students.[15]

Two studies found that many children today do not engage with actual books effectively, preferring digital media.[16] Another study found that dialogic reading using technology-enhanced books increased the vocabulary of preschoolers with an autism spectrum disorder.[17] Dialogic reading is a method of shared interaction with the student and librarian while reading a book. In this method, the adult asks questions about the plot, pictures on the page, etc.[18]

Further, the Council for Exceptional Children-Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) drafted a Joint Position Statement of Early Childhood Inclusion in 2009. Both organizations value inclusive activities and suggest that all children should have access to developmentally and individually appropriate materials, use a range of activities that promote engagement of all children, and provide the necessary supports that all children need to thrive in reading activities.[19] Developmentally appropriate children's books are multicultural, have engaging illustrations, have interesting words and wordplay, and are generally visual.[20] Therefore adapted books must be developmentally appropriate as well, and librarians can design or adapt books that are developmentally, individually, and culturally appropriate.

In the vignette above, even though Nesbitt has a solid grasp of the needs of those who regularly participate, she is hampered by what she can purchase and her ability to modify existing books because of limited experience.

Here we will examine three ways to create, modify, and adapt children's materials so all children in a library setting can learn from the same story, albeit in unique and developmentally guided formats and in low-cost formats (e.g., digital, adapted, squishy).

Low-Cost Alternatives

Adapting books is not a new concept; around 1854, the American Printing House for the Blind began adapting books for individuals who were visually impaired.[21]

Librarians can adapt an existing book for alternative formats such as digital, adapted, or squishy books. Some librarians may worry about copyright infringement; however, the following disclaimer can be used: "This book was adapted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976 and may contain copyrighted content not authorized for use by the owner. Section 107 of this act states, "Allowance is made for "fair use" for purposes such as . . . education."[22] Additionally, these adapted books can be circulated in a local library.[23] Therefore, provided the library owns a copy of the book to be adapted, these modifications do not constitute copyright infringement and are permissible for educational purposes. Once the librarian determines the necessary adaptations to an existing traditional children's book, the librarian may print or copy the book (if needed), create adaptations to the existing book, create a digital book, and/or create a squishy book so all children can have access to the same story in a format at their ability level.

Adapted Storybooks

One low-cost option is to use the book in its traditional format but with added interactive elements on each page. The key is that an adapted book should be more engaging than a traditional storybook and include meaningful interactions on the page for the child. For example, if a character walks across the page in the traditional storybook, in the adapted book, a cutout of the person may either be moved across the page by pulling a string or using Velcro to move the person from one side of the page (following a line) to the other—or animation can be used in PowerPoint to make the character move across the page. The interactive elements are endless, but again should be meaningful and not superfluous.

Interactions can include flaps over pictures that the child moves to see the illustration, movement of pertinent items on the page of the story, texture on objects in the story, selection between items in a story, and the use of Velcro to aid movement and selection.

Also, librarians could add page fluffers (e.g., items like puff paint added to keep the pages apart to assist a child in opening the book

and turning the pages) or page turners (e.g., items like Popsicle sticks or clothespins placed on each page to assist in turning the pages) for children who cannot physically turn a page easily.

Ms. Nesbitt asks Kasey to help create some adaptations for a book. He had many ideas; he wanted to feel the animals' texture (e.g., fur, whiskers, etc.). and wanted to do something with the animals. Ms. Nesbitt first adapted the book with page fluffers and used Velcro to make some animals move and hide behind the felt cloth that could be lifted with a strip of Velcro. For the first time, Kasey showed interest in books during independent reading time. Happy with that success, she decided to adapt a book for Kolby by making it digital.

Digital Books

Digital books are omnipresent, and as technology has changed, formats have also changed (the ability to highlight the words as the book is read, graphics that can be manipulated by the student). Developmentally-appropriate use of digital books should include co-viewing with adults and/or peers.[24]

One study found that children could learn vocabulary through digital storybooks on a tablet paired with developmentally-appropriate activities.[25] Recall of events in a story is better on a digital platform than in a traditional book, and animation improved recall, with further improvement if the book included a child's voice reading the digital book.[26]

To create a digital storybook, the first step is to create a storyboard, which plans out each page by outlining the plot or themes of the book while deciding what images to place on each page. The storyboard allows the creator to individualize the experience either by simplifying text, using targeted words, or even creating more challenging text for gifted students. By creating the storyboard first, the librarian can be selective of the text and images that will appear with the final product using a PowerPoint presentation. If assistance is needed to work in PowerPoint, there are numerous tutorials online to learn the features discussed below. The user only needs to know the version of PowerPoint to be used.

Use of PowerPoint

PowerPoint is an excellent program to transform an existing storybook into a digital storybook.

Typically, one page of the book is on one slide, and the book continues in this format. However, if there is more than one concept on the page, the librarian might decide to split the page into two pages.

Additionally, it is easy to use the "sounds" feature of PowerPoint to read the story. Another nice touch is to have a child's voice reading the book, since it improves recall.[27] As the story is being read, the words on the PowerPoint can be highlighted so that the reader can see the words as they hear them. Page animations in

A page from a squishy book using a toy cupcake and candy sprinkles.

PowerPoint may be a way to encourage engagement when a person is not reading the story. Animations should be consistent with the story events or characters associated with that given page of the story; for example, a page that indicates a child walking to a given location might incorporate movement of left-to-right animation. Additionally, sounds can be included (e.g., a car honking a horn).

For ease of use, the digital story should incorporate continuous play to support the student's independence to interact with the entire story. Once started, the pages should advance without the need to press any key. However, if the child is able *and* librarian would prefer, the story could be set to manually advance for students to use adapted switches or the Enter key to advance the story. Narration on each page is essential so that the student can hear the story while viewing the pages and the text. The text should appear on each page and as a page is narrated, each word should be highlighted sequentially to link the spoken and written word.

