Children & LIBRARIES

the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children

Winter 2024
Vol. 22 | No. 4
ISSN 1542-9806

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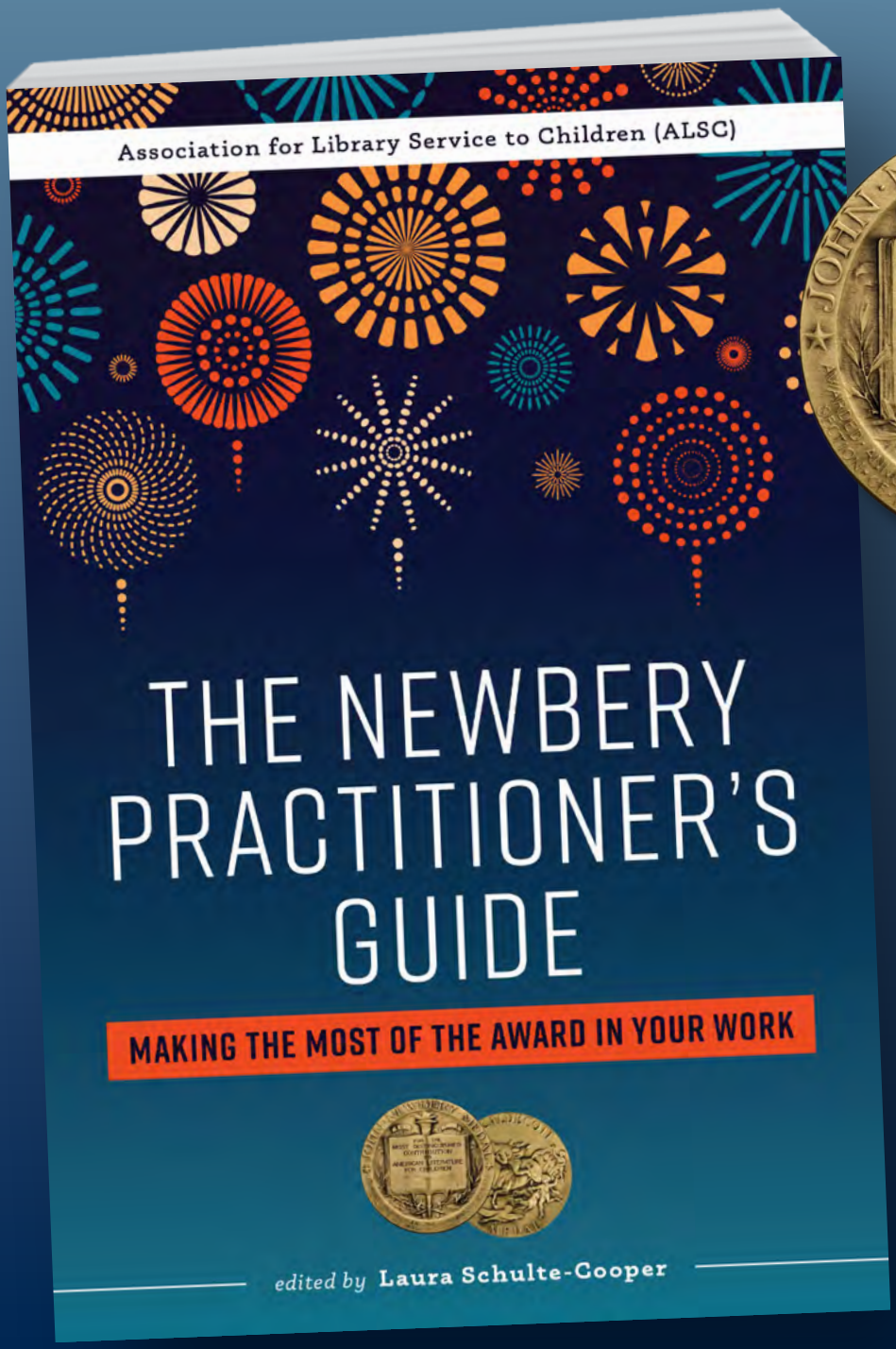
ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY SERVICE TO CHILDREN

Prepping for Book Challenges
Prelutsky's Amazing Poetry Collection
One Approach to 1,000 Books B4K

Celebrate a century of the Newbery Medal with this handy guide from ALSC!



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.

ISBN: 978-0-8389-3827-0

100 1922–2022 Newbery
A Century of Distinguished Children's Books

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Editor's Note

A Mental Health PSA

By Sharon Verbeten

The pop/country artist Jelly Roll recently popularized a song titled "I Am Not Okay." The backs of T-shirts are read, "To the person behind me reading this, You Matter."

I recently traveled to the "happiest place on Earth" and still remained depressed. It's been a challenging past few months, mired in divisive election emotions and confusion about the impact of the election on libraries.

Some of us have experienced financial difficulties, unsettling library patron interactions, and family challenges on top of that. But whatever the challenge, caring for yourself and your mental health should be at the top of your "to do" list.

For me, traveling to Disney World was supposed to be my getaway from the real world—a panacea of sorts. And while I did manage to have some fun (head cold notwithstanding), my energy and thrill level remained at about 50 percent. I still walked the (very long!) walks to the parks and took pictures with some of my faves (like Mr. Potato Head). But even amid the most spectacular light and fireworks show I've ever seen overhead—complete with synced Disney tunes soundtrack—I remained sad. And I couldn't really say way.

This note is simply a nudge from your favorite (?!) editor to take care of yourself first. Seek the help you need. Take more "me" time. And share your concerns with others.

On a very quick shift, one thing that makes me happy and provides a positive future is our upcoming Spring 2025 issue of *CAL*—our first all-digital issue. It's an example of how ALSC is looking out for its members—delivering the same valuable content but via a more sustainable and cost-effective manner.

What's more, it will provide searchability, convenience (no more postal snafus), and easy and readily available portable access. It's an exciting evolution of our beloved publication, not just a change for change's sake.

We hope you'll find the change positive, and you'll find more on our website prior to the issue's launch; we'd love to hear your feedback.

Stay happy. Stay positive. Best wishes as we approach a new year. And don't forget, take care of yourself. &

Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children LIBRARIES

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Circulation

Children and Libraries (ISSN 1542-9806) is a refereed journal published four times per year by the American Library Association (ALA), 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601. It is the official publication of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of ALA. Subscription price: members of ALSC, $20 per year, included in membership dues; nonmembers, $50 per year in the US; $60 in Canada, Mexico, and other countries. Back issues within one year of current issue, $15 each. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Children and Libraries*, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601. Members send mailing labels or facsimile to Member Services, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601. Nonmember subscribers: Subscriptions, orders, changes of address, and inquiries should be sent to *Children and Libraries*, Customer Service—Subscriptions, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601; 1-800-545-2433, press 5; fax: (312) 944-2641; email: subscriptions@ala.org.

Statement of Purpose

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

Production

ALA Production Services (Tim Clifford and Lauren Ehle)

Advertising

Bill Spilman, Innovative Media Solutions, 320 W. Chestnut St., PO Box 399, Oneida, IL 61467; 1-877-878-3260 or (309) 483-6467; fax: (309) 483-2371; email: bill@innovativemediasolutions.com. The journal accepts advertising for goods or services of interest to the library profession and librarians in service to youth in particular. It encourages advertising that informs readers and provides clear communication between vendor and buyer. The journal adheres to ethical and commonly accepted advertising practices and reserves the right to reject any advertisement not suited to the above purposes or not consistent with the aims and policies of ALA. Acceptance of advertising in the journal does not imply official endorsement by ALA of the products or services advertised.

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Manuscripts and letters pertaining to editorial content should be sent to Sharon Verbeten, editor, 820 Spooner Ct., De Pere, WI 54115; (920) 339-2740; e-mail: childrenandlibraries@gmail.com. Manuscripts will be sent out for review according to the journal's established referee procedures. See www.ala.org/alsc/publications-resources/cal/author-guidelines for author guidelines. If you are interested in serving as a volunteer referee for manuscripts submitted to *CAL*, contact Editor Sharon Verbeten at childrenandlibraries@gmail.com. More information about the referee process is available at www.ala.org/alsc/publications-resources/cal/referees/referee-process.

Indexing, Abstracting, and Microfilm

Children and Libraries is indexed in *Library and Information Science Abstracts* and in *Library Literature and Information Science.*

Children and Libraries is indexed, abstracted, and available in full text through EBSCOhost. For more information, contact EBSCO at 1-800-653-2726.

Children and Libraries is also available from ProQuest Information and Learning in one or more of the following ways: online, via the ProQuest information service; microform; CD-ROM; and via database licensing. For more information, call 1-800-521-0600, ext. 2888 or online at www.proquest.com.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

Ready, Set, Respond

Becoming a Challenge-Ready Library Professional

VAL EDWARDS, MAEGAN HEINDEL, AND BECKY CALZADA

Imagine you are setting up a new display when a community member approaches you about a book their family checked out. They feel that the book is inappropriate for their family to read. You may feel a variety of emotions: fear, anger, defensiveness. If you are not in a position to make decisions in your organization, you may also feel uncertainty and helplessness.

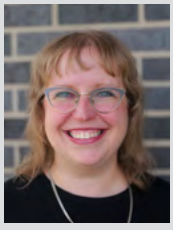
However, no matter your position in the library, you can personally develop a confident approach to intellectual freedom challenges and bring that lens to your wider organization for greater team unity and preparedness.

Policy and Procedure Foundation

In the tense moment of an intellectual freedom challenge, your library's policy and procedure will be your solid foundation. They present a neutral third point in the face of a query that can trigger a strong emotional response from both the library staff and the inquirer.

Ground in Your Selection Policies

Youth services staff should first be deeply familiar with their library's selection policy. If asked, you should be able to articulate why a book is in the collection and why it was placed in the juvenile, tween, or young adult section. Whether you have a direct role in the selection of youth services materials or your materials are selected centrally, it is essential that you know what guidance informed the selection of the book. While busy days full of programming or administrative commitments can push materials selection to the back burner, taking time to know and apply your selection policy consistently will save you from stress and conflicts down the road.



Val Edwards *is the library team leader in the Madison (WI) Metropolitan School District. She has experience working in a variety of library settings. She has served on several ALA/AASL/CORE committees, was the AASL division councilor, and a past chair of the CORE Library Consulting Interest Group, and currently serves on the AASL's Bylaws & Organization Committee.* ***Maegan Heindel*** *is the library services coordinator for the Madison (WI) Metropolitan School District. She is an alum of ALA's Emerging Leader program and served as the AASL's Learning4Life coordinator for Wisconsin. A frequent conference presenter, Maegan has held multiple positions in the Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association and the CCBC's Friends Board. Maegan is currently a member of the CCBC's Charlotte Zolotow Award Committee.* ***Becky Calzada*** *is the district library coordinator of the Leander (TX) Independent School District. She is also a cofounding member of Texas #FReadom Fighters and is the president-elect of the AASL for 2024–25. She was selected for ALA's fourth Policy Corps cohort, works as a member of the Policy Corps' cadre for Proactive Advocacy on Book Banning, and is a member of ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee. Becky is the recipient of several intellectual freedom awards and was honored by* People *magazine in their 2023 Women Changing the World portfolio. The trio are authors of the new book* Prepared Libraries, Empowered Teams *(ALA Editions, 2024).*

If the selection policy has been followed, with a little research you will be able to share the criteria that was applied to selecting the book and determining its location in the collection. Referring to policy helps you avoid personal value judgments or criticism that are likely to escalate the situation. When you can share the straightforward fact that the book was selected in alignment with board-approved policy, you can then move forward with the patron in selecting a book that better fits their family's preferences.

Know and Apply Your Reconsideration Policies

Second, get to know your reconsideration policy and process. What happens when a patron is not satisfied with the book selection information provided? What do you do when they insist the book be removed from the collection? Do you pull it until a reconsideration process is completed or does it stay on the shelf? Which staff members are authorized to share the reconsideration process with patrons? The answers to these questions should be included in your library's reconsideration policy. Again, knowing the next steps in the process will help you maintain composure and professionalism when challenging emotions may be surging.

Advocate for Updates

In the event that your policy and procedures are not proactive or protective of intellectual freedom, take the opportunity to advocate for an update. Since policies are typically voted on by the library's governing body, identify the individuals in your organization, if not you, who can take your concerns to those who can make change. Encourage your organizational leaders to consider updating in-house procedures even sooner, as these departmental guidelines may be simpler to change than board-approved policy. If you have faced a challenge already, share the areas that the policies and procedures did not serve your library staff or the tenets of intellectual freedom. If you have not yet faced a challenge, provide scenarios—either imagined or real examples from the news—to demonstrate the urgent need for change.

Awareness Smooths the Path Forward

When planning and professional development focused on responding to inquiries and challenges is not a regular part of your library's structure, there are steps you can take as an individual. Having ensured that you are informed about the policy and procedural guidance to which your library is bound, you can use your awareness of your community and happenings in other libraries to guide your planning. While you may need to start this work independently, be alert for opportunities to discuss and share with colleagues within your library and those with whom you are connected in other library settings.

Your most valuable action at this stage is to understand that inquiries represent patrons motivated by a variety of different factors. It is important to listen for the underlying concern and respond with questions and information sharing that deepens your understanding of the situation. Using intellectual freedom reports from the American Library Association's (ALA'S) Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) to become aware of what is happening across the country will help you plan a response in your setting.

Be Attuned to Trends

Making sure you are aware of your patrons' and communities' stances on a range of social issues will help you to anticipate the type of concerns that may be raised in your library. How are issues around mental health, diversity, and reproductive information portrayed in the local media? What concerns do citizens raise at local school board or city council meetings? What language is used to describe these concerns and how are solutions identified? This type of awareness will help guide anticipation of an inquiry and formulation of a response that works toward resolving the concerns rather than escalating to a possible challenge.

Plan Library Programming with Intentionality

When you set up a display, create a reading list, or select books for storytimes, be intentional in your choices. Engaging with your patrons, asking for suggestions and feedback keeps you connected to your library users and aware of their reactions to what they and their children experience in your space. This practice allows you to be prepared with an explanation about the relevance of these materials to your community and how they are in keeping with your library's policies should you be questioned.

Build Your Professional Network

Opportunities to connect, learn, and build relationships with fellow librarians and like-minded community members abound. Recall like-minded classmates from your library coursework. Maintain contact with cooperating librarians from your field work experiences. Establish an active member presence in your local, state, and national professional associations. Volunteering with and learning from librarians in similar roles can provide you with an abundance of thought partners and collegial support to get through tough times.

Think beyond your immediate circle and form relationships with your local school librarians, bookshop owners, and members of your library's friends groups and fundraisers. This cohort of peers and contacts can make all the difference in your preparedness for challenges and in helping ensure that you do not face difficult work in isolation.