Creating a Squishy Book

In 2008, Dr. Patricia Pierce first wrote about the concept of "squishy books,"[28] and the concept has been included in newsletters for parents and practitioners and is a project in the Connect Modules,[29] where they are shown to create books for children who prefer a sensory experience. Pierce found that

preschool children were as engaged in similar amounts of time with squishy books as they were with traditional children's books.[30]

Squishy books are a great low-cost way to adapt books for young children in inclusive environments that may be needing more foundational literacy concepts (e.g., vocabulary, concept, memory). Research shows that English language learners can learn vocabulary through visual and tactile modalities.[31]

Squishy books are books that are adapted using tactile materials enclosed in a re-sealable plastic bag. Initially, most squishy books were created with non-toxic gel or other semi-liquid substances, thus giving them the name "squishy books." Now, many other tactile substances are used for the "filling" in the book such as beans, small pebbles, and Orbeez.

In addition to the main texture of the book, other items are added to the bag to create the meaning of the "story" of the book. Each page of the created book typically has one concept per page. *(Note: Don't fill the bags too full or the book will be more apt to bust and be more difficult to create a manageable-sized book).*

The squishy book also needs a binding and the words on each page. Going back to the storyboard and creating a one-sentence text for each page (i.e., one filled bag with manipulative) will decide what items, fillers, and text will be used. Many professionals use many colors of duct tape to add additional seals to the bags and to bind the pages together. Or, instead of binding the book with duct tape, it can be placed in a binder. After the book pages are sealed, each page can be hole punched before the seal (i.e., so there is not a hole in the page of the book) and placed in a ringed binder. Creators can use a permanent marker or use labels to write the text of the story on the outside of the bag.

Librarians who work with young children—both those with and without disabilities—want them to be interested and engaged in books. Creating adapted books ensures that more children can visit the library to enjoy books and learn from them. &

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Stan Is THE Van

Mobile Makerspace a Hit in Ohio

SHAWN WALSH

Stan the Tech Van is all ready for visitors at the Madison Village Market to come see what they can make.

When is a cargo van more than a van? When that van is a mobile makerspace that brings creative, fun activities to children.

Stan the Tech Van is an experience on wheels belonging to Madison (OH) Public Library (MPL). It's not just a 2022 Ram Promaster 2500 cargo van; it can hold an FDM 3D printer along with other tech on carts in the back. We chose a high roof delivery van to allow any staff member the ability to drive Stan for a program or event since it does not require a commercial driver's license. Stan is outfitted with delivery shelving, a roof rack, and an awning package as well as a powered Gramps Aluminum Gated Commercial Van Ramp System. It's more than a vehicle that holds enough LEGO Robotics that a staff member doesn't have to clean out his or her car to get a classroom set out to a school. It's a mobile makerspace that holds all types of machines that anyone can use to create all sorts of projects.

Stan is about bringing experiences to children and their families outside the walls of the library. Like his cohort in mobile services, Gus the Book Bus, Stan received a name to make the mobile makerspace more friendly and easier to remember for the library's youngest patrons.

How Stan Came to Be

In July 2021, MPL applied for an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Outreach Grant through the State Library of Ohio (SLO). This was how the SLO was distributing the federal ARPA Funds that they received from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). With only a relatively short time period to get partners on board, the library and its partners—like the local school district, YMCA, senior center, food center, and local government groups—got to write about a dream that had been had for many years that finally had an outlet—a mobile makerspace and computer lab. In mid-September, the library received notification that the $100,000 grant had been approved, and as part of the grant, the library was getting a van. The van and its extras, like the roof rack, shelves, awning, and ramp came to approximately $52,000. The remaining part of the grant was used for items that were part of the mobile makerspace and computer lab. In addition to the van itself, the library was able to purchase the following things:

- Benches and tables for people to work at or take classes outside.
- Tents for people to sit under while working as well as for shading and protecting the machines from sudden downpours. (Weather off Lake Erie can be a bit unpredictable at times!)
- Carts to hold various machines on the van and in the building when not in use on the van.
- A ten-thousand-watt dual fuel portable generator. Just using the

Shawn Walsh *is the Emerging Services and Technologies Librarian for Madison (OH) Public Library. Overseeing the technology, marketing, and digital presence of the library, he was also the project manager of the grant that resulted in Stan the Tech Van.*

power of the van wouldn't run enough of the machines if we were doing something for more than three or four people.

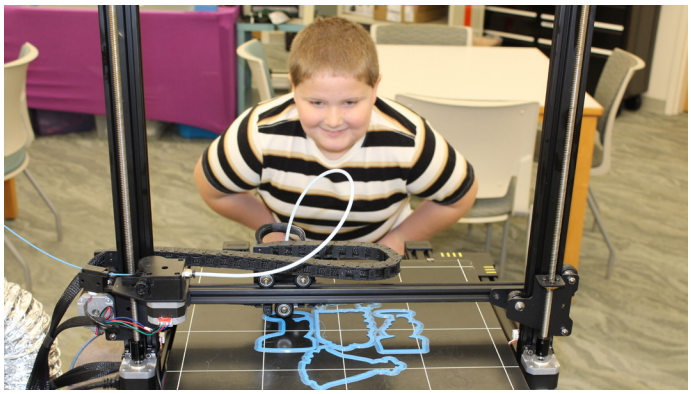
- Several Dell and Apple laptops as well as iPads. These interact with many of the machines in the mobile makerspace.
- A Roland DG CAMM-1 GS-24 desktop vinyl cutter so people can cut large sheets of vinyl to make signs or other large displays.
- Triple Badge-A-Minit System means the library has three different-size button makers and they get used *all* the time.
- Glowforge and Glowforge Air Filter so people could see and use the laser engraver that was splashed across television commercials through the holiday season around Madison.
- Photon Mono X, Wash & Cure Machine Plus is an SLA (or resin) printer, and the children know what a resin printer can do.
- ANYCUBIC Chiron 3D Printer, Semi-auto Leveling Large FDM Printer (also called a filament printer). The children discuss at length this particular printer's capabilities for size projects and time-to-print projects.
- SOL 3D scanner and carrying briefcase, which has been used more by high school students for class projects than the younger children, so far.
- X-Carve and accessories and an X-Carve Upgrade Kit, a large CNC router that the parents of many of the children want to come and talk to staff about, including what are its capabilities and how much dust does it make.
- Mayku formbox, a vacuum former that delights the children with the suction sound it makes and causes them to dream of custom chocolate molds made from the outlines of their favorite small toys.
- LEGO Education Spike Prime Set for middle school and high school students.

By leveraging sales and coupons, the library was able to purchase an additional FDM printer, an additional SLA printer, and a heat press.

Stan the Tech Van and the grant it is a part of was written for the entire Madison community, young children through senior citizens. But the kids have been most interested and pushed forward what the library wanted to do with Stan as a mobile makerspace. And they are the most vocal about the importance of the makerspace being mobile and being available where they are.

Long Time School Partner

MPL and Madison Local Schools have a rich history of collaborations over the past decade. Being situated between the middle school and the high school helps a lot, but the library had partnered with the school district's preschool and two elementary schools for many years on different projects.



Sometimes you have to stop and watch custom cookie cutters being extruded on the 3D FDM printer.

One of the students' favorite collaborations is when the library brings LEGO robotics kits to school for whole classes to use. This is now a lot easier with Stan. No one needs to clean up their entire back seat and trunk of their car to bring multiple kits and laptops to school! The kits are receiving less wear and tear and being able to roll out kits on a cart down a ramp saves staff multiple trips from the vehicles into a building.

However, in May 2022, when making visits to the elementary schools to promote the library's summer activities including Stan's mobile makerspace programs, staff realized how important the opportunity to use a makerspace was to the students. These children in kindergarten through fifth grade were asking in-depth questions about how the FDM (filament) 3D printer operated. They wanted to know the temperature the plastic was extruded at and how long jobs typically ran. They asked about the costs of certain projects and discussed supports on objects, how much they were filled, and what those things did to the cost of the project. They asked about coming and making gifts for their parents for Mother's Day and Father's Day. They wanted to know about the staff who ran the machines, including some of the young staff who had recently graduated from high school or who were part of the high school robotics team but worked at the library as well.

Many students came with some knowledge of 3D printing, laser engraving, and vacuum forming, but for many of the students, this was their first time seeing these technologies in person and actually meeting a person who ran these machines. The realization that these technologies were not unobtainable and could be used at their school, the public library, or at a community stop was life-changing for many students. Children in families with socioeconomic disadvantages saw the ability to become entrepreneurs and create products with Stan's equipment to sell to their friends, family, and community.

During the 2022–2023 school year, Stan and some of his equipment have made trips to the different schools. Two elementary

schools have made use of the button makers that were part of the grant. One school used the button maker as part of their PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support) program as a reward for a group of students' good behavior, and another elementary school used the button maker as part of their Family Literacy Night festivities.

The sixth graders at the middle school are going to use the FDM printers and vacuum formers shortly as part of their exploration of manufacturing.

As a partner, the library can fill a pivotal role with the schools with Stan. The library is fortunate to partner with a school district with supportive and engaged administrators and a plethora of imaginative and innovative teachers. Unfortunately, the administration and teachers face hardships of a community, a county, and a state that has had many economic hardships and cannot offer the technology and machines to their students that they would like.

The library has been fortunate to be nimble and has been able to receive grant funds to provide staff and equipment to empower our schools to foster the innovation of the teachers and students. The library continues to do what it has always done: provide materials—in this instance makerspace equipment instead of books—as a way to provide economy of scale.

Children's Favorite Things about Stan

With other makerspace opportunities around the community, the summer 2022 programs were not especially well attended. However, children often brought their parents in tow to the weekly open houses Stan had—when he was parked at the town square displaying items from all the different machines that were purchased as part of the ARPA grant. They wanted their parents to see all the things that could be made, and sometimes they were trying to convince their parents to take them to the library.

It wasn't until most of the way through the summer and after hearing from children at the open houses that the library staff understood that children in the Madison community couldn't make it to the events throughout Madison. However, their parents were more willing to bring their children to events where there were multiple things going on, like the events in the town square over the summer. A separate event at a community park that didn't have anything else happening at the same time was just as hard to convince most parents to drive to as it was to get them to drive to the library for a program. That was the genesis of working to make Stan events experiences that were part of much grander events.

Where Is Stan Going in the Future?

Stan the Tech Van will continue to grow in his role as part of MPL. While currently Stan does more events out in the community with adults, we plan to do more projects with the elementary school and middle school down the road. For this summer, based on what the children told library staff, there will be regular makerspace projects happening at the weekly car show and outdoor market in the town square. This will allow the children to work on projects while their adults stroll the square and enjoy the different vendors and displays.

Stan plays a part in the library's commitment to use its makerspace to educate the youth of our community as well as empower them to become the small business entrepreneurs of the future. The staff of the library often say their job is to launch the next hundred Etsy stores in our community, and with so many creative and curious children in the community, it will definitely happen. &

Couples who Collaborate

Mary Ann and Perry Hoberman

MARY-KATE SABLESKI

Mary Ann Hoberman and her son, Perry Hoberman, make children's books all in the family.

Though this column usually highlights couples in the more traditional sense of the word, typically in a committed relationship in any form, defining the term more widely yields a delightful collection of couples who collaborate to produce children's books.