Communication and Relationships Rally Support

Established protocols and communications for collection development processes and procedures are foundational components for a strong library system. Interrelated in this, is the importance of the relationships between team members. The successful gathering and dissemination of library information is dependent on your reliance and confidence on the delivery of this communication. If these elements are in place, your team will be challenge-ready and share consistent information to whomever requests it.

Review Communication Pathways

But where do you begin? This is a multi-step process that begins with an evaluation of the current communications in place in your workplace. What is the process in your workplace? Who needs to be contacted within your system should a concern arise? Who should review communications and consider what updates need to be made? Understanding the communication protocols are where the opportunities lie for you to be a proactive and contributing member of your library team.

It's important for you, as a member of the library team, to learn the location and establish procedural information such as an FAQ or a landing page on a library website where information is shared. Should you determine an information gap, consider passing your suggestion along. Your contribution of information strengthens your organization, informs your community, educates all library workers in your library, and systematizes consistent messaging at all times.

Rehearse for a Confident Response

Sharing current processes with a team is a starting point but using practice scenarios helps to hone communication skills and allows you to practice and reflect on how to approach an inquirer. Your response and body language impacts a conversation and there are actions that facilitate or escalate communications. "Practice makes perfect" is an adage that applies; the more you engage in rehearsal, the more confident you will be at having conversations about questions that arise.

Use situations based on challenges in other libraries and formulate a response that you might give to a patron were you to receive that same inquiry. Scripting and rehearsing, even on your own, will make you better able to address a patron's concern calmly, respectfully, and knowledgeably. Ideally, you can share with a colleague or two within your library or externally to discuss possible responses and reactions. Any exchange for which you are prepared will have a more positive outcome. Your anticipation, collaboration, planning, and rehearsal of inquiry scenarios provides the best chance for a constructive and positive outcome for your library and your community.

Lean on Your Coalition

As your confidence builds, be sure to also recognize when to lean on others for questions or when coping with the emotional struggles that may result from these sometimes heated interactions. The persistent book challenges across the country can take a toll on your mental health. It is incumbent on you to be mindful of this and seek out help and support whenever the need arises.

Help might come from an attentive friend outside the field willing to listen. It may also look like members of your curated professional network who can relate to your experiences. Do not overlook the patrons you serve. The transparency provided in your communication strategy can develop regular library visitors into strong library advocates who can speak on your behalf at a town hall meeting or library board session. Intentionally build your coalition to include all kinds of supports on deck. Even if you never have to call on them during an intellectual freedom challenge, your team of supporters will enrich your work in so many ways.

Prepared Libraries, Empowered Teams: A Workbook for Navigating Intellectual Freedom Challenges Together (ALA Editions, 2024).

Whether a book challenge is upon you, on the horizon, in your rearview mirror, or not yet in sight, now is the time to start envisioning what a challenge-ready team looks like in your organization. This unique workbook will equip you and your colleagues with the tools and resources to tailor a challenge preparedness action plan to the needs of your library and community.

Preliminary data for 2023 from ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) shows an all-time high number of book challenges, shattering the previous record set only the year before. Anticipating and preparing for challenges can only be done effectively when the library has a unified team. This workbook will help library directors and managers at all types of libraries ensure that all members of their staff understand the essential role they have to play when challenges arise. Simultaneously, it will guide you toward managing the stress of the circumstances with lessened impact on team well-being and organizational reputation. Solo librarians will also find resources for coalition-building in the absence of library colleagues within their institution.

Conclusion

With this solid grounding, you can prepare to avoid doing this work in isolation. Look beyond your team if necessary to prepare yourself for this work and to have support systems in place. You can also position yourself to be a support to others as they encounter questions around intellectual freedom. Ensuring that strong collegial relationships are part of your professional network is a necessary foundation for delivering high quality service.

To use this preparation to support your team, monitor the news around intellectual freedom and identify opportunities to engage in conversation around this topic. Even a brief exchange can improve team members' readiness to field an inquiry. This "of the moment" approach will help in defending intellectual freedom and in staying on your library team's radar.

Still feeling stuck? You are welcome to contact the authors for conversation and support. #StrongerTogether &

Magnificent Manga

The Joy of Reading Studio Ghibli

SONG JOSEPH CHO

Enter any Barnes & Noble bookstore and chances are that you will see Japanese comic books (manga) prominently displayed, many of which have all the outward trappings of a fairy tale. It is not uncommon to see customers of various ages wearing clothing and carrying smartphone cases decorated with manga-related products, as even the most casual visitor to the bookstore can attest. Read from right to left, manga graphic novels encompass a wide range of genres. Even though they originate from Japan, many of them draw inspiration from a variety of sources that transcend geographic boundaries—such as the Studio Ghibli film comic *The Secret World of Arriety*, which is based on Mary Norton's 1952 children's novel *The Borrowers*.

Young readers appear to be particularly drawn to Studio Ghibli film comics, such as *Ponyo* and *Kiki's Delivery Service*. Many of these manga comics are a throwback to childhood innocence. They resonate with the readers, capturing the timeless theme of friendship in a way that captivates their imagination. Their visual palettes are breathtakingly vivid.

Many of these protagonists triumph in the most unlikely circumstances while expressing deep, profound emotions—verbalizing their fears and making them relatable to young audiences from diverse backgrounds. As such, these graphic novels not only make for an interesting reading experience but they also prompt readers to ask deep questions.

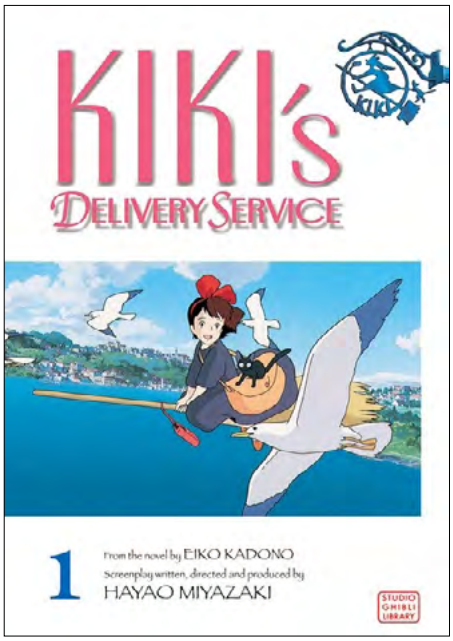
Consider the case of *My Neighbor Totoro*, a manga that rewards repeated reading. As a newly transplanted family in a quiet, picturesque country, the Kusakabe sisters (Mei and Satsuki) certainly do not expect to encounter anything out of the ordinary. Before long, the story takes on the characteristics of a fairy tale. It is the kind of story that many children dream of—two young sisters befriend a forest spirit, who takes them on a magical ride through the blue hues of a moonlit night—a passage that constitutes one of the most memorable and endearing moments in the series. The forest spirit also helps the sisters during their times of greatest need.

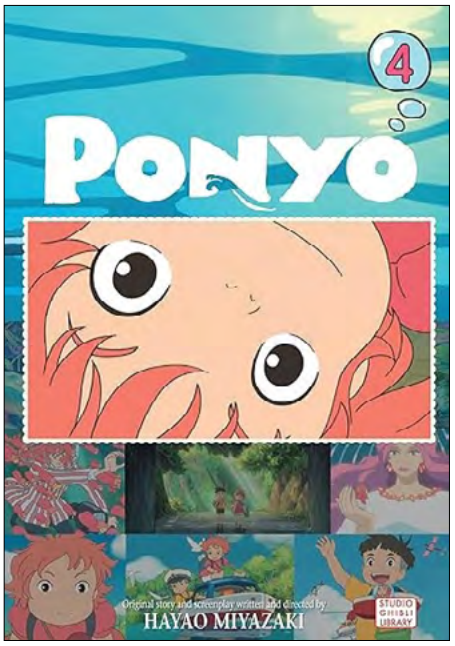
The story is full of magical worlds while depicting the many textures of everyday rural life in Japan. There are numerous

What is Studio Ghibli?

Studio Ghibli is a famous animation studio in Japan, co-founded by Hayao Miyazaki. Among other things, its films are known for their stunningly beautiful hand-drawn animation. Miyazaki's films *Spirited Away* and *The Boy and the Heron* each won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature, in 2003 and 2024 respectively. Many Studio Ghibli films have been adapted into manga series and novels.

Song Joseph Cho *is an associate professor of interdisciplinary studies at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA.*





instances in which the sisters embody childlike curiosity and uninhibited joy as they forge a new life in the countryside. The story also explores some of the heartbreaking emotions that children encounter, mirroring the experiences of young readers. Through a heart-warming narrative, the story fosters empathy. Upon reading this graphic novel, one learns that it is okay to cry and depend on others. No story can completely capture all the vagaries of emotion of children, but at moments, *My Neighbor Totoro* appears to come close.

The aforementioned manga series is of many that engages young readers' interests as they are invited to enter into the realm of fantasy. Each Studio Ghibli film comic is unique in its own way as it explores some of life's challenges through the lens of children, and together they expand the prismatic portrait of what a hero is: courageous, imaginative, compassionate, curious, and selfless.

Their storylines may be conventional, and yet their messages are undeniably compelling and uplifting as they weave joyful and heart-rending scenes into a satisfying aesthetic whole. They have a knack for telling stories that leave children quizzically wondering as they ponder such questions as, "What does it mean to be a true friend?" The theme of friendship is a mainstay in manga, a topic that is pertinent at a time when so many young people seem to experience loneliness.

Can Studio Ghibli graphic novels serve as great reading materials for young people? Just as importantly, can they serve as a catalyst for deep discussions about life? Studio Ghibli manga books answer with a resounding *yes*. A sense of enchantment consistently pulses through these stories as they intersperse the narratives with ordinary and fantastical elements. The dominant feeling in these graphic novels is one of optimism. There is no doubt that people are moving beyond the conventional ways of thinking about these Japanese comic books. They inspire feelings of joy, community, and wonderment.

Moreover, they can help readers envision new ways of understanding life's challenges. All of this creates an opportunity to reconfigure our approach to these graphic novels. It is hoped that these family friendly Studio Ghibli manga series will be available in children's libraries across the globe. As they immerse themselves in these stories, young readers will no doubt gain invaluable insights regarding loyalty, compassion, and unconditional love, among other themes that tug at their heartstrings. At the same time, these family friendly manga books can instill a lifelong love of reading in them.

The books mentioned are available from American manga publisher VIZ Media. In addition to those mentioned earlier, another manga series recommended for reading is Castle in the Sky. &

Jump into Reading

An Initiative Supporting Children Learning to Read

KATIE ECKERT AND LORI FRUMKIN

If you've spent any time providing reference at a public library, you've probably experienced a parent asking, "My child is learning to read; what do you recommend?" There are so many factors to consider when helping new or struggling readers!

Public libraries are great at helping young children before they start learning to read and then engaging school-aged children after they can read. But what about supporting them in between, when they are learning to read?

Being able to read is a fundamental right. According to the World Literacy Foundation, when children are empowered to read, they are able to think critically and actively participate in their communities, supporting a more equitable society (worldliteracyfoundation.org). In 2021, Chicago Public Library (CPL) began more deeply exploring the public library's role in supporting children who are learning to read. We asked ourselves, "Even though librarians are not reading teachers, what can public libraries do to better serve emerging readers?" It's a timely question as educators, community leaders, and parents across America are increasingly interested in literacy advocacy. This issue affects all children, but disproportionately impacts marginalized communities.

CPL launched Jump into Reading in the fall of 2023 at nine branches. This multifaceted initiative fills a gap in library services and promotes equity in literacy for youth across Chicago. It focuses on four key areas to help new and struggling readers and their caregivers as they become more fluent readers:

- Staff knowledge
- Curated collection materials
- Specialized resources
- Intentional programming

Staff Knowledge

First, we wanted to know more about how children learn to read. Our research led us to Scarborough's Reading Rope. The

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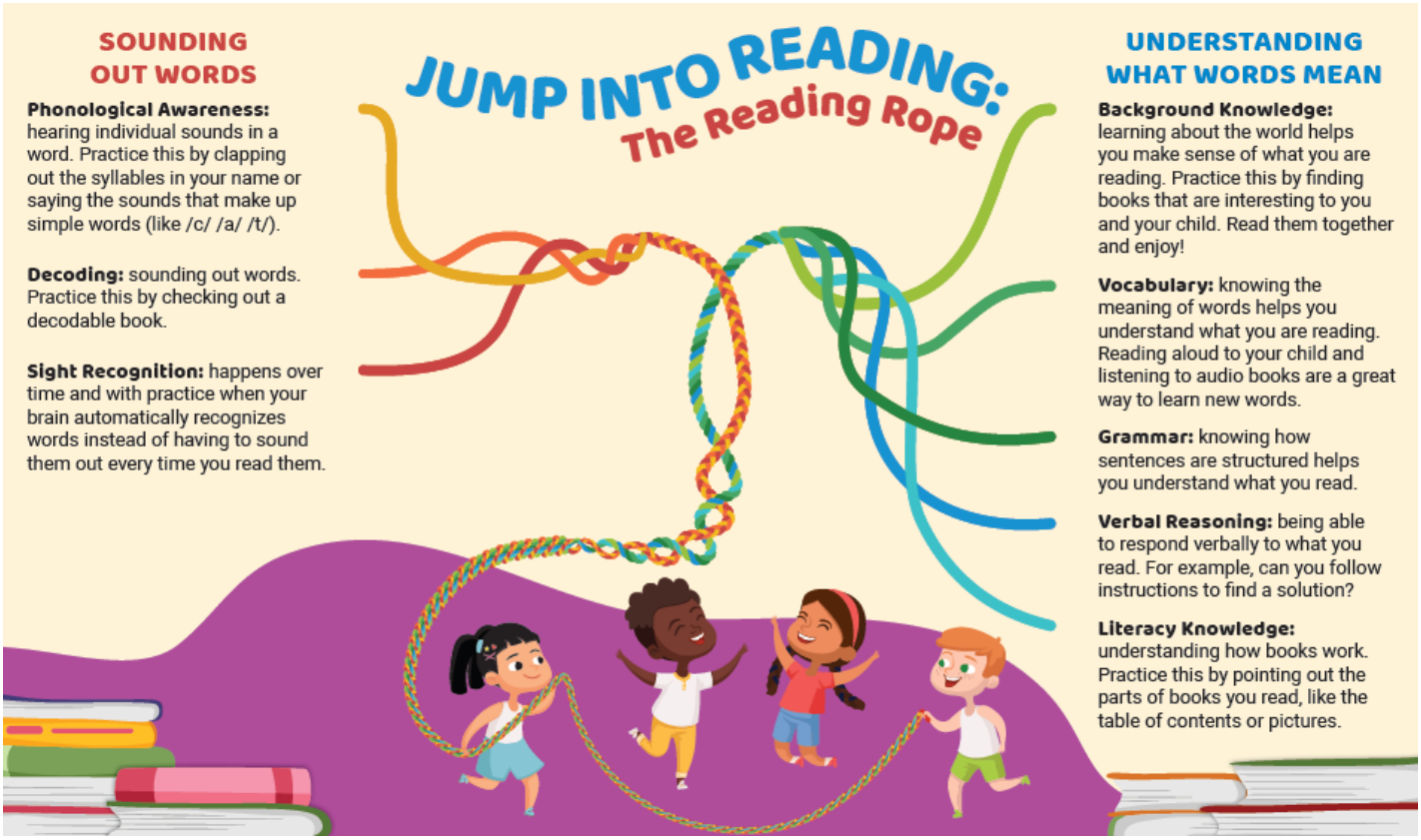
Lori Frumkin *works on special initiatives for children and families at Chicago Public Library, including early literacy, summer learning, and community partnerships. Before working as a children's librarian at CPL, Lori was an elementary school teacher in New York City.*



CPL worked with local literacy organization Redwood Literacy to adapt Hollis Scarborough's reading rope concept into an informational pamphlet for families. Hollis Scarborough, review of *Connecting Early Language and Literacy to Later Reading (Dis)Abilities: Evidence, Theory, and Practice. In Handbook for Research in Early Literacy,* edited by S. Neuman and D. Dickinson (New York: Guilford Press, 2001).

infographic made by Dr. Hollis Scarborough shows two main skill sets, each one made up of individual skills that are interconnected and interdependent. Over time and with practice, the two main strands (and the smaller strands they include) work together to lead to skilled reading.