The Pumphrey brothers were the first sibling couple discussed (see vol. 19, no. 4 (2021): 27–29). In this column, we feature a mother-son duo, Mary Ann and Perry Hoberman, who have partnered for their very first collaboration, *Away with Words* (2022). No stranger to family collaboration, Mary Ann describes a dream come true, partnering with her son to create a picture book, and Perry, a well-known artist in his own right, shares similar sentiments to describe collaborating with his legendary mother to create another contribution to her impressive collection of children's books.

Mary Ann Hoberman is well-known and adored in the world of children's literature. Her career spans more than six decades, and represents a wide variety of familiar poetry and picture books that have accompanied countless children through their growing years. She won the Excellence in Children's Poetry Award from NCTE in 2003, and was named the Children's Poet Laureate by the Poetry Foundation in 2008. Her books are ubiquitous in early childhood classrooms and library programming. She collaborated with her late husband Norman Hoberman on four picture books. Her children and extended family are a community of artists who are both skilled and passionate about creating art in many forms. Her oldest son, Perry, is an artist, and the most recent family collaborator.

Perry Hoberman is a media artist, educator, and musician. He lives in Twentynine Palms, California, with his wife, the artist Julia Heyward, and two cats. Hoberman has been exhibiting and performing locally, nationally, and internationally for more than four decades. Using a wide variety of high and low technology, Hoberman has done pioneering work in such areas as virtual reality, interactive media, and stereoscopic imaging. He has been the recipient of many awards and honors, including fellowships from the Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York Foundation for the Arts.

Q: How did you decide to work on a book together?

Perry: She's been on my case for literally decades to illustrate one of her books. I drew a lot of cartoons and illustrations when I was younger, and then I kind of slipped into the art world, thinking that kind of stuff was what I did when I was a kid. But you know, fast forward a few decades, and I stopped teaching about five years ago and moved out to the desert. I have more time now, so when she brought it up this time I said, "Okay, let's do it!"

Mary Ann: It just seemed a natural step because he enjoyed doing cartoons for birthdays and all kinds of things. I was going through my books that are out of print, or that were published a long time ago, or fallen out of demand, and I noticed there were a lot of them

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that seemed to fall into the category of language. Everything from puns, talking about "commas and their dramas," to rhymes, and I got this idea that a book about language would be a great thing to do with Perry. It's just been great fun; there's nothing better than to work with one of your own kids.

Q: What a dream come true! How about for you, Perry? You grew up with your mother's books surrounding you as a child.

Perry: One thing that gave me pause in agreeing to do this with my mom was the fact that my dad illustrated the first four books my mom wrote. And, in my opinion, she's never had a better illustrator. I did not feel like I would be able to live up to that. What he did was just beautiful.

This book was basically a group of poems about language that were arranged alphabetically. One of the early ideas for the design was to have a giant letter on the left-hand page, with poems and illustrations on the right. It was a sans serif big red letter, and then there'd be little drawings around it, of characters, kind of hanging out on the letter. But that idea went by the wayside as the book took shape.

Mary Ann: I'd already done an alphabet book for little kids with very short little poems, and it was long out of print. When we started *Away with Words,* I realized that this was not going to be a book for very little children. It was going to be a book, in our minds, for everybody. So, we had to think of another way to present the poems, and not as an alphabet book. One way we did this was by talking about the title.

Perry: For a long time, the book was going to be titled *Alphabetter.*

Mary Ann: Yes, we thought about calling it *The Alphabetter Book*. We did end up using that in the book, but it did not end up as the title. I sent the book off to the editor with the table of contents in alphabetical order as a way to organize the poems. I didn't think they would actually end up in alphabetical order in the final book. Perry thought about it differently.

Perry: There are multiple poems for some letters, and only one for other letters. So, we settled on a focus on the alphabet and letters.

Mary Ann: We talked a lot about the title *Away with Words*. To me, it has at least two meanings, "**a way** with words!" and then, "**away** with words." So, because of those multiple meanings, we knew that would be the title for our book.

Q: Perry, how did you go about illustrating the poems?

Perry: Some of the poems suggested very straightforward illustrations, and some were really hard to illustrate because they were kind of abstract. When I first started illustrating, I used large letters, taking up the entire page. It was difficult to figure out how to fit all of the poems on the page with the letters, though, so we dropped the big letter idea eventually.

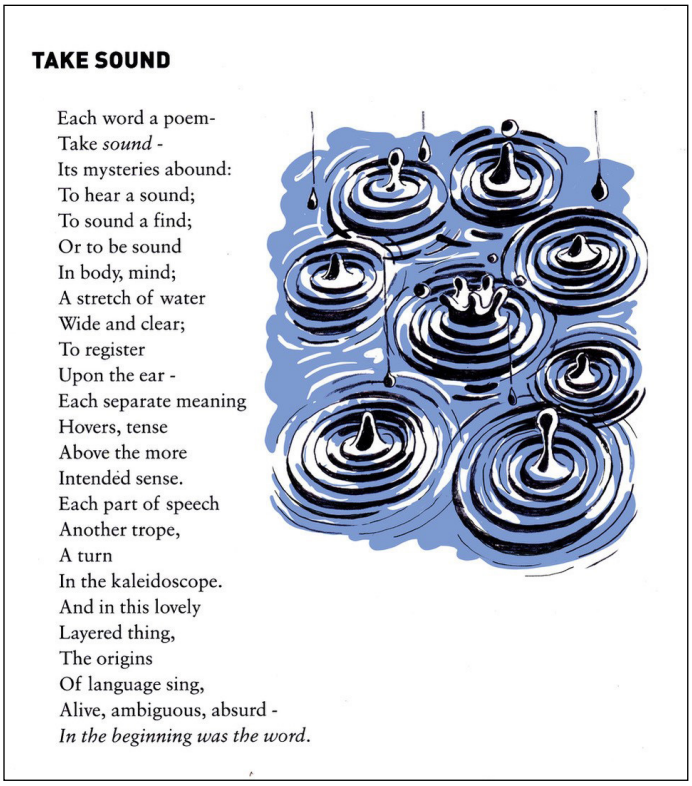


Illustration from *Away with Words,* written by Mary Ann Hoberman, illustrated by Perry Hoberman; used with permission.

Q: Did you work together to make those decisions, or did you work on the art and text separately as in a typical author-illustrator relationship?

Mary Ann: Most of the discussions occurred over email with all of us, so I was aware of the discussion. As the book moved closer to completion, Perry worked directly with the art director, but for the most part, we were all part of the discussion. Typically, editors like to keep illustrators and writers apart as long as they can. Things can get a little bit hairy sometimes when the author and the illustrator either don't agree with each other, or don't agree with the editor. It was freeing in a way because with my son I didn't have to be so tippy-toe about everything. We could talk it through, and I would still love him, and I hoped that he would still love me.

Perry: One thing I was noticing, looking at the book more recently is the way it gets a little less silly toward the end. Starting with the poem *Over*, with the eyes on the moon. And then there's some more silly poems, but then you've got *Regression*, which is a little more sedate, and then *Spellbound*, which is really not funny. Those poems are more poignant. *Take Sound* was definitely the most difficult to illustrate. I just ended up doing a bunch of water drops going into water. I was basically trying to illustrate a concept that doesn't really lend itself to illustration very well. For *Note*, the art director basically just cut everything. I had a very busy illustration for that poem. So, there were these instances when the editors took material away from the illustrations. And,

Illustration from *Away with Words,* written by Mary Ann Hoberman, illustrated by Perry Hoberman; used with permission.

my mom and I did have to fight for a few things where the art director or editor didn't quite get what we were trying to do with the poem and the illustration.

Mary Ann: In *Vast*, the art director wanted to make the children in the illustration into adults. But the illustration was exactly what I wanted the way Perry created it. I still look at it, and I love it. Many people single it out as one of their favorites. So, I just laid down the law, and said the characters simply cannot be adults.

Perry: *Vast* was a very abstract one, but it came to me right away. There were a few instances like that where the suggestions did not line up with what we wanted to do in the book. The next poem, *Very*, is essentially playing on the idea that the word "very" can be positive or negative. There's a boy eating ice cream who's smiling, and the girl is scolding him, because she is saying it is very bad to eat ice cream. The editors did not want the girl in the illustration to look angry, but if she didn't look angry, the whole meaning of the poem, the joke, was missed. So, we discussed that with the editors, and we settled on the illustration as it looks in the book.

Q: Can you talk about how you considered diverse representation in the book?

Perry: We did a lot with skin color, and representing different groups of people. In my experience, personally, I've noticed that for many cartoonists and illustrators, our default is just to make every character some version of yourself. I think guys draw guys, girls draw girls. I have a kind of stock figure that I just draw if I'm not thinking about it, which is clearly me. Creating diverse characters for this book required a different mindset. At some point, we thought about having a consistent line of certain characters that would reappear throughout the book, but we decided against it. Some of the characters are definitely related to other characters in the book, but we thought of each of them as distinctive.

Mary Ann: One of the problems with diverse representation, too, is that the default for women is male also in the language—we use he/him as a default in our writing. That was my default, too, and I never even thought about it that much until we were doing this book.

Perry: Almost all of the poems in this book are first-person, so the issue of gender is addressed in this way. Another thing that we did to sort of mitigate the dilemma of whether the character is male or female was to make some of the characters into animals, which was really fun, and worked for some of the poems. For instance, in a spread towards the beginning with the walrus and the penguin, it was just perfect to just use ridiculously inappropriate animals. But then the poem facing it is *Belong*. I first drew the character stretching "long" as a little boy, and it ended up being a little girl. But the editors suggested that character could become a giraffe. The character, however, could not be a giraffe, because a giraffe doesn't have to stretch to reach anything. It's already the tallest. So, we had to put our foot down on things like that.

Q: It is fascinating to hear how you really worked as a team, advocating for one another's work. Were there ever any disagreements between the two of you?

Perry: I don't think the two of us had many disagreements throughout the process. Once I got going on the illustrations, there were some that took more revisions than the others, but with computers it is really simple to do a new version. So, we worked really well together and it went pretty smoothly.

Q: Have you been able to share your book with children? What have been their responses?

Mary Ann: We have a little fellow right in our own family, and we've enjoyed sharing it with him. Children are interested in the pictures, and with poetry, children can memorize them when the book has been read to them multiple times. I always encourage new parents to start reading to their children in utero. And then, as they grow, sharing books together helps children get used to turning the pages, holding the book, looking at the pictures. As we said, this book is for everyone! I've always believed that books can stretch to any age, depending on what you want to do with it.

Perry: I think both the illustrations and the text can appeal to any age. Some of them clearly would appeal to really young kids, and they're really silly. And then some of them are less silly, and maybe a little more complicated, but the humor and the themes in them can really appeal to any age, including adults.

Q: Do you have any advice for any other family members who might be considering collaborating to create a book?

Perry: Wait forty years before you do it! Either way, I recommend it.

Mary Ann: Just that it's grand! I suppose it could destroy a relationship if it wasn't too strong to begin with, but it's really a wonderful thing to do together. There are all kinds of creativity in the family, both backward and forward. Our family gatherings are great fun!

Q: What might be next for the two of you?