We thought about the two strands in the context of a public library setting:

- **Language Comprehension** (or understanding what words mean) covers skills public libraries already excel at nurturing. Libraries strive to offer high quality programming and books that build vocabulary, background knowledge, and other important language comprehension skills.

- **Word Recognition** (sounding out words) is an area of growth for public libraries. How could we more deeply support children's phonological awareness and decoding skills as they learn to read?

We focused our efforts on learning more about decoding and phonological awareness through training at the Institute of Multisensory Education and partnering with local literacy organizations. One organization, Redwood Literacy, helped us create a simplified version of the reading rope to share with library staff and families as a tool to better explain how children learn to read. It even inspired the name of our initiative because it reminded us of a jump rope! Our staff participated in additional trainings from literacy experts to expand their knowledge of learning to read.

Curated Collections

Based on our better understanding of how children learn to read, we examined our collection. Like most public libraries, CPL's children's collection contains many books that support language comprehension. What we didn't have were books focused on helping children with word recognition. Lots of books can support word recognition, but specially designed books called "decodable books" are perfect for this. They only (or mostly) use specific letter patterns and go in a specific order, from simple to more complex, to help children practice their knowledge of letters and corresponding sounds. Decodable books encourage children to practice sounding out words instead of using pictures or context clues to read words they don't know. The literacy organization Reading Rockets also points out how decodable books help build confidence because they allow children to experience success reading on their own using the skills they are learning (readingrockets.org).

Working with our collection development team, we created a boutique collection of decodable books for all Jump into Reading locations. We reviewed sample decodable books from several publishers to consider durability, content, and diversity, and carefully selected series including Little Blossom, Dandelion Readers/Launchers, The Decodables, Meg and Greg, and My Decodable Readers.

Because decodable books serve such a specific purpose, they may lack dynamic vocabulary, syntax, characters, and narrative. From

the start, we made sure to emphasize when and how to use decodable books. Decodables support word recognition, one strand of the reading rope, but we can't forget to continue to support language comprehension, too. Because listening to high quality books read aloud builds language comprehension, we continued to encourage caregivers to read engaging and interest-driven books aloud with their child. We also highlighted our growing collection of Wonderbooks, VOX Books, and audiobooks as another way for children to engage with stories.

Our collection of decodable books is labeled and shelved in its own area with an informational sign. Additionally, we created a book selection tool to help select appropriate decodable titles. It gives information on how to use a decodable book. It includes an optional activity guiding children to read sets of words in different skill categories that follow the progression of acquiring decoding skills. This simple activity helps caregivers know which decodable book would be a good starting point.

Specialized Resources

To support and educate parents of children learning to read, we created new educational resources. Our Jump into Reading pamphlet is a parent-friendly informational brochure featuring our version of the reading rope. It breaks down complex ideas into simple language with concrete examples. This tool is also useful for library staff as they share information about the initiative.

We also developed website content for parents and caregivers that features expert content from our partners, suggested booklists, and further resources. As a trusted source of information, we found it particularly useful to share local and national resources that can be used to support new or struggling readers.

Programming

It has been a fun challenge to think about ways to incorporate word recognition skills into programming for children learning to read. Modeled after a traditional storytime, our Jump into Reading storytime is perfect for kids beginning to learn to read. We invite caregivers to join us as we pair a read-aloud with activities that play with sounds and words. Our focus is on phonological awareness, which is the understanding that language is made up of words and words are made up of individual units of sound. Phonological awareness is easy to implement in storytime because it is an oral language skill that focuses on sounds. We want children and caregivers to understand that letters represent sounds and that exploring those sounds will eventually help children learn to read. Plus, playing with sounds and words is fun!

When selecting books, we've had the most success with picture books that play with rhyme and sounds, like *Bathe the Cat* by Alice B. McGinty, *I Ain't Gonna Paint No More* by Karen Beaumont, and *Sheep in a Jeep* by Nancy Shaw.

We created Grab and Go Kits to practice skills outside of library programs, too. We worked with a local literacy organization called Big City Readers to develop simple activities using household items. Our Pop-It kit was great for a wide range of ages; kids could practice different skills by popping a bubble on a toy pop-it for each word they heard in a sentence or each syllable or sound they heard in a word. Another popular kit was the word race activity, which included a toy car and instructions to practice blending sounds.

Lessons Learned and Looking Forward

We learned a lot in our first year of Jump into Reading. Some of our biggest takeaways include:

- **Partnerships.** Jump into Reading was new terrain for CPL. We could not have developed this initiative on our own. From understanding the complex process of learning to read to evaluating the quality of decodable books, working with experts in our community like Redwood Literacy and Big City Readers was imperative to the success of this initiative.

- **Reference.** Because decodable books are very specific tools, it's important for staff to understand what they are and how they factor into the process of learning to read. Developing our reading rope pamphlet for parents also provided talking points for staff. We spent more time than expected on training for this initiative to ensure that librarians felt confident helping families support their new readers.

- **Community Outreach.** Parents, educators, and community leaders are strongly invested in supporting literacy initiatives, and many communities have exciting opportunities for program partnerships. We found a great partner who shared our goals in the Black Boy Literacy Campaign, a church-based literacy program that helps boys on the south side of Chicago grow their literacy skills. CPL provided special programming and materials to support their work, resulting in a deeper connection between the participants and their neighborhood libraries. Working with local groups helped us respond to specific community need and allowed this initiative to effectively support families outside of the library.

- **Decodables/Publishing**. Quality, diversity, and accuracy vary widely in currently available decodable series, and we anticipate even more series released in the near future. We learned how important it is to evaluate decodable books just like you would any other books for your library's collection.

We plan on expanding our Jump into Reading initiative to seventeen more CPL branches in the next year. We also plan to offer informational programs for parents of new and struggling readers. Long term, we hope to strengthen our focus on equity in literacy by more deeply supporting diverse learners, English-language learners, and older struggling readers. We're excited to keep building upon the success of our first year! &

The UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

Cultivating Programs and Partnerships to Change the World

GWENDOLYN C. NIXON, STEVEN YATES, AND JAMIE CAMPBELL NAIDOO

The potential of a dynamic, maintained school and public library partnership cannot be underestimated. School librarians are in a position to encourage global involvement of their entire school community through an inspiring school library program. Public youth librarians, who often serve youth throughout the community and have existing relationships with community leaders, offer valuable partnership opportunities for their school counterparts. Together, school and public librarians can leverage their influence and expertise to create change throughout their entire community on a variety of topics and social issues. One way to harness this relationship to affect global and sustainable change is to collaborate in support of the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

In 2015, the Member States of the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a universal call to action to "end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity."[1] Throughout the adoption process, the UN conferred with numerous stakeholders, including the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

Librarians as a profession have historically been at the forefront of supporting social justice; individual freedom; diversity, equity and inclusion; sustainability; and active citizenship. Libraries around the world have come out publicly endorsing the UN Agenda 2030 since its adoption, and have offered ways they plan to achieve and support its goals.

Seventeen global UN SDGs were adopted as part of this agenda. Goals such as "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" lend themselves easily to be supported by school and public library programs.[2] Global literature can provide a window into the experiences of citizens around the world and allow students to reflect upon their own community and their place as an individual



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within that community. Creating and cultivating partnerships and collaborations is a skillset most librarians already possess, and one that is vital to enacting global change. As stakeholders, as leaders, and as citizens, school and public youth librarians are uniquely positioned to make a large impact.

This article provides strategies for meaningful implementation of this global initiative within the school and public library setting, highlighting collaboration opportunities for school librarians and public youth librarians to work together toward a common aim of supporting the SDGs. We walk through a school year (as public libraries often tailor their programming seasonally as well, to best serve their young patrons), providing tangible ideas for collaboration and implementation each month, creating a UN SDGs calendar ready to use in a school and public library setting.

Both school and public librarians can benefit from real-world implementation examples to support a selection of SDGs, offering ways that teacher-librarians and youth services librarians can partner to encourage social responsibility in children and teens, as well as promote community—building equity, inclusivity, and sustainability. We offer a practical, hands-on toolkit that can immediately be put into practice in your community.

Yours, Mine, Ours: Supervisor Meetings

Arguably the most important part of successful implementation of SDGs in your school or public library is getting administrator and supervisor buy-in. Early on, school and public librarian partners should come together with their respective supervisors to discuss the SDGs and possible ways to support the goals. Come prepared for the meeting with planning items available from the American Library Association SDGs website or create your own draft plan for the year.[3]

The UN Sustainable Development website offers in-depth explanations of each of the seventeen goals.[4] Familiarize yourself with them and consider which ones are the best fit for your community. *What is reasonable and attainable? Which initiatives are free or low-cost, and which ones will take budgetary planning? Which ones are you already doing?*

The best way to ensure supervisor buy-in is to highlight ways in which the SDGs align with the current goals of your organization. Are there any that directly relate to your district's mission, vision, and core values? Brush up on the mission and vision of your school or public library and be ready to state your case for why your plan supports these goals.

Be prepared to change your targets based on your principal's or supervisor's feedback until you come up with a plan that the entire team is excited to implement for the upcoming school year. The SDGs discussed below are a selected sample of the seventeen total goals made by the United Nations. You will select ones to match your community's values.

July: Planning Month

When you have the green light from your administrator and supervisor, brainstorm planning with your collaborating librarian. Use the template provided by the ALA or create your own SDGs library chart. Brainstorm how you can support each goal. If possible, partner with other librarians across the area for district- or region-wide implementation. Both school and public librarians should be able to create a list of successful previous collaborations to reach out to those partners again this year. Consider how to harness the energy, resources, and expertise of each community partner to best support the goals you've matched with your yearly plan.

Moving forward, ask for time at the next leadership team meeting to discuss how your colleagues can assist with implementation at your school or public library. Have your co-librarian attend the meeting with you to introduce themselves and see what connections can be made. Most of all, good luck and have fun with it!

August: Zero Hunger

The dog days of summer may mean far-flung vacations and lazy afternoons at the pool for some families, whereas others experience food insecurity during the weeks of summer without access to free and reduced breakfast and lunch. Be a part of the efforts to feed your community by volunteering to hand out meals—and books—in the weeks between summer school and the beginning of the school year.

Perhaps your district already delivers meals via school bus to various locations in the community. Hop on board with a cart of books and allow students to check-out with a mobile scanner. Other localities have successfully instituted free meals at the public library during the summer months: ask for recommendations from the ALSC online community on how to launch this practice in your area. Maybe a seed library is just the thing to jumpstart your community in creating a library or community garden where fruits and vegetables can be shared with those facing food insecurity.

August is also a good time to get organized for the school year and consider how to support the goal of zero hunger from inside your school or library walls. Consider housing a food drive bin in your library with a student-run collection effort and donate the proceeds to local organizations serving families in need in your community. Shop classes, scouting troops, or other service groups may be willing to construct a pantry for your space. Or, you or a teen volunteer could make one with a makerspace 3-D printer. If these options aren't possible, simply advertise an existing pantry.

Allowing food in the library after school, during lunch periods, or in designated areas is another option. You can also keep a sealed container of snacks at the circulation desk for youth in need. Your nonfiction section should include kid- and teen-friendly choices on farming, nutrition, and sustainability.

September: Partnerships for the Goals

September is the perfect month to publicize to your community the valuable relationship between the school and public libraries—perhaps inspiring others in your town to forge similar partnerships! School librarians can help facilitate Public Library Card Sign-up Month, highlight the library's free programs, air-conditioning, and internet access available year-round. Public librarians can leverage their relationship with their school partners to reach many more families than is possible through their contacts alone. English language learner teachers can be invited to bring their classes to tour the public library. PreK teachers could use the public library space to host a family literacy night. The possibilities are endless!

This month is also a good time to consider additional partnerships beyond the school-public library collaboration, for example, reaching out to other local government departments, such as the Department of Human Services, or to school partners like the counseling department. Invite parent groups (PTA, Padres Unidos) to learn about SDGs by hosting a parent night at the school or public library. Parents and other community members can be a great resource—request their help in locating expert speakers or organizing events. School librarians should view their students as partners in implementing the goals and ask service clubs and scouting troops for help. Public librarians similarly can offer volunteer hours for teens interested in assisting with tasks and projects.

It is ideal for school and public librarians to also build global partnerships as part of their support of the SDGs. One way to do this is by participating in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)'s Sister Libraries for Children's and Young Adults' Reading.[5] This program partners librarians with those in other countries to create global literacy programs celebrating each other's cultures, fostering intercultural connections among librarians and youth.

October: Reduced Inequalities

Librarians are often at the forefront of efforts to reduce inequalities through their community outreach programs, support of intellectual freedom, and access to print and electronic resources. With administrator approval, and if feasible, open the school library for evening and weekend hours. Public librarians can help staff the space to provide programming, reader's advisory, snacks, and potentially translation services. Alternatively, host a family night at the public library to demonstrate how to use the online catalog, view student checkouts, renew items, and download electronic resources (such as audiobooks and e-books) to enjoy as a family. Invite your school librarian counterpart to attend so families see a familiar face and understand that the libraries work together to provide resources, solve problems, and offer services to everyone in the community.

On the collection development front, analyze your statistics to see which demographics, grades/ages, or student groups you may be missing. Check your circulation statistics for gaps and invite those community groups or classes for an additional library visit. If feasible, boost your subscriptions and highlight free digital resources allowing access to high-quality multilingual resources and services outside of your library's four walls.