Mary Ann: Well, I hope I can persuade Perry that at some point we get to see the fourth book that Norman illustrated for me, *What Jim Knew* (1963), back in print with Perry's illustrations. The main character in that book is named James. Perry's original name was James Perry Hoberman. But then what happened?

Perry: Well, when I moved to New York, I was living on the Bowery. Before I moved there, the film critic James Hoberman lived near me, and people kept mixing us up, with our mail and other things. So, since he was there first, I figured at that point I would just drop the James and go by my middle name, Perry.

Mary Ann: So, we have this book, *What Jim Knew,* and it's not exactly out of print, but it's sort of waiting there, and if someone orders it, the publisher will print a copy, but it's not very satisfactory. So, I got the idea that it would be a wonderful thing for Perry to re-illustrate this book about him. But, since his father illustrated it first, he's very reluctant.

Perry: I think maybe I'll do a sort of meta version of it, where I'm, myself, being asked to illustrate a book that had the illustrations by my father, written by my mother, and what I think about it.

Mary Ann: Doesn't that sound like fun?

Perry: Another idea that's been in the back of my mind for a long time, relates to work I've done with stereoscopic 3D work both for performance and installation, but also prints, and so on. I have an idea for a kind of 3D pop-up where the reader would wear red and blue glasses, and things would pop off the page.

Selected Books by Mary Ann Hoberman

Away with Words. Illus. by Perry Hoberman. Little, Brown. 2022. 32p.

The Sun Shines Everywhere. Illus. by Luciano Lozano. Little, Brown. 2019. 32p.

You Read to Me, I'll Read to You: Very Short Tall Tales to Read Together. Illus. by Michael Emberley. Little, Brown. 2014. 32p.

Forget-Me-Nots: Poems to Learn by Heart. Illus. by Michael Emberley. Little, Brown. 2012. 144p.

What Jim Knew. Illus. by Norman Hoberman. Little, Brown. 1963.

Hello and Good-by. Illus. by Norman Hoberman. Little, Brown, 1959.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

Mary Ann: The poem "Take Sound" was based on a poem called "Take Sky" by David McCord. I thought it was a beautiful poem, so I wrote "Take Sound" as a tribute to him. I wasn't sure if it would fit in this book, because it is so serious. But I think it fits very well in the book, with all of the other poems. And, I can read it now, if you'd like me to?

Q: How lovely! Mary Ann Hoberman read me a poem, and that is all I need! &

Building in the Library

The Importance of Block Play

Betsy Diamant-Cohen and Lisa M. Sensale Yazdian

Betsy Diamant-Cohen *is a children's librarian with a doctorate, an early literacy trainer, consultant, and author. She is known for translating research into practical activities with developmental tips and presenting these via webinars, engaging workshops, and online courses.* ***Lisa M. Sensale Yazdian****, PhD, is an educational psychologist with experience supporting birth–adult learners in libraries and beyond. She currently manages education and engagement efforts at CET (PBS).*

Some libraries have had puzzles, toys, and blocks as part of their children's room offerings for more than twenty years. For others, the emphasis on play as one of Every Child Ready to Read's five practices has inspired them to add these to their collections.

Building with construction toys helps children develop many different skills—creative problem solving, engineering, learning through mistakes, language to communicate with others who are building with them, and exercising their imagination when explaining what the structure they have built is meant to be. They also may be matching colors, looking for patterns, using planning skills, learning patience and persistence, cooperating with others for group builds, having fun, and experiencing a boost in self-confidence when they finally succeed in building what they intended to build. Written materials specifically for children's librarians and early childhood educators explain the value of these activities and provide many developmental tips for parents and caregivers. Below are a few recommended resources.

"Ten Things Children Learn from Block Play"

https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/mar2015/ten-things-children-learn-block-play

Young Children is the publication of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The online March 2015 issue contains a few articles regarding block play; this one is a brief list that can easily be used as developmental tips for parents and caregivers.

"The Importance of Play, Particularly Constructive Play, in Public Library Programming"

http://www.ala.org/alsc/sites/ala.org.alsc/files/content/Play_formatted.pdf

ALSC's own Sue McCleaf Nespeca wrote this white paper that was adopted by ALSC's Board of Directors in 2012. Describing the stages of block play and how constructive play in library programming affects literacy and STEM skills, this paper also includes links to sources for blocks and bricks as well as recommended books, articles, and websites.

"Read! Build! Play!"

http://www.ala.org/alsc/sites/ala.org.alsc/files/content/Read-Build-Play_Librarian-Toolkit.pdf

"Read! Build! Play!" is a toolkit for librarians created by ALSC and LEGO DUPLO to develop early literacy in young children. It includes a booklist for a "Things that Go" Storytime, suggested questions to ask of children as they are building, and outreach program recommendations.

Block Play: Building a Foundation of Early Learning in the Library

https://continuinged.isl.in.gov/block-play-building-a-foundation-of-early-learning-in-the-library-1-leu/

https://youtu.be/9Mxhr6dY3zI

The Indiana State Library's Continuing Education Toolkit for Library Professionals provides access to this free, archived YouTube video that

describes how the Allen County (IN) Public Library tackled the challenge of adding more play, specifically block play, to their program offerings, giving recommendations to libraries big and small for adapting their initiative.

"Block Play"

https://extension.msstate.edu/publications/block-play
Written for caregivers by Dr. Louise Davis and Elizabeth Thorne from Mississippi State University Extension, this piece offers simple suggestions for creating a block center, making blocks, and supplementing block play. Suggestions for how to support block play with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are also provided.