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November: Sustainable Cities and Communities

For November, your focus can be on how to make your community inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The first step begins in your own library—is your space safe, inclusive, and accessible, particularly for children and persons with disabilities? Invite members of underrepresented groups to tour your library and offer feedback on possible improvements. Check that bookshelves are the appropriate height for your age group, and spaced at enough distance for a wheelchair or stroller.

Work with your facilities departments and outreach committees to offer both the school and public library space for community meetings, including affordable housing workshops. Consider dedicating time to working with the local planning commission and advocate for your community's needs. Are there accessible, safe sidewalks for all members of your community to walk to your school or public library? Is the walkway to your library appropriately lit at night? What about public transportation? Often there is a transit or transportation planning committee you can contact to brainstorm ideas for how to improve shared public spaces, and therefore the quality of life for your patrons and neighbors.

Protect your community's local heritage by creating a local history collection in your school and public library. Preserve and catalog invaluable documentary heritage for future generations, such as yearbooks, letters, and literary journals. If your school has alumni groups, reach out to them to collect items of value to your school community. Both school and public librarians should promote open-access digital books platforms such as Storyweaver (https://storyweaver.org.in) from India, Book Dash (https://bookdash.org/) from South Africa, and House of Mini Picture Books (https://www.minipicbooks.com/) from Singapore to help archive cultures across the globe.

December: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Librarians who work with youth are uniquely positioned to help promote productive employment and decent work for all to their

patrons from a young age. If your school or library has a college and career counselor/librarian, partner with them first. If not, organize events on your own and ask community partners for assistance with staffing and expertise. Ideas include organizing a resume and mock interview workshop for kids and teens. You can invite local lawmakers, leaders, and business owners to provide constructive feedback.

The promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth means all children and teens should have the opportunity to prepare and train for future job markets. Partner with your district or school technology lead on the international Hour of Code to broaden participation in the field of computer science, particularly for underrepresented groups. Volunteer to write college or job reference letters for students, to assist with online applications, or act as a mentor for students looking for job or volunteer experience.

Often, career day or college representative visits take place during the school day. What if the school and public libraries collaborated on an evening "College and Career" event for students and families? Make it fun and interactive by inviting animal technicians, chefs, and firefighters. Invite guest speakers of all backgrounds and identities to highlight possible career paths.

Teenagers can be partnered with community mentors and elementary students can be paired with teens to hear about jobs and opportunities in your area. Each county or city department can staff a table to discuss career paths available in their field. These events would appeal to all youth patrons, from pre-kindergarten to college-aged.

January: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Promoting inclusive societies and providing access to justice for all is an easy fit for school and public librarians. All patrons should feel safe when they enter your library space, regardless of their orientation. School librarians can spearhead efforts to be a No Place for Hate School, a student-led school climate improvement program from the Anti-Defamation League.[6] Another way to be involved is to sponsor your school student government association and encourage students to develop a lifelong habit of voting.

As is customary in libraries, be sure to recognize celebratory heritage months, but also celebrate those cultures throughout the school or calendar year. Hold a "book tasting" event celebrating diverse authors and illustrators. Encourage tween participation with food items that match with each book. The UN SDG Book Club archive with a blog, suggested activities, and curated list of books, in all six official UN languages—Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish—for children ages 6–12 is a great place to find global titles.[7] Use these titles in support of peace, justice, and strong institutions.

A natural partnership between the school and public library is to host a community read. Splitting the cost of an in-demand author means twice the fun for half the price. Authors can be selected based on whatever issue, related to peace and social justice, is most relevant to your region. If the topics are controversial in your community, partner with local organizations who are skilled in this arena and could help guide difficult conversations around sensitive cultural topics.

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February: Good Health and Well-Being

Post-pandemic, there is perhaps nothing more important than supporting the health and well-being of the young people we serve. February is a good time to recognize the physical and mental strain that comes from being a child or teen in today's world, and think of ways the school and public library can support well-being in your community. School and public librarians should be vocal supporters for the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, one of the targets of the SDG goal for good health and well-being. Volunteer to host naloxone trainings in your library space, or offer it for community meetings on health-related topics. Librarians should maintain accurate and kid-appropriate print and online resources on health-related topics.

Many jurisdictions have a social-emotional learning committee or dedicated social worker or counselor to support social-emotional learning in schools. Find ways the library can be involved in their initiatives. For example, designate one day a week for Yoga in the Library after school, tapping on fellow teachers and other librarians to share their practice with others and guide participants each week. Children and teens alike would be delighted if their library invited a therapy dog non-profit to share books with readers, whether reluctant or avid. Teen spaces can host "Stress Less, Laugh More Week" during final exams with games and activities.

The snowy days that February brings to some parts of the country make it the perfect time to host a coffee and cocoa bar in your library space, and now is a good time to boost your collection of meditation audiobooks, or create recommended reading lists for families and young people looking for cozy picks to read and relax. Year round, libraries can offer relaxing makerspaces with activities such as puzzles, adult coloring books, create your own bookmarks, painting, and do-it-yourself (DIY) slime.

March: Gender Equality

March is Women's History Month, making it the perfect time to promote gender equality in your school and public library. Be a part of the conversation surrounding STEAM opportunities and take the lead on initiatives like Girls Who Code or creating makerspaces for all students. School librarians can ensure equal opportunities for student leadership by sponsoring student clubs for underrepresented groups. Public librarians can promote the use of public meeting spaces for girls' groups and clubs. Regularly review your library collection to remove materials that may include stereotypes or gender biases.

Hosting a joint International Women's Day event with authors, book giveaways, and prizes, is an opportunity for school and public librarians to come together in celebration of important women. You can ask attendees to identify notable women in history, share stories of important women in their lives, or even nominate themselves—or their librarian!—as an extraordinary person in their community.

Another way to ensure equality for all users is to publicly designate your library as a Safe Space for all users. This could also lead to opportunities for services and programs for non-binary, genderfluid, and other gender diverse youth.

April: Climate Action

Celebrate Earth Day (April 22) with a used clothing swap. High schools that have a Senior Prom often host tuxedo and formal dress donation drives—offer to hold this in your school or public library space to promote sustainable reusing and equitable services for all, as well as publicize your part as a leader in the community. Younger tweens and elementary-aged patrons may also enjoy taking the lead on organizing a collection of bikes, shoes, or other items, either for trading with their classmates and neighborhood friends, or for donation to a worthy cause. If there is a way for you to support the recycling and reusing of materials, sign up!

Another fantastic and easy way for school and public libraries to support the environment is to have a Seed Library available for taking, trading, and borrowing. Consider joining the Global Seed Library Census and share tips and tricks with librarians across the globe who are a part of this effort.[8] As leaders in your community, school and public librarians can advocate for green options during library renovations. In an existing space, take advantage of windows for natural light and airflow. Keep a stash of reusable tote bags behind the circulation desk for patrons who request a bag for their books.

When replacing titles, consider if a digital version would be just as effective as a print copy. Run a recycled books art program in lieu of placing items in the trash. Save discarded poetry books for Poem in Your Pocket Day (also during April!) or DIY buttons. Art teachers both in the school building or the Parks and Recreation Department would be delighted to receive a donation of your discarded magazines. Nonfiction resources on climate change should be up-to-date and accurate.

For More Information

- **American Library Association Task Force on United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.** Downloadable Materials. https://www.ala.org/aboutala/ala-task-force-united-nations-2030-sustainable-development-goals.
- United Nations' lesson plans for teaching the Sustainable Development Goals to grades 8–12. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sdg_tg_email_updated.pdf.
- **Global Literature in Libraries Initiative (GLLI).** Suggested global/international youth books in a month's-worth (March 2021) of blog posts. https://glli-us.org/2021/03/30/wrapup.
- **United Nations' Climate Action Superheroes,** which includes games and downloadable activities. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-action-superheroes/.
- **Games for Change.** Game creation competition for youth inspired by the SDGs to create digital games about real-world issues impacting their communities.https://gameforchange.org/studentchallenge/.
- ***Frieda Makes a Difference: The Sustainable Development Goals and How You Too Can Make a Difference.*** United Nations' free digital children's picture book about the SDGs. https://issuu.com/unpublications/docs/frieda_2018.

May: Quality Education

End-of-year final exams and state and national testing lends itself to an easy match for May—quality education. Both public and school librarians should regularly evaluate their print and online resources to ensure their collection provides inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Do websites need to be translated? Is the collection organized in a way that even a first-time library user can find what they need? Take the time during May to see your library space from a learner's eyes. This can be a great opportunity to practice systematic planning and assessment of your library.

School librarians can take the lead on informing their public librarian partners of the curricular needs. School library lessons are already aligned with state and/or national curriculum standards, and with the school-public library partnership, the learning can be extended outside of the school building. Public library afterschool programs are a natural fit for expanding on instruction that took place during in the classroom or school library: storytimes can reinforce concepts, book clubs can extend

discussions from the school day, and makerspaces promote STEM learning for students from all backgrounds.

Both school and public librarians should make an effort to participate in school- and county-wide educational committees and collaborative learning teams. A recommended practice for connecting SDGs to state and national educational standards is to walk through the curricular standards for each grade; for example, focusing on Social Studies, or whatever works best for your community, and brainstorming with your collaborative learning team about how to support each goal. The UN website also offers ready-made booklists and lesson plans. Public librarians can offer insight on additional materials or online resources or create LibGuides to aid their school counterparts.

Collection data should be compared to student achievement in specific units to analyze any gaps in the collection. School librarians can connect their evaluation goals to student data. Work with specific classes or small groups to increase student achievement where your school needs it the most. Public librarians can make their SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) goal related to the SDGs or tied directly to education—promote lifelong learning through inquiry-based research projects, book clubs, and by establishing the library as the heart of both your school and the town.

End of Year Reflection (June/July)

Summer buzzes with activity at public libraries, presenting a prime opportunity for librarians to dive into SDG-aligned initiatives. With increased foot traffic and participation in library programs during the summer months, public librarians can leverage this momentum to continue promoting awareness and action on issues such as zero hunger and sustainability. One option is to integrate SDG themes into summer reading programs, empowering patrons of all ages to play a role in shaping a brighter, greener, and more equitable world.

Don't forget to promote your program's results! Let the community, and your supervisors, know how your program played out. An infographic is an effective way to display the highlights of your work and also can be seamlessly shared on social media. June is a good time for school librarians to ask for an end-of-year meeting with their administrator to evaluate community progress regarding implementing the targeted SDGs; this might occur at the end of summer reading for public youth librarians.

Take notes now when your memory is fresh on what worked and what should change, so the groundwork is already laid out for the following year. Consider whether it works for your school to continue with the same plan for next year, or if you would like to reevaluate and select new goals. If there were goals brought up during your initial buy-in meeting in July that were less urgent the first year of implementing (or that required multi-year budgetary planning), discuss now what milestones you need to hit to get those bigger projects off the ground for next year. Perhaps your community would benefit from selecting one targeted goal for the next school year and would like to place all your focus there. It may work better for you if the school and public libraries alternate each year, taking turns being the lead on your community's efforts to support the SDGs. Whatever you decide, enjoy your summer knowing you've helped to make a difference in your local community and the world!

Concluding Thoughts

Throughout this article we have discussed how to find and form successful collaborative partnerships and suggested best practices for connecting SDGs to state and national educational standards. We hope this article inspires you to act as a changemaker in the greater global society, and provides a springboard for you to discern how to inspire young people, families, colleagues, and community stakeholders to see themselves as change agents in the larger community. The SDGs have a much greater chance of success if school and public youth librarians are at the forefront of promoting and supporting the universal call to action. Are you ready to join us? &

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Listen to Children

The Jack Prelutsky Antiquarian Children's Poetry Collection at WWU

SYLVIA TAG

In the preface to her book *What the Dragon Fly Told the Children*, Frances Bell Coursen speaks directly "To the Children's Grown-Up Friends" stating that, "Nearly all children are poetic. They live near to the heart of things in the early spring-tide of life when 'birds and buds and they are happy peers.' They have also a natural rhyme and rhythm and the melody of verse."[1] The adult reader is gently reminded that listening to children allows us to embrace the endless possibilities of language and imagination.

Founded as a teachers' college at the end of the nineteenth century, the Western Washington University (WWU) Libraries contains noteworthy children's literature collections. Over the last decade, we have dedicated resources to deepen and expand our youth poetry collections through grants, gifts, and advocacy. Our distinctive collection, Poetry for Children and Teens (PoetryCHaT), supports collection development and a wide range of programming. A particularly successful event, Poetry Camp 2016, brought more than forty poets and twice as many attendees to campus for a weekend of workshops. Co-directed by WWU faculty Sylvia Tag and Nancy Johnson, with keynote speakers Sylvia Vardell and Janet Wong, the weekend culminated in a standing room only performance by Seattle poet Jack Prelutsky.

Known for his inventive and irreverent poetry, Prelutsky has amassed many awards in his long career, including the *New York Times* Outstanding Book of the Year, *School Library Journal* Best of the Best Book, International Reading Association/Children's Book Council Children's Choice Award, and the Library of Congress Book of the Year. In 2006, he was appointed as the inaugural United States Poetry Foundation Children's Poet Laureate.

Jack and Carolynn Prelutsky

His first book, *A Gopher in the Garden* (1967), started it all. Prelutsky's combined works have sold more than a million copies and been translated into many languages. During the height of his popularity as a best-selling poet, he traveled all over the United States doing book promotions and visiting antiquarian bookstores building a personal collection of more than twelve hundred books, toys, pamphlets, art, and ephemera.

In 2019, Jack and Carolynn Prelutsky gifted their extensive antiquarian children's poetry collection to the WWU Libraries. The gift included funds to preserve materials, something few donors think to include. As the sorting, processing, and cataloging commenced, the breadth of the donation was evident. Then, came 2020.

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As the COVID pandemic enveloped the world, the country, and Washington State, the WWU physical campus closed. Shelved in silence, some of the Prelutsky Collection books had traveled over two hundred years to arrive at WWU. These items would have to wait a couple more. In 2022 when spaces and services reopened, the library took stock of projects that had stopped midstream. The Prelutsky Collection was a joy to rediscover. By 2023, cataloging and preservation had begun in earnest. As we pondered how best to spread the word and share this extraordinary collection, plans for an exhibit and catalog began to percolate.

Dating back to the late eighteenth century, items in the Prelutsky Collection give a sense of what children's poetry was like, at least in the English-speaking world, in times gone by. Some of it is familiar, some of it is not. Some of it is still a joy to read, some of it is off-putting and even offensive, either because of its style, content, or perspective. The books were owned and used by real people who lived, in some cases, more than two hundred years ago. While it's hard to say what the poems meant to them, we can hold the same books they held and, with a little imagination, listen to their voices.

The Exhibit and Catalog

Listen to Children: The Jack Prelutsky Antiquarian Children's Poetry Collection was conceptualized and curated in collaboration with Western Libraries Special Collections Librarian and rare book scholar Michael Taylor. Exhibit design and catalog composition began in early 2023 and was finalized just in time for the exhibit opening in spring of 2024.

An exhibit is a valuable experience for those who visit but is confined to a physical location. If the pandemic years taught us anything it is that multimodal delivery is essential. Publishing an exhibit catalog has allowed us to share the collection with a wide audience. A collection of essays, images, and references, the catalog offers a fresh look at youth poetry through topical explorations, including early didactic poetry, Mother Goose, nature, nonsense verse, illustration, imaginary voyages, politics and history, songbooks and scores, and advertising. Blurring the boundaries of audience, and in contrast to the innocence of youth, there are examples of satirical, political, and commercial poetry published for adult audiences. No young people's exhibit would be complete without the magical world of movable parts and unexpected formats.

Making historical poetry relevant to young readers of today is important. We are grateful to the contemporary poets who contributed to the catalog, sharing their own creative practices, experiences with young people, teaching insights, and joyful reflections: Margarita Engle, Kenn Nesbitt, Joyce Sidman, Peter Sís, Arianne True, Sylvia Vardell, and Janet Wong. These important voices bring items in the collection into the present, expanding the exhibit content beyond themes in antiquarian poetry. Here are a few selected highlights from the exhibit and catalog.

Mother Goose

Perhaps the deepest area within the collection is Mother Goose. Hundreds of editions of this classic collection of nursery rhymes are available, along with numerous spin-offs, parodies, and attempts to explain what the rhymes mean. For example, *Mother Goose for Grown Folks* (1860) by Adeline Whitney contains brilliant and funny explications.

What is it about these simple and yet not-so-simple rhymes that led them to become perhaps the most familiar poems in the English language? Part of the answer may be that Mother Goose bridges both of the two major historical "schools" of children's poetry. Over the years, some have tried to show that like Aesop and his followers, Mother Goose teaches serious moral lessons. That said, the rhymes are also the forerunners of Victorian (and later) nonsense poetry, deliberately ridiculous verses that celebrate play and imagination for their own sake and reject the idea that children's poetry must have an instructional purpose.

A few titles in the Prelutsky Collection overhaul Mother Goose as social satire. Eve Merriam's *The Inner City Mother Goose*, first published in 1969, is about urban poverty and the many issues associated with it. The book was widely banned because of its provocative subject matter and illustrations. *The Liberated Mother Goose* (1974) by Tamar Hoffs, by comparison, was intended to be funny, but also offers biting social critique from feminist, antiwar, and pro-Native American rights perspectives. Both works use Mother Goose as a way of saying that we shape the world by what we teach our children.

Nature

In the second half of the nineteenth century, nonsense poetry mated with Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and gave birth to a new breed of storytelling that delighted readers young and old. Probably the most well-known example, Edward Lear's *Nonsense Botany and Nonsense Alphabets* (1888), can be interpreted as a caricature not only of the Victorian fascination with science, but also of the many new theories that were being proposed at that time—some sensible, some not. Was the Fizzigiggious Fish, "who always walked about upon Stilts, / because he had no Legs" really any crazier than the conclusions that highly respected scientists were drawing about topics like race and genetics?[2]

Other nature-themed works challenge humans to see things from a non-human perspective. In *The Vege-Men's Revenge* (1897), a young girl named Poppy is kidnapped by Herr Carrot and Don Tomato and taken to Vege-Men's Land. The vegetables, she learns, are unhappy about being diced, mashed, and fried at the hands of humans. Poppy is placed underground, where she grows, is harvested, undergoes kitchen prep, and is finally served as the main course at a banquet. The reader is grateful when it turns out to be just a dream.

Nonsense Verse for Children

Nonsense poetry acknowledges the resilience, tenacity, identities, and independence of young people. One reason that nonsense is attractive to young readers is its lack of nostalgia and sentimentality, both of which might be considered adult preoccupations. Nonsense is refreshingly straightforward. The child who is wise beyond their years might ask, "What is not nonsense?" In what could be referred to as the liberation of young readers, nonsense as a literary form was popularized in the Victorian Age. Illustrations often play a collaborative role in nonsense verse through the double laugh—once for the words and again for the images.

An early novel in verse disguised as a picture book, *The Tale of Mr. Tootleoo* (1925), takes the reader on a nonsensical journey with a jovial sailor who suffers shipwreck but does not drown. The book and its two sequels were written by Bernard Darwin, grandson of naturalist Charles Darwin. His wife, artist Elinor Darwin, created the book's whimsical lino print illustrations.

Poetry in Periodicals

Vast as it is, the Prelutsky Collection contains few periodicals, which are among the major places where children's poetry was historically published. Educators and researchers may wish to consult online resources to access these publications. Many academic libraries subscribe to the American Antiquarian Society's American Historical Periodicals database. In addition, a growing number of publications are freely available online through sites such as the HathiTrust Digital Library and Google Books. These resources contain major periodicals such as *The Juvenile Miscellany*, *The Youth's Companion*, and *St. Nicholas* magazine.

Before the mid-twentieth century, mainstream publishers printed very little poetry by people of color; instead, it tended to appear in periodicals. *The Brownies' Book: A Monthly Magazine for People of the Sun* edited by W. E. B. Du Bois is a good example. Other poems by people of color were printed in newspapers, either for general audiences or specific groups. Thirteen-year-old Phillis Wheatley's first published poem, for instance, is found in the December 21, 1767, issue of the *Newport Mercury*. Some periodicals were short-lived but historically significant, such as *La Edad de Oro* (*The Golden Age*). Published in 1889 by Cuban exile José Marti and dedicated to the children of the Americas, only four issues were ever printed. Newspapers and magazines are also an important source of poetry by anonymous authors, many (perhaps most) of whom were women. In short, periodicals are an important part of the study of historical children's poetry and should not be overlooked.

Illustration

Meaning and vocabulary can be elusive; art functions to explain metaphor and wordplay. In nonsense and parody, the juxtaposition of artwork and text may be contradictory, respecting the reader's acumen. Conversely, a concrete poem *is* the illustration, with the words being written in a shape. A poem on a page, surrounded by blank space, invites participation by the artist. Emotional responses can be confirmed, aroused, or soothed with shape and color. Most importantly, illustration invites us to linger. We may look at the picture and then the poem, or first the poem and secondly the art, and then the poem again.

The Prelutsky Collection includes examples of works by numerous artists from the Golden Age of Illustration including Arthur Rackham, Walter Crane, Beatrix Potter, John Tenniel, Jessie Willcox Smith, Howard Pyle, and Kate Greenaway. Artistic styles, together with new approaches in book construction, paper composition, graphic design, and eventually international printing, all made their mark on children's books, offering endless rabbit holes, twisty avenues, and spaces for exploring the intersection of art and poetry.

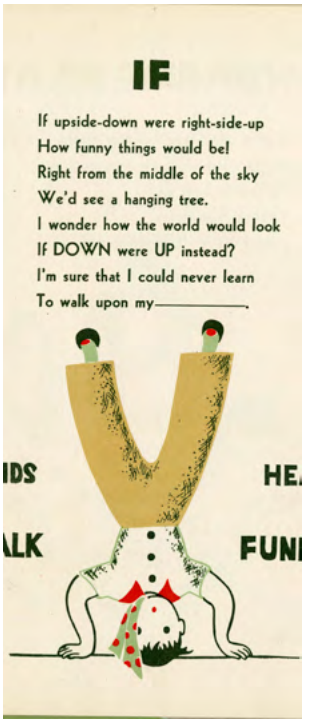
Toys and Novelty

How do children spend their play time? How *should* children spend their play time? When grownups purchase toys for children, they express their opinion and values about leisure. Educational toys may reinforce lessons while recreational toys may relax and rejuvenate. Some amusements do both. The Prelutsky Collection includes numerous, well-preserved miniature, craft, and activity books.

By the middle of the twentieth century, televisions were commonplace in middle-class homes. *My Little Television Sets* (1949) employed a TV cutout at the top of the packaging box. A fragile cellophane film printed with lever lines produced animation when moved, mimicking motion. Crude by today's standards, this must have been great fun at the time. Supplementing the screen action were nine Tom Thumb miniature books. Shared leisure activities that children and adults enjoy together are an expression of values. The variety of toys in the Prelutsky Collection adds to our understanding of childhood diversions and childlike play.

Music Lyrics and Scores

Children's poetry is rooted in ancient lullabies, nursery rhymes, and ballads, all of which were as likely to have been sung as spoken. Some songs that children still sing today date back to this early period. Jane and Ann Taylor published *Original Poems for Infant Minds* in 1804. Their book remains best known today for the poem "The Star," later retitled after the first line, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."



The familiar melody was taken from a French folk song, "Ah! vous dirais-je, Maman" ("Oh! Shall I Tell You, Mama"), which Mozart popularized through twelve variations for piano published in 1785. The easy-to-sing tune was paired with the earlier poems in *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song-Book* (1744), and with "The Alphabet Song" (1835) first copyrighted in 1835 by Boston music publisher Charles Bradlee.

By the late nineteenth century, even middle-class families could own something that had once been limited to the elite: a piano. Publishers stepped up to meet the increased demand for music that children could play and enjoy. Most scores contained only the music and lyrics, but some were richly illustrated, such as Walter Crane's *The Baby's Opera* (1877). As the Golden Age of Children's Literature embraced young people's perspectives and experiences, music books changed too. The poems in *A Child's Day in Song* (1916), tell of daily life, for example, "Dirty Face" and "Sometimes I Think." Music programs in schools began to appear around this time. Music anthologies for schools had themes ranging from playtime and bedtime to nature and manners.

Composers of color were largely excluded from songbooks and tune-books published for a general audience. A notable exception was the publishing house of Franklin Watts. Langston Hughes wrote *The First Book of Jazz* in 1955. Music books and scores in the Prelutsky Collection celebrate the longstanding relationship between lyrics and poetry.

Advertising and Marketing

Commercial poetry bundled as a packaged gift is challenging to trace due to its ephemeral nature and short-lived purpose. Literary marketing to young people took a giant leap forward in 1903, when Beatrix Potter patented a Peter Rabbit plush toy, wallpaper, and game. That same year in the United States, the pharmacy retailer Rexall wasted no time in following Potter's lead. The Prelutsky Collection includes *Rexall Nursery Rhymes* (1905), with their logo prominently displayed on the first page.

A textbook and map publisher, Rand McNally & Company, was established in the late 1800s, growing into a million-dollar business by the 1920s. An early example of Rand McNally's diversification into children's books can be found in the Prelutsky Collection. *The Runaway Toys* (1920) is part of a series set in Nuremberg, Bavaria. Always involving travel, in this book the

How I Became a Book Collector

Jack Prelutsky

By nature, I'm a collector—I'm still trying to find new quarters for about 40 boxes of frogs of every size and description that I've amassed in the past fifty years. Extending this kind of obsession to antiquarian books of children's poetry was inevitable.

The first books I collected were comic books. I was devoted to superheroes. I hated to finally part with them, but eventually I had to when I ran out of space among my jumble of birds, plastic bottle caps, found objects, decades of old *National Geographic* magazines. You get the picture.

When I first began working with Susan Hirschman, who remained my editor at Greenwillow Books for many years, she convinced me to not read any other children's poems so I could develop my own voice. I followed her advice for about ten years, until we were both convinced that I had sufficiently developed a singular style.

I then began frequenting libraries and buying inexpensive books at library sales. I discovered the world of children's poetry was much larger than I ever imagined. Some of these poets had voices similar to my own and others as different as can be. When I first started writing, I thought I wouldn't have enough to say, but as I continued to collect books of children's poetry, I learned this specialized corner of literature is infinite.

I guarantee that the first antiquarian book I bought is NOT in this collection. Let me explain: when I first started buying children's poetry, I had very little money to spend on books, so what I purchased were inexpensive copies, usually $5 or less. As I learned the finer points of book collecting, I replaced these "cheap" copies with ones in better condition, or a first edition, or an earlier printing.

Technically, while not in the category of an antiquarian book, but almost old enough to qualify, one of my purchases was a copy of my OWN book. *(As I shuffle through my eighties, my body and mind qualify as "antiquarian.")* My first book, *A Gopher in the Garden*, went out of print within a few years of publication. It didn't sell well enough to remain on the backlist, and I carelessly gave away my last copy. In those days before instant internet searches, I had to riffle through hundreds of shelves in used bookstores, and after years of searching, I eventually found a worn but serviceable copy—in the bargain bin in San Francisco. To this day, it's still my only decent copy of my first book.

While many of the poems in these books do not speak to a modern audience, this collection contains cultural artifacts and provides historical value. For example, the poem, "There was a Little Girl who had a Little Curl," has often been attributed to "anonymous," but among my antiquarian finds, there is a copy of this poem with authorship given to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. (Albeit, there are scholars who dispute that Longfellow wrote this poem.)

I had many years of discovery and joy in putting this collection together, and now it's time to share these infrequently seen works with a wider audience. I'm delighted that these books have found a home in Special Collections at the Western Washington University Libraries, where adventurers in literature will continue to be surprised and make discoveries of their own.

Text excerpted with permission from *Listen to Children: The Jack Prelutsky Antiquarian Children's Poetry Collection* catalog.

children follow the runaway toys out of the town but return when their mothers promise to give them toys of their own.

The Jolly Adventures of Billy Van and Betty Camp (1923), published by Van Camp's Pork & Beans, is "Dedicated to the children of America." Aladdin presents his lamp to the title characters, sending them on adventures to Mother Goose Land and the Good Fairy's Castle.

"When they hungered for food, they just rubbed / on the Lamp / And the food that was brought them was / labeled 'Van Camp.'"[3] The advertising industry has long harvested children's literature content and repurposed it.

Conclusion

There are countless ways to enjoy and study materials in the Prelutsky Collection. One book is simply a starting point for the countless journeys that readers and researchers might take through the collection. In mounting the exhibit and publishing the catalog, we hope to inspire participants to launch critical conversations, look for poetry in unexpected places, and listen to children.

The Jack Prelutsky Collection has expanded and deepened our youth poetry holdings to a degree we could only imagine when *Poetry for Children and Teens (PoetryCHaT)* was established.