Building Structures with Young Children

https://books.google.com/books/about/Building_Structures_with_Young_Children.html?id=VZLoCAAAQBAJ&source=kp_book_description
Part of the Young Scientist Series by Ingrid Chalufour and Karen Worth, this science curriculum for children three to five years old has also published resources on discovering nature and exploring water with young children. Although designed for teachers, it offers useful background information on building and exploring science through play, along with guidance for creating impactful block play environments that can be incorporated into established block play areas, used to create a program series, or even shared with caregivers. Many chapters can be accessed via Google Books.[1]

"Let's Build!"

https://www.pbs.org/parents/lets-build
PBS Kids has assembled a number of building and engineering resources including building challenges and digital games for children ages two to eight, along with brief articles on how to support young learners.

"Five Ways to Build Reading Skills While Playing with Blocks"

https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/5-ways-to-build-reading-skills-while-playing-blocks.html
This article by Christie Burnett on Scholastic's website asserts, "Blocks are great for promoting literacy skills related to speaking, listening, reading, and writing." The piece shares five simple ways to promote literacy learning during block play, including using paper and pencil in block play, playing the "You Build, I Build" game, creating alphabet blocks, making a set of building challenge cards, and adding books to construction play, with a list of recommended books.

"The Role of the Teacher in Block Play"

https://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2018/the-role-of-the-teacher-in-block-play/
Community Playthings, a company that makes wooden play structures as well as blocks, also publishes articles that relate to the items they create and sell. This article addresses topics such as when the adult should insert themselves into the block play, how to respond to conflict in the block area, how to set up the environment to support block play, and effective strategies for cleanup time.

"'They Want Toys to Get Their Children into Harvard': Have We Been Getting Playthings All Wrong?"

https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/nov/24/have-toys-got-too-brainy-how-playthings-became-teaching-aids-young-children
The Guardian's most recent piece on play by Alex Blasdel takes a historical look at the relationship between toys, play, and child development. The belief that educational toys need to be sophisticated to prepare children for school has permeated the early learning landscape and is at odds with a growing body of academic and market research. The results of a longitudinal study examining the relationship between toy type and the complexity of play are shared and assert the critical role open-ended toys, like blocks, play in developing cognitive, language, and social skills.[2]

Some public libraries even offer block-building programs. For instance, the Wright Memorial Public Library in Ohio runs early literacy programs called "Books and Blocks." The Baltimore County Public Library in Maryland offers LEGO programs regularly, along with building with paper bag blocks. Museum-quality exhibits, like Block Party from the Omaha Children's Museum, have also made their way into library spaces. &

References

1. Ingrid Chalufour and Karen Worth, *Building Structures with Young Children: Trainer's Guide* (St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press, 2004).
2. Michael Rouleau, "Ten Years of TIMPANI: Annual Study Investigates the Paradox of Play," Eastern Connecticut University, February 1, 2020, https://www.easternct.edu/news/_stories-and-releases/2020/02-february/timpani.html.

Advocating in a Time of Book Challenges

Emily Mroczek

Emily Mroczek *is a youth services librarian at the Arlington Heights (IL) Memorial Library and is co-chair of the ALSC Public Awareness and Advocacy committee.*

In a time where challenges and new bills restricting access to books are sweeping the country, it is easy to feel helpless. For library professionals who are not personally facing book bans and challenges there are still tangible ways to prepare yourself as an ally for helping library professionals and educators.

Spread the Word

Stay up-to-date on current book challenges by reading publications like *Book Riot* and ALA's *The Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, staying abreast of local and national news, and following hashtags on Twitter including #bookchallenges and #bookbans.

PEN America (https://pen.org/) has a study on the increase in book bans that could be helpful to read. Be mindful of checking sources to ensure information is accurate before sharing it with your network and beyond.

Focus on the Now

When making book displays for Banned Books Week, consider focusing on books currently being challenged, like *Maus* and *Gender Queer*, instead of historically challenged titles, like *Lord of the Flies* and *The Great Gatsby*, which have received plenty of challenges throughout the years.

Learn about Different Types of Censorship

Public book challenges are the most publicized and recorded. However, quiet censorship exists when materials are never included in collections in the first place. This could be because the items go against the beliefs of the purchasers or because the educator or librarian doing the purchasing is worried that the items may be challenged. This type of censorship is not recorded, although it happens quite often. Think about your own purchasing tendencies and see what checks and balances can be put into place at your organization to stop quiet censorship.

Prepare Yourself

Familiarize yourself with your library's collection development policy and how books are brought into the building. Talk to your workplace supervisors about preparing a written response if anyone challenges books. Keep your supervisors aware of challenges across the country, and ensure your organization is on the same page if anything happens in your location. Keep abreast of available organizations that can assist you, like the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, PEN America, and the Freedom to Read Foundation.

Write Letters and Attend Meetings

If there is trouble in any areas near you, attend library or school board meetings where these titles are being addressed. Make sure that you have updated contacts for your local school board, library board, and city council. Opposing groups are coming out in droves, and it's important to resist. Even if you're not making a statement, you can show support. If you're not able to attend a meeting, write a letter to local boards and legislators stating your stance.

Practice Constant Vigilance

It can be easy to let advocacy slip to the side or to become complicit, especially with everything else on your plate. However, that's when things can fall apart. Do your best to ask and answer questions about why certain books are being purchased while others are not. It's important to encourage and expect engagement on the information in your library.

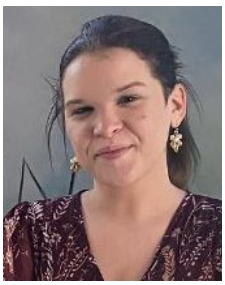
Be an Ally

When meeting other librarians or educators, introduce yourself as an ally for keeping books in libraries. Don't be quiet about it, and don't assume everyone knows you're an ally. If you see someone having trouble, don't hesitate to reach out and offer support in any way possible. Remember that book challenges, bans, and quiet censorship are not a thing of the past but of the present. As librarians, we can do our best to advocate for one another while pushing against censorship. &

Membership Profiles

Compiled by Sarah Jo Zaharako

Rosie Camargo



Aryssa Damron

Sally Battle

Rosie Camargo, Cultural Literacy Specialist, South Holland (IL) Public Library

How has ALSC contributed to your work in libraries?