We look forward to hearing from librarians, educators, scholars, and creatives who would like to learn more about the collection. The physical exhibit has been dismantled, but an online exhibit and accessible catalog of *Listen to Children: The Jack Prelutsky Antiquarian Children's Poetry Collection* are available on the Western Washington University Libraries website, https://library.wwu.edu/archives-special-collections-events-exhibits. &

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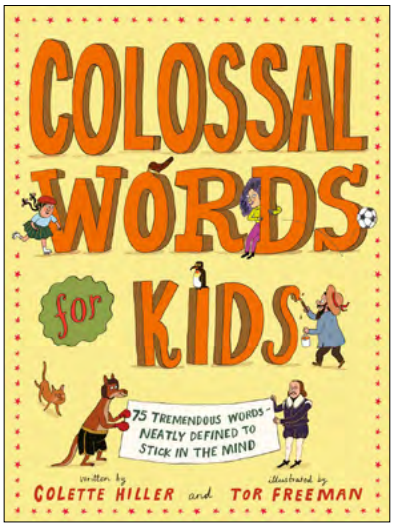
Little Kids, Big Words

Using Colossal Words in the Library

COLETTE HILLER



I recently led a seminar for two hundred nine-year-olds at the Brooklyn Public Library, all about big words. There were no animations or screens—just me and the (seemingly dry) subject matter, big words for big kids or, in the name of my new book, *Colossal Words for Kids* (Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2024). For an hour, the children were rapt, fully engaged by language, all of which left the organizer pleased but slightly astonished. For my part, however, I wasn't at all surprised!

Children are natural wordsmiths. They love knowing and using big words. Despite this, adults often take pains to avoid seemingly sophisticated words. But they needn't. For if a child can grasp a word's concept, they'll relish using the word itself. Of course they can understand a word like *unbiased*. What child doesn't understand the principal of fairness? And who'd ever want to say *second to last* when instead you could say *penultimate?*

This was the thinking behind my new book, which introduces seventy-five useful, big words. From *capacious* to *voracious*, *procrastinate* to *unbiased,* these seemingly sophisticated words are usually taught in high school, but now younger children can understand and enjoy them. For these are no ordinary dictionary definitions. Move over, Mr. Webster! Each word in this collection is defined in a simple rhyme. These meanings aren't just defined—they unfold, giving the reader a sense of personal discovery, which makes the business of discovering a new word entertaining rather than laborious.

Take the word *retaliate.* The dictionary definition is flat—"*to perform one action in response to another.*" But define it in rhyme, and it's immediately accessible. In fact, when I tested these rhymes in a London primary school, *retaliate* proved a favorite (and could be heard shouted across the playground!)

Retaliate
If somebody calls you an old kangaroo
You might **retaliate** and call them one too
If someone should try, to give you a thwack
You might **retaliate** and give them one back
But really you mustn't respond in the way
No need to **retaliate**, just walk away!

After just three school workshops, with a class of thirty ten-year-olds, the results were noticeable. The teacher reported that the children were using the words they'd learned in spoken and written communication. Best of all, they'd developed a real appetite for language and wanted to learn more.

If the importance of a rich vocabulary is undisputed, if we know that language opens doors, if we know children love big words, why then, don't we usually teach younger children more complex, interesting words? It's a proper conundrum!

To my mind, a dash of imagination is missing. School vocabulary lists are often combined with spelling lists. They are (perhaps out of necessity) filled with everyday words like *genuine, dangerous, descriptive*—nothing to make anyone's pulse race. But offer more interesting shades of meaning and everything changes. *Disingenuous* is more intriguing than *genuine. Precarious,* more interesting than *dangerous.* And while the word *descriptive* is unlikely to inspire anyone, *nondescript* is a very different story. (Can something be so unremarkable as to not even deserve a description? The very notion prompts discussion!)

Ultimately, the reason to teach vocabulary from an early age is not to create irritating youth who can sail through exams. (That may be an added bonus!) The real aim is to spark a lasting joy of language. When we teach young children ambitious words, we show them that they are not intruders and that the English language is theirs for the taking! &

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The Importance of Social Stories

How Museums Are Portrayed in Children's Literature

ARYSSA DAMRON

A class walks into a museum—they are shushed, corralled, and chastised, and then a statue comes to life, or the class clown wanders off on their own. This could be the beginning of any number of children's books set in museums.

When the reader of that book goes on their first field trip to a museum, what do they expect? Do they enter worried that they're going to trip the alarm and go to jail? Do they leave disappointed that the pictures don't talk? The use of children's literature as social story provides unique opportunities for readers and educators of all types to set up cultural experiences, but a survey of museum representation in children's picture books found that set up to be lacking when it comes to what modern museum experiences are being curated for children.

As an educator working in a school that prioritizes social stories, I look to picture books that can prepare my students for not only the future, but the present. I look for stories about libraries that make the library a welcoming space—I do not choose to read books about kids who get shushed in libraries or get threatened over late fees. When you choose a book about going to the dentist, do you want one where a kid has a terrible experience? Even though we know there are ranges of experiences, we choose picture books as social stories for authentic, ultimately positive outlooks. We bring back the book late, we get a cold compress after the dentist, and we understand better what is expected of us.

When I created an annotated bibliography of children's book representations of museum visits—especially in illustrated titles—I found a lot of *Night at the Museum* shenanigans, bored kids wandering off, and finger-wagging chaperones. What was that setting kids up to experience in these cultural havens, and what was it teaching when it came to representation? Why were serendipitous revelations of the importance or relevance of museums saved for portraiture while class clowns fell silent in the face of dinosaur bones? What impact did these stories have on the ability of these books to serve not only as social stories, but also mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors?

Some of the books I studied included picture books, easy readers, early chapter books, and nonfiction titles. They ranged from simple readers with simple sentences to full-length nonfiction accounts of particular art exhibits, but the bread and butter became the picture books that focused on childhood experiences in museums, particularly first visits. I looked for diversity in the books I read, both in the protagonists but also the museum staff. Here are a few of particular interest in regards to picture books as social stories.

***Anna at the Art Museum* by Hazel Hutchins and Gail Herbert, illustrated by Lil Crump. (Annick Press, 2018).**
A young girl is terribly bored at an art museum and is constantly chastised when she tries to entertain herself and engage with the art and patrons. When she sees a Cassatt painting of a bored girl in a backroom, she realizes that there's more to the paintings around her. But the day has been long, and she and her mother soon leave with the promise to come back. This is more of a picture book about the expectations kids might have of what a museum day is like and how art may subvert that, which could be paired with a text showing more engaging activities for kids at a museum. The art included throughout is a treat for the viewer.

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***Harvey Moon, Museum Boy* by Pat Cunningham. (Aladdin, 1994).**
In this *Night at the Museum*-style picture book, a Black boy takes a class trip to the museum and brings along his lizard. When the lizard escapes, he chases him through the museum and ends up hiding until after the museum closes. When he comes out, he sees the museum come to life—including Greek statues stealing food from paintings. As Harvey escapes, he becomes famous and gets a movie deal. This is not as instructive about museums as you might want for such an exciting tale that will appeal to readers, but it does scratch the "what happens after hours" itch and allows the imagination to drive the discussion.

***Simon at the Art Museum* by Christina Soontornvat, illustrated by Christine Davenier. (Atheneum, 2020).**
Simon and his family visit a Metropolitan Museum of Art-esque museum, and Simon is bored and wants cheesecake. But when he sits back and watches people engaging with art, his world opens up. With beautiful, sweeping illustrations that capture movement and shape well, this book talks about museum etiquette of being quieter, shuffling feet, not chasing or running or waving our hands, but still invites a child to see the beauty around them and themselves in the art.

***Parker Looks Up* by Parker and Jessica Curry, illustrated by Brittany Jackson. (Aladdin, 2019).**
A young Black girl, her mother, and her sister visit the Smithsonian Museum of American Art and see an array of beautiful pictures that make them feel excited, and then Parker is stopped in her tracks by the portrait of First Lady Michelle Obama. This is a beautifully illustrated, diverse book about the importance of representation in museums and showcases Parker and her friend Gia playing dress up in the museum and dancing, which shows how inviting museums can be towards younger visitors and validates that museums are places of exploration and play in relationship to the artifacts and art.

***Zach and Lucy and the Museum of Natural Wonders* by the Pifferson Sisters, illustrated by Mark Chambers. (Simon Spotlight, 2016).**
Two siblings make a natural history-inspired museum in the basement of their big city apartment building in this easy reader. After reading about the Natural History Museum, the siblings collect "specimens" including moss, pellets, and dead bugs from outside and donations—including a stuffed parakeet and a peacock fan from their neighbors—to create a "museum of natural wonders" that finally excites the neighbor who always looks at kids with disdain. While not about a "real" museum, this book encourages kids to see a museum in natural elements and shows the kinds of samples that might not be the flashiest artifacts in the museum.

After compiling this research, I felt a bit inspired, but a bit defeated. I didn't have the perfect social story of a museum book to hand to my teachers before a field trip or to plan programming around when partnering with a museum. The five I shared stuck out as social stories, but I could have listed a dozen other examples of kids being dragged around museums, bored out of their mind until they see something off the beaten track.

In my research, I found great examples of diversity and the power of art, and I had funny mysteries and great examples of kids discovering the magic of dinosaur bones, but did museums seem accessible in the majority of these stories? No. Did traditional museums in these stories serve children as their audiences as equally as they served adults? Rarely.

I knew there were children's museums, but I struggled to find those represented in children's literature. Instead, the usual suspects appeared time and time again—art museums, natural history museums—and they were presented as a cavernous expanse of opportunity to get in trouble. I found gender disparity; boys were more likely to be the ones getting in trouble in museums, while girls were more likely to see themselves represented in art. I saw emerging trends in diverse protagonists, but not in diverse art and staff representation in the museum space. I was intrigued by what I had found, but I wanted to take the next step.

Visiting in Person

I interviewed the curator of education and the coordinator of museum engagement and outreach at the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Museum in Washington, DC, to get their take on how museums of today welcome children into their spaces and what they wish children's literature was teaching kids to expect about museums.

The DAR Museum collects, preserves, and interprets objects used and created in American homes; it welcomes many class groups and scout troops; there's often a stroller parked in the lobby, a docent on duty, and a programming plan being printed upstairs.

This museum, which features thirty-one period rooms of homes ranging from the late seventeenth century through the 1920s, is not what one might think of when they think of a museum that welcomes kids because rooms include a lot of china dinnerware, pretty wallpaper, quilts, and books. Each room captures the American home in a particular period—such as an 1810s parlor, a historic kitchen, a 1780s study—but the museum does regular children's programming.

What would museums like to see in children's literature geared towards children's first visits?

"We had second graders through middle schoolers here recently as part of the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts, and I find that the thing that ends up being the most disruptive is the adult participation in general," said Kevin Lukacs, curator of education. "Sometimes they'll directly contradict not just museum content, which is fine, I can address that strategically, but also methodology. So, we're in the Study Gallery, I'm just about to tell them they can open the drawers, and they're freaking out telling the students not to open the drawers. They frighten the children just as we're about to open them up. They want them to have their library voices on in the museum, but we don't need library voices."

Lukacs and Sarah Kirspel, who works in engagement and outreach, also highlighted that the museum wants youth to see museums as places where there are things relevant to their lives. The DAR Museum, for example, has an entire room that is a display of historic children's toys. Having common childhood items as valuable museum pieces helps children understand that museums are for and about them as well.

How do you engage with children's groups and child visitors strategically in a museum not inherently made or advertised for children? How do you structure that introduction?

The museum has historically worked with scout troops to host badge-earning programs, field trips, craft afternoons, engagement with historic toys, and more. Recently, the museum has added more educators to their team to help better facilitate those programs, but they still have a few methods in place to ensure success.

"Student-led learning guides the process, even the museum rules. We don't list them, we ask them what they think the museum rules are, and then we facilitate that discussion. They'll be very specific, like don't spit on the object," Lukacs explained. "We literally throw play into there too sometimes! If we're talking about not wandering away, or we have a really wiggly group, we see that and we have to get our wiggles out. I might say, "just wiggle with me," and I also do vocal warm-ups with the kids and incorporate screaming. When I introduce the kids to the idea of museum voice, I ask how quiet they can be, how loud they can be, I might use a vocabulary word that we say really loud and really soft, giving them a spectrum. Having more physicality with the lesson is important."

"With the scouts, I also tell them all the things we're going to do. We're not going to look at that now, we're doing this now, but we'll come back to this. It is really easy to lose them," Kirspel added.

This benefits not only the children but also the chaperones who might see something that interests them as well, or wonder what is happening next.

"Chaperone modeling is something we don't talk about, but we should," Lukacs said. "You might have things to share with your students to prepare them—content and social skills—but there needs to be materials for the chaperone, what's expected of you. I think a lot of people are unprepared for what chaperoning a museum experience can look like."

There are other more physical things in the museum that make it more child-friendly. These features not only provide multi-age accessibility, but also a sense of security for caregivers who might be afraid themselves of getting in trouble if their child breaks something or goes past a certain point.

"The gates are clear," Kirspel points out, referencing the wooden gates that welcome visitors into every period room. These plexiglass gates allow the visitor to see into and lean into the room without fully stepping in. The gates are about three- to four-feet tall in each of the period rooms and vary in depth into the room.

"They didn't used to be," Lukacs pointed out. "They used to be wooden slats–super inaccessible. They redid them all to be plexiglass, so you could see through and lean on them," which allows visitors who might be shorter to still have full visual access to the artifacts inside the room. "The idea that a toddler can lean against the plexiglass . . . that's really important."

The DAR Musweum now hosts Family Days, which are afternoons designed to invite families with younger children into the museum for curated activities. How do you design those?

"We've been doing them for just over a year. The family day activities are based around the priority of play and positive associations with museums. You can bring your kid here for free, and they're going to have a fun time," Lukacs said. "They're not going to break anything!"

"Let them play–when we pull out games, I'm saying, I'm an adult, I work here, I'm telling you I'm going to play this game. But there was often a hesitation to explore the rest of the museum," he explained. The family day activities usually begin in the O'Byrne Gallery, a large empty ballroom-type space often used for weddings. "So how do we make sure they know the whole building is their safe space?"

"We made some activities," Kirspel adds, "that encourage them to explore the museums—like seek and finds, I Spy games, etc."

"We find it's also helpful for adults," Lukacs chimes in. "No, you don't have to explore this big intimidating museum, just go look at this table." The I Spy board invites participants to find particular items around the museum like a leech jar, an old teddy, and more.

Going Forward

What would a social story-inspired picture book about visiting this museum look like? It might start with a sound game, with play, with yelling the word "ARTIFACT," or whispering the words *period room*. It might demonstrate leaning against the plexiglass gates to show how to get a better look at wall art, or a certain piece of weird china that you've never seen before like an oyster plate. It might include kids exploring kids' toys, looking at old teddy bears and slate globes and being glad their seats are not so rigid. It might show kids designing their own quilt blocks using pattern blocks or watching a restoration artist hand-paint gilding on the wall.

When you read picture books this year, think about what social stories they are teaching youth readers. What expectations are they setting? What are they assuming about the reader, and about the setting? Social stories are increasingly used in education settings—I hope to see more usage of picture books in this field. &

Children Are Not Rational

(Thank Goodness!)

LAURA RAPHAEL

For more than a decade, I worked mostly with adults in my system's large, urban Central Library. It was steady and interesting work, and I got very good at identifying and answering intellectually rich reference questions. I knew my sources, and, being an adult myself, I could easily relate to my customers.

Adults were rational. Adults could generally, with guidance, articulate what they were looking for. In the context of our professional relationship of librarian and knowledge-seeker, adults were, more or less, how do you say—*sensible.*

And then, ten years ago, I became a children's librarian at a branch library, and my rational world was completely upended.

Children, I quickly discovered, were, how do you say—*not at all sensible*.

I'd forgotten, but now it started to come back to me. I remembered my foolish 5-year-old self. Kindergarten Laura absolutely knew she was going to marry Barry Manilow (such a ladies' man!), believed there was no flower more beautiful than a dandelion, and also somehow managed to be talked into drinking perfume because her sister convinced her it would give her magical powers. *(Spoiler alert: it did not.)*

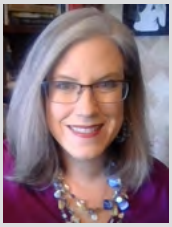
Similarly, the children I formerly had the great and wonderful pleasure of working with in libraries showed that they were holding some truly ridiculous beliefs and engaged in behavior that is completely bonkers.

Namely, when they saw me in the library, or sometimes in a sandwich shop or grocery store, they acted as if I were some combination of the Easter Bunny and a magical unicorn. They treated a sighting of Miss Laura as I would treat seeing Beyonce or George Clooney filling up a fountain drink at the corner convenience store. Some look at me with wide eyes and whisper, "I know her! She came to my school!" to each other. Others were bolder and told me directly with their high, clear voices, "I know you! You came to my school!" and looked at me with sheer awe.

"That's true!" I would say. "And I know YOU! I remember coming to your school! Wasn't that so much fun?"

Further proof that they did not have adult levels of intellectual logic or skepticism: they believed me, though my memory is like that *Memento* movie dude. (Really bad.) I have been known to forget things like my middle name, or what I had for breakfast that morning, so I certainly wouldn't recall what schools I had recently visited.

The first few times kids fanned out on me I was flattered but bewildered. "Hey, kid," I wanted to say, "I'm, like, not a big deal in any kind of way. So, I read a book about monsters to your class last month. It's literally one of the easiest and best things in the



***Laura Raphael**, MA, MLIS, started her professional career as a middle school Reading and Language Arts teacher before turning to public libraries. Since 2001, she has worked in public libraries in a variety of capacities, most recently as Children's Services Coordinator for the Tulsa City-County (OK) Library System.*

world to do, and your amazement is similar to if someone praised me for eating a chocolate chip cookie. OF COURSE I would eat a cookie. Cookies are awesome. Reading to school kids is even better than cookie-eating, truth be told. It's your teachers you need to revere as celebrities."

Children are particularly not like their adult counterparts in libraries because they do not seem to understand or respect titles, library hierarchy, or any other signifiers of importance that I have spent nearly two and a half decades trying to build. Instead of acknowledging the superiority of my two graduate degrees *(two! Both Summa cum laude!)* or my work on professional committees and such, they respond to such easy things as warm smiles, remembering their names, and asking friendly questions about their favorite animals.

It doesn't take much to earn their devotion. *(Nearly as easy as eating a chocolate chip cookie.)*

For example…

When I made a comment about the sparkles on her shoes, Julia embarked on a monologue of such intricacy and eloquence that I was stunned into silence and a few "Wows." That just inspired her to tell me even more about the significance of her matching socks. Every time after that, when she visited the library, she made a point to find me to show me many more special sartorial choices.

Oliver, who had missed storytimes for a few months because of preschool, made himself sick with excitement about spring break storytime. "He would NOT go to sleep last night," his mother said. "He kept talking and talking about Miss Laura and storytime."

I mean, I made puppets say, "Boop!" and sing like a frog. It isn't rocket science, Oliver.

I wasn't really special. Children's librarians have a million of these stories. Once, however, I temporarily caught the kids' mania and thought I had to be pretty hot stuff to be causing this level of fandom. Well, of course! It was because of my careful planning and encyclopedic knowledge of early literacy concepts, and did I mention, I have two graduate degrees?

And then I subbed for another librarian at her storytime, and whew, did it not go well. One boy turned his back on me for the entire session because **That! Is! Not! Miss! Tatiana!** and another cried in the corner because I didn't use the same puppet as Miss Tatiana. My humility was immediately restored.

I saved it somewhat with bubbles and stickers because, did I mention, children are easier than adults in some ways? I may have not been Miss Tatiana, but bubbles are serious magic for two-year-olds.

No matter.

I still love their little faces, their irrational smiles, and hot sticky hugs, even (sometimes) their crying and carrying on. Why they insist on loving the library, and me, and all of my other extraordinary colleagues, to such an incredible degree is baffling but wonderful. I wouldn't change a single thing about their precious illogical selves.

How lucky we are to protect and love them. They will (alas) become sensible adults soon enough. &

1,000 Books

More than Just a Reading Challenge

KRISTINA LAREAU

Enter the bustling Lodewick Children's Library at the Ridgefield Library in Ridgefield, CT, and you will notice a few things at once—a colorfully decorated service desk, a large freshwater fish tank, my office window displaying hundreds of little toys and baubles, and a whole lot of red bags.

The red bags are our very popular and highly circulating 1,000 Books before Kindergarten (1KBBK) Collection. This is Ridgefield Library's unique physical collection of picture book titles that accompany the challenge. This collection consists of one hundred red totes, each containing ten curated books surrounding a theme. Each tote is accompanied by an extension activity, nursery rhyme or poem, tips for reading with children, a breakdown of the anatomy of a picture book and how to engage young readers in exploring the art.

The 1,000 Books before Kindergarten Challenge is a Nevada-based non-profit organization developed to promote early literacy skills by providing a foundation for caregivers to best prepare children for academic success. While the concept of improving literacy skills by reading 1,000 books to children is not unique to the foundation, their framework, resources, and tracking have made it easier for libraries, caregivers, and other organizations to adopt this as a program.

Since Ridgefield Library launched the 1KBBK collection and the accompanying reading challenge in September 2022, we have seen a steady increase in the circulation of these totes. To date in July 2024, the totes have about four thousand collective circulations, which trends to about two thousand circulations a year.

The circulation data underscores the qualitative feedback received from patrons. Ridgefield patrons have been overwhelmingly positive about how the library has designed the initiative to be accessible with an easy entry into participation. We receive daily positive reinforcement from our patrons that our curation has enabled them to grab and go, freeing up time and mental energy that better allows them to commit to reading books to and with their children. And they appreciate the ease of selecting a bag on a theme, regardless of their family's active participation in the reading challenge.

Ridgefield is a town of about twenty-five-thousand and we average around twelve hundred participants for the library's annual summer reading challenges. Ridgefield Library currently has about three hundred families formally registered through the

Kristina Lareau *has been the Head of Children's Services at Ridgefield (CT) Library since 2017. She has an MS in Library Science and an MA in Children's Literature from Simmons University and has set out to use humor, creativity, and empathy to create open and welcoming environments for both library patrons and staff.*

Beanstack tracker. We offer our families several different means of tracking to make it as easy as possible for them to participate. Patrons receive a folder upon registration that contains a combination of in-house made materials (Ridgefield branded bubble-fill book counter, sticker tracker for each one hundred books read, tips for reading with children) as well as official materials developed by the 1,000 Books before Kindergarten Foundation (coloring sheets, reading tips and information, bookmark). When our young Ridgefield readers complete the challenge, they are invited to pose wearing a bright red graduation cap and gown, a sign and their well-earned prize: a backpack with both the library's logo and a 1KBBK patch.

How It All Began

In 2016, I was a children's librarian at Fairfield Public Library in Fairfield, CT, and I first began a 1,000 Books before Kindergarten collection. I created the framework while serving Fairfield and later was able to build off it when I became the Head of Children's Services in Ridgefield. The main difference is that I began the project in Fairfield without a guaranteed means of funding the project.

Building a curated list is both extremely fun and incredibly challenging. I solicited recommendations from the other children's staff, scoured resources, and generated the first curated list of one hundred themed bags. The primary goal was to create an easy means of reader's advisory for parents by offering them a rough survey of children's picture books.

I created the inserts and branding and began the arduous process of soliciting books from our Amazon Wishlist, donations to the Friends group, and partnering with the Fairfield University Bookstore for a book drive. By the time I relocated to Ridgefield Library in 2017, Fairfield Public Library had solicited about a quarter of the necessary titles. By 2018, the project was launched with the support of the Friends of Fairfield Public Library and a special fund earmarked for children's projects.

Interested in the success and longevity of the 1KBBK collection and program in Fairfield, I met with Tamara Lyhne, Head of Children's Services at Fairfield Public Library. While Fairfield offers an online tracking system in Beanstack, they find that their patrons are more interested in the collection for convenience rather than to engage in the reading challenge.

Fairfield's collection of 1KBBK bags has averaged about 1,445 circulations a year between 2018 and 2023. *(Note: That includes the reduced circulation numbers that affected all libraries in 2020 because of the pandemic.)* Lyhne has also added thirteen duplicate bags of the most popular themes to accommodate demand and recently re-packaged the collection in more attractive and robust bags. Six years after the implementation of the 1KBBK collection, it has not only grown in size, but remains a popular and top-performing collection.

The Ridgefield Proposal

I knew very early that I wanted to iterate the 1KBBK process in Ridgefield. I had already created a framework of titles, songs, rhymes, research, and organization. Luckily, one of the library's small restricted funds had unexpected returns with a post-pandemic fluctuating stock market, allowing us to fully commit to funding the project in Ridgefield. I would be able to see this project through from inception to patron graduation.

My desired outcomes for the 1KBBK project in Ridgefield are similar to those in Fairfield, to:

- Encourage caregivers to actively promote early literacy at home
- Increase circulation by offering pre-packaged themed titles
- Assist with reader's advisory by offering themed bags

I added secondary goals to the Ridgefield proposal to take quality, diversity, and representation into account when developing the list of 1,000 books.

Here are the diversity and inclusion metrics that I proposed:

Across the 1,000 books included in this project, our *minimum* goal for diversity and inclusion is the percentage representation of historically underrepresented or disadvantaged groups based upon the 2020 Census and Gallup Poll information.

This information will be uploaded to the IMLS-created Collection Analysis Tool on Diverse BookFinder[1] to generate a report of multicultural titles that will serve as the basis for racial, cultural, and language representation. In addition to racial and cultural groups recorded by national census information, the representation of persons with a disability, who identify as LGBTQ, and persons in poverty will be researched for inclusion.

Action Steps and Timeline

- September-November 2021: Audit list from Fairfield to determine quality, diversity of titles, themes, authors, and protagonists then develop a list of titles released since 2016 that would be candidates for inclusion.
- November 2021-March 2022: Begin book ordering twenty-five bags a month until February 2022, begin organizing titles into the themed bags and creating the materials to include in each tote.
- April 2022-June 2022: Develop an ongoing reading initiative program for patron logging, cataloging, marketing push.
- Launch either June 2022 or September 2022 (either with the start of Summer Reading or start of Back to School)

Estimated Costs

- Books: $14,000
- Bags: $1,000
- Incentives: $800
- Supplies (printouts, laminating, processing): $250

The Challenges of Doing the Work

With a solid proposal, plan, and budget, it took us about a year from start to finish to complete this project. One of my earliest challenges was the lack of diversity in the picture book market in 2016. The data collected by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) and presented in their chart for "Children's and YA Books Received by the CCBC, by and/or about Black, Indigenous and People of Color, Publication Year 2018-present" shows a clear, though gradual, increase in the representation of non-white authors and characters.[2]

With the assistance of staff and colleagues, we researched titles to represent diverse characters and creators for the various themes; however, even with excellent resources such as Diverse BookFinder, We Need Diverse Books, The Brown Bookshelf, The Conscious Kid, Black Children's Books and Authors, Let's Talk Picture Books and American Indians in Children's Literature, it was difficult to meet the metrics I envisioned. We fell short of every diversity goal, but I am confident in the quality, diversity, and variety of titles curated for this collection—based on the titles we could realistically acquire from our vendors at the time of the project. Hopefully we will continue to see an upward trend in the number of diverse materials published for children that will enable such goals to be met in the future.

The other challenge we faced was organizing our titles into their thematic bags. While we developed a list of themes, we had to change, mix and match, and sometimes outright dissolve a theme. We also aimed to "mature" the totes if read in order—so bags one to ten are geared towards the youngest readers, and bags ninety-one to one hundred had broader and deeper themes like "Perspective" and "School Days."

Essentially, this was a big literary puzzle. Sometimes our theme had an abundance of quality titles like "Seasons: Summer," others were more difficult to fill out like "Achoo: Feeling Sick." Still other themed totes were created by books that were slated for inclusion that did not really fit in with other themes but felt as though they should be grouped together like "Sweet Stories" or "Books that Feel Like Fairy Tales." Some themes had overlap like "Moon" and "Bedtime," where titles were swapped in and out to find the best balance.

Conclusion

Any library can participate in the 1,000 Books before Kindergarten Challenge—the framework, materials, and resources are all readily and freely available from the 1,000 Books before Kindergarten Foundation's website (www.1000booksbeforekindergarten.org). There are nominal costs to purchase reward stickers or promotional materials, but the program itself is adaptable and flexible to any budget.

Adding a 1KBBK circulating collection not only encourages participation in the reading challenge but provides a valuable service to the community. The collection serves as a reader's advisory tool and resource for patrons seeking specific topics for classes or interests, an easy entry into the world of children's literature, and a convenience for patrons that enables them to build library visits into their weekly routines.

I hope the successes at both Fairfield and Ridgefield will encourage and inspire other libraries to use this as a model for early literacy engagement, to increase circulation, offer an elevated user experience, and create lifelong learners and library users in both children and caregivers. &

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Lead On!

How ALSC Can Help Build Leadership Skills

STEPHANIE BANGE

For years, educators have used authentic learning to engage learners in hands-on activities centered on authentic, relevant, real-world tasks that are of interest to the learner. This hands-on experience engages learners with relevant experiences that they can take away and apply to other situations, similar to on-the-job training when one joins the job market. Looking back over my twenty-seven years of active membership in ALSC, I see the many opportunities for authentic learning that helped me grow both professionally and personally that I applied not only to my work in ALSC, but also to work at the library and in semi-retirement.

Mentoring

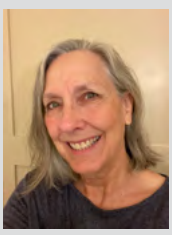
Mentors generally take a mentee under their wing and help guide them in their early years as an ALSC member, though this relationship has been known to continue well beyond that time. A mentor may help build a foundation for the mentee by explaining how ALSC is structured. They may pass on tips to first-time ALA Conference attendees. They may help mentees see the leadership skills the mentee possesses or suggest skills they should consider developing. They may guide them to volunteer for a committee that would be a good fit for the mentee's existing skillset or to one that develops a desired skill. Mentors can give mentees a networking boost by introducing them to other ALSC members.