I created a whole program centered around ALSC Babies Need Words Every Day called "Bienvenido bebe!" I host it once a year for parents who only speak Spanish to visit the library with their new baby, enjoy a storytime and tour of the library; they leave with a goodie bag filled with items that support ECRR tenets.

What project are you excited to be working on?

I started a new storytime inspired by the world of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* called "It's YOU I Like." It is centered on self-love, affirmations, kindness, and being a good neighbor. Instead of the usual post-storytime craft, we will be creating Kindness Projects to give back to our community. Some of the projects will be collecting mittens for our library mitten drive for the winter, making holiday cards for our senior centers, and a welcome banner for our big grand opening of our newly renovated Youth Services department.

What challenges you in librarianship?

Creating new programs. You want people to have fun and you want attendance. A good day and time and hope and a prayer for people to show up. I try to make at least one new storytime to roll out every year. I think families enjoy routine, but they also enjoy something new and unexpected. Once a month I host Family Fiesta, a forty-minute dance party with a mix of English and world music.

What brings you joy?

My job. I make connections with families and bring happiness to children. Creating new programs and events is so much fun.

What is your favorite book(s) to share with children?

Right now, I like using *Build a Burrito: A Counting Book in English and Spanish* by Denise Vega. It is great for a movement storytime!

Aryssa Damron, Children's Librarian, Washington, DC, Public Library System

How has ALSC contributed to your work in libraries?

ALSC has helped me learn to be a children's librarian and expand my own experiences in research, in member engagement, and in book evaluation through ALSC and ALSC adjacent work.

What project are you excited to be working on?

I am excited to be working on the team bringing virtual membership gatherings to the whole ALSC community because it is a simple way to get engaged with ALSC without having to do anything more than join a Zoom, and we are able to connect ourselves and other members with amazing resources and people within the organization.

What challenges you in librarianship?

I think the hardest thing for me in librarianship right now is finding the balance between how much I love my job and how bureaucratic a large library system can be and wondering how to balance my time so that I am maximizing the work I can do with the children I serve with extended hours, admin work, etc. It's hard to remember that libraries are so many different things when I'm lost in the joy of doing storytime and craft hours and readers advisory.

What brings you joy?

I love getting the right book into the hands of the right reader. Seeing a baby light up over a Sandra Boynton book that features an animal at the zoo they visited, or a middle grade reader with a book that will help them cope with bullying or family drama—both are so important and bring me joy.

What are you looking forward to?

In August, I'll visit Cornwall, England, where I'll not only spend a week immersed in reading *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier as a sacred text, but also shopping for gorgeous UK editions of my favorite books.

What is your favorite book(s) to share with children?

I love getting the Nevermoor series by Jessica Townsend into the hands of readers who love fantasy or cool worlds and may have already read J. K. Rowling and Rick Riordan. It's a charming series that I love myself, and love how excited they get to dive into a new, magical world.

Sally Battle, Youth Programming Librarian, Mount Prospect (IL) Public Library

What project are you excited to be working on?

In 2021 and 2022, a team of us at Evanston Public Library created a series of hands-on workshops for families to play, talk, and learn about race. I learned so much! We rolled out the newest iteration of the program just before I changed jobs, and participants seemed to get a lot out of our racial literacy workshop. It's not perfect by any stretch, but we've made all of our pretty extensive curricular resources available free by request on our website, https://dedicatedtothedreamtogether.com/.

What challenges you in librarianship?

The challenges of librarianship for me are the same as what I love about the field. There's so much variety in what we do! I was so inspired by Jason Reynolds' 2021 Zena Sutherland lecture—the kids we serve do deserve the best. I'm learning that a part of that is recognizing that I'm human and have limits; sometimes I have to say no to great projects so that I can give and be my best. That's tricky for me.

What brings you joy?

Hearing kids play and talk to each other. Admiring my excellent colleagues. The sound of my dog plopping on the couch after a long day of, well, laying on the couch. Creating fun and playful moments for kids and caregivers. Lake Michigan, the sky, trees, and the wind. Laughing with family and friends.

What are you looking forward to?

I'm newer to the podcast world and now I'm a believer. I'm hoping to figure out ways to connect people and podcasts, in real life, through the library.

What is your favorite book(s) to share with children?

I love putting *Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper or *Fish in a Tree* by Lynda Mullaly Hunt into kids' hands. &

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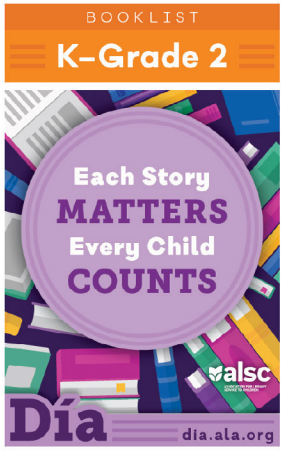

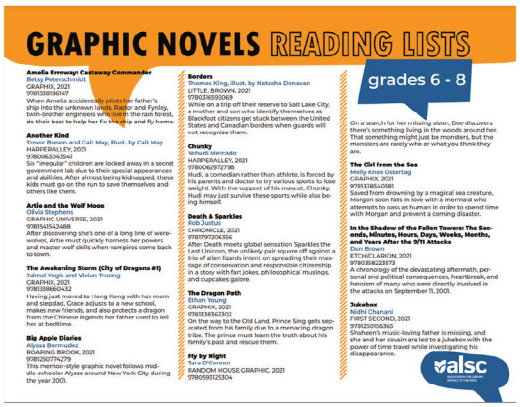

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