ALSC members should consider serving as a mentor, whether in a formal or informal way. Mentoring can be done virtually, one-on-one through the year, or at a conference or workshop. ALSC has built-in mentoring opportunities for those serving as committee chairs/co-chairs. Check out my article about how my library school professor mentored our class in the November 2023 issue of *ALSC Matters*: "How Dr. P's 3 P's of Professionalism Informed My Career as a Librarian."[1]

Volunteering

There are nearly sixty committees and discussion groups that make up ALSC; their charges can be found here: https://www.ala.org/alsc/aboutalsc/coms.[2] When looking at the list of committees, members should take into consideration: Where is my area of interest? What are my passions? How much time do I have to give to ALSC work? ALSC is a member-driven organization where members provide the vision and do the work, while the Chicago-based ALSC staff provides support, guidance, and continuity.

Reading through sixty committee mission charges can be a daunting task. ALSC's "process" committees are a good place to begin. These working committees are located in Priority Group I: Advocacy and in Priority Group V: Professional Development. Would you like to gain skills in speaking up for children and libraries? Think about joining the Intellectual Freedom, Library Service to Underserved Children and their Caregivers, or Public



Stephanie Bange *is a Children's Literature Consultant in Dayton, OH.*

Awareness and Advocacy Committees. Are you interested in program planning? There are committees for both Early Childhood and for School-Age Programming and for Early and Family Literacy. Looking to gain skills in writing and evaluating programs? Consider either the Education or Program Coordinating Committees. Are you a supervisor for your children's services department? Managing Children's Services might be a great fit for you. Are you up with the latest in computers and such? Children and Technology could be your jam. Want to learn more about book or media evaluation? Oh, yeah—we have several committees for that as well.

The ALSC President appoints all committee members, using completed Committee Volunteer forms to make all appointments: https://www.ala.org/CFApps/volunteer/form2.cfm.[3] Several ALSC Past-Presidents have commented that they really appreciated those who volunteer for "anything."

Committee Work

Once an ALSC member has accepted appointment to a committee, it is their obligation to perform the assigned committee work. Assignments could include suggesting titles to build a bibliography for Quicklists Consulting (build your skills in developing balanced bibliographies!); writing a blog post to promote an upcoming ALSC program (hone your marketing skills!), penning an article for *Children and Libraries* (develop your writing skills), sharing one of your successful ideas or programs for the *ALSC Matters* newsletter (support your team!), or program planning for ALSC National Institute (deepen your event management and public speaking skills!).

Discussion Groups

For those who have little time to commit to committee work, consider participation in one of ALSC's discussion groups: Preschool Services Discussion Group (PG-I), BIPOC Discussion Group (PG-IV), or Children's Collection Management Discussion Group (PG-VI). Not only will you learn from your colleagues, you may find you have something to share with them!

Chairing/Co-Chairing a Committee

ALSC members who chair/co-chair a committee gain so many leadership skills. Making meeting arrangements (whether on Zoom or live) requires planning. Building an agenda takes some thought. Why are you meeting? What do you need to get done? How long will each topic take? Setting allotted times for each topic noted on the agenda will keep the meeting on time (learn time management!). An effective committee chair/co-chair models how to run a meeting that is on time and on task, engages all members, identifies skills that each member possesses and matches them with the tasks at hand when distributing committee work (refine worker strength assessment!), and works on teambuilding.

Chairs are also tasked to write/submit a report of their quarterly progress to ALSC leadership and post the report on the committee's ALA Connect space (deepen report writing skills!). They work with the committee to suggest future work assignments for the committee and collect thoughts for ALSC's three-year Strategic Plan (practice strategic planning!). Co-chairs are staggered, so, ideally, the second year co-chair mentors the incoming co-chair through the year, sharing the responsibilities and vision.

Organizational Leadership

If you really want to learn more about how ALSC works (organizational leadership!), consider one of the committees from Priority Group IV: Organizational Support. They focus on Budget, Organizational Effectiveness, Interdivision Organizational Cooperation, EDI, or Membership, or consider putting your name on the ballot for ALSC Board or ALSC representative to ALA Council to see the "big picture" in action.

Networking/Community Building

A popular expression states, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." The late psychologist Dr. Frederic Neuman wrote an article using this title.[4] He feels that those workers who are proactive make success in their organization more likely. He details some suggestions on self-promotion that go beyond just doing a job well.

Go to the places ALSC members go to see and meet other members. Step up and introduce yourself to someone you don't know to build your network. Virtual and live ALSC opportunities include meetings, seminars, workshops, and chats, ALA conferences, and ALSC National Institute. Networking happens when working together on ALSC committee projects or assignments. Your name gets out there when you write or co-write an article for an ALSC publication. Give your best effort to the committee you are assigned, as committee chairs are asked to give feedback about outstanding committee members to ALSC leadership. Deep friendships and fondest memories have been formed with ALSC members across the nation and around the world.

What Can ALSC Do For YOU?

ALSC provides so many opportunities for professional growth. What do you want to learn? How do you want to grow? What do you want to achieve?

Everyone has a story about how ALSC has enriched them or made them stretch and grow.

For me, it was something I never imagined I would ever do—provide the vision for a public awareness campaign. When then-ALSC President Gretchen Wronka asked me to chair the "Kids!@ your library" Campaign Task Force (TF), my initial response was, "You want *me* to be the chair?" She said, "Yes" with conviction.

I never dreamed that I would do all the things that lead to the development of this public awareness campaign, but we did it!

Storyteller/songwriter Bill Harley wrote a song that the TF built the campaign around. We launched at the 2006 ALA Conference with Harley performing our song, presented the free online toolkit that included downloadable marketing plans, games, and puzzles, and unveiled new ALA Graphics posters and bookmarks illustrated by Michael P. White. In 2007, we began to search for libraries that implemented any part of the campaign and posted links to best practices of hundreds of libraries on the ALA Wiki. We invited USC Adjunct Professor of Marketing Gene Del Vecchio to talk about marketing to children at the 2008 ALA Conference, adding additional toolkit activities, including reader's theater scripts adapted from books by Christopher Paul Curtis and Dianne de las Casas. We hosted Avi's A.R.T. (Author's Reader's Theatre) at the ALA Conference in 2010, adding a second ALA Graphics poster and bookmark with artwork by David Diaz. We requested the ALSC Board to turn this task force into ALSC's Public Awareness Committee; this came to fruition in 2007 at a time when ALSC was sunsetting other committees. Today, it is ALSC's Public Awareness and Advocacy Committee.

My experience in ALSC has been that you get back what you put into it. You are your own best advocate. Let others know what you want to do and learn about. As an ALSC member, you are not only taking advantage of an amazing opportunity for growth, but also supporting our mission to support and enhance library service to all children. Years ago, Rachel Fryd, my co-chair on the Quicklists Consulting committee at the time said it so well. "Teamwork makes the dream work." She is so right. &

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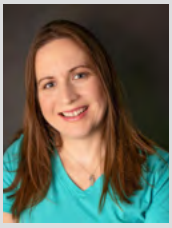
Author/illustrator Loren Long reading his new book, *The Yellow Bus* (Roaring Brook, 2024), during an event at The Book Bus Depot in Cincinnati, OH, last summer. Photo by Stephanie Bange.

Cultivating Partnerships and Collaborating with the Community

Soline Holmes



Soline Holmes *is the Preschool/Lower School librarian and the Information Services Department Chair at Academy of the Sacred Heart in New Orleans. She is co-chair of the* Children and Libraries *Editorial Advisory Committee and the Secretary for ALA's Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table.*

Recently, I realized that I have used the term "partnership" somewhat loosely when I talked about other libraries or non-profits with which I worked. Over my years as a school librarian, I have built up partnerships with our local libraries, independent bookstores, and local groups and organizations such as the New Orleans Opera, Project 826, and the Congo Square Preservation Society, among others. We partnered by working together to host an event or program.

Earlier this year, I read an article published by the Global Education Benchmark Group (GEBG), and it helped me understand that my idea of a partnership had been more one-sided. A true partnership is one where both partners have a goal or need that can only be fulfilled through working together, through the partnership and because of the partnership.

This past summer, I was able to see true partnerships come to life and flourish. Together with my principal, Shara Hammet, we piloted Books from the Heart, a summer community engagement project. Our school has a strong service learning program for our middle and high school, but we did not have many opportunities for our Lower School students. While the students would be engaging in service and would be learning in Books from the Heart, rather than calling it a service learning project, we called it a community engagement project. We wanted to highlight the partnerships and that through these collaborations, we would be bringing our school community together with the community of New Orleans.

As a librarian, some of my most important partnerships are with my colleagues and, as a school librarian, with my administration. To build this relationship, I have a monthly meeting scheduled with my administrator, and, throughout the year, we keep a running agenda on a Google doc so that we can both add items to discuss whenever they arise. This collaboration with my administrator is invaluable—she not only listens to my ideas and invites my thoughts and suggestions, but she is also always ready to help me brainstorm and asks questions to help ensure I have worked through all the details of a project or situation. (We are also both avid readers, so we regularly recommend books to each other!)

The idea for Books from the Heart started when I attended the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) conference in Tampa, Florida, in the fall of 2023. My administrator attended with me, and we were inspired by an idea that we saw at a poster session. *(Side note:When/if possible, I highly recommend attending with your administrator to be able to share what you do as a librarian!)* During the poster session, we met a librarian who had created her own bookmobile to deliver books to kids. My principal and I looked at each other, with our eyes aglow, and, at the same time, said "We WANT to do something like this!" We both had visions of our school bus with our school's logo driving around New Orleans as we passed out books to kids. And, so the seed was planted….

But, just as seeds require sunlight and water to grow, our idea required brainstorming, fine tuning, and collaboration. We knew we could not do it alone. We wanted this to be a true community engagement project that highlighted our partnerships and community. We decided Books from the Heart would be a three-day program that would focus on literacy and allow our students

Quick Partnership Tips

- **Do not be afraid to reach out.** Remember that potential partners are looking for collaborations, too.
- **Be seen.** Attend events at your local libraries, bookstores, and in the community. Get ideas and make contacts when you can.
- **Keep in touch.** After you make those connections, follow up. This could be as simple as an email every now and then. I will often send people book recommendations when I read a book that makes me think of them or a project in which they are engaged.
- **Ask what your partner needs.** To make a true partnership, remember that both parties should benefit from the collaboration. To ensure that your partner's needs are being fulfilled, simply ask.
- **Be clear about your goals.** Do not forget that you/your library has needs and goals, too. Do not be afraid to share these with partners. You might find that you have the same needs or goals!
- **Say thank you.** At the end of your project or collaboration, send a thank-you note. Sending it via email is fine, but remember that everyone always appreciates a handwritten note, too!

to investigate the world with intellectual curiosity and cultural literacy; recognize and value diverse perspectives; communicate with agility; and take responsible action that promotes peace and justice.

On the first day, students would visit a chain bookstore, an independent bookstore, and a Black-owned bookstore—the Community Book Center—to learn about literacy and the different ways that people find information. On the second day, the students would visit two different library branches, the New Orleans Public Library and the Jefferson Parish Public Library. At the libraries, students would also attend a storytime and participate in a storytime workshop I led. On the third day, we would return to the libraries where the students would lead their own storytime before inviting attendees to choose a free book from our school bus-turned-bookmobile.

How could we make this happen? Partnerships! I reached out to our pre-existing partners, but I also needed to establish relationships with new partners. For example, in the past, my library collaborated with the New Orleans Public Library for Library Card Sign-Up Month and an author visit, but we had never worked with our other local library system, the Jefferson Parish Public Library. How do you establish new partnerships? Reach out! I had previously served on the board of the New Orleans Information Literacy Collective (nolaILC) with the Jefferson Parish Library director, so I reached out to her and shared our plan and goals. I also reached out to the State Library of Louisiana, which generously donated several boxes of books we were able to give out.

In building the program, it became clear that some of our goals were the same as those of our partners. We all wanted to educate children about the importance of literacy, access to books, and the value of community.

Each student received a journal I designed. It contained pages for reflections on each visit as well as pages of brain breaks with a maze (of a bookmobile trying to get to a library), coloring pages, and a free draw page. The journal was an important part of the community engagement project because it provided students with an opportunity and space to reflect on the roles that bookstores and libraries play in communities. For example, my students observed that people do not go to the Community Book Center just to purchase books, but our students noted that, while we were there, people came in to visit with one another, to find out the local news, and to look at community art. While we were there, an international author from Ghana was signing books and talked to the students.

The students also noted that not everyone has access to a bookstore and that some people cannot afford to purchase books. They learned the definition of "vital" and discussed how libraries are vital to communities. I wanted to cheer when one student said, authoritatively, "Libraries are more than just books!" The students were impressed with the seed library at New Orleans Public Library and the Library of Things at Jefferson Parish Library. They loved discovering that patrons could check out sewing machines, an air fryer, baking pans, and record players. I was so proud when a student said that it was good that the library offered these items because "everyone might not be able to afford them on their own."

In addition to these realizations, the students also learned about the importance of literacy and how they can share books, stories, and information with others. On the final day of the program, the students took everything that they had learned and led a storytime that included songs, read-alouds, and crafts. At the end of the storytime, they invited all of the children to our school bus that was lined with boxes of books. Every child got to come on the bus and pick out a book to keep. The young patrons were so engaged in the storytime and loved working with our students to make breathing wands, but they were most excited to get on the bus and pick out a book. Kids were literally hugging books and running to sit down and read them.

After the program was over, it was important to me to follow up with our partners to say thank you. I put together a slideshow (complete with music!) which I shared with our partners. I now understand the true meaning of partnership.

We provided the bookstores, libraries, and their patrons with a storytime and provided the patrons with books to keep, but the bookstores and libraries that we visited gave us knowledge, understanding, empathy, and hope. The foundress of our school is known for saying that she would have founded the school "for the sake of one [child]." I would have committed to our Books from the Heart community engagement project for the sake of one child, but the beauty is that we reached so many children. &

Post-COVID Storytimes

What's Happening and Planning for Success

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).*

Across the country, children's librarians have reported a marked change in their audiences since COVID. Before the pandemic, for the most part, preschoolers generally could sit still and focus during storytime. But now, children of all ages find it difficult to stay in one place for an extended period of time, and as a result, programming can be a struggle.

In this column, we have provided some resources that explain what is happening and some materials and suggestions for adapting programs to appeal to restless audiences.

Student Growth in the Post-COVID Era, https://bit.ly/3WuOJdq
This report from Curriculum Associates explores student data pre- and post pandemic and offers insight into recovery efforts by examining trends. Regarding reading performance, upper elementary students appear to be approaching pre-pandemic levels of performance. Children in K-1, however, are behind their pre-pandemic counterparts. Students in need of extra support or already below grade level pre-pandemic, are struggling the most.

Differences were also found across zip codes, with household incomes falling above $75K mirroring historical data trends, and students from lower income brackets facing greater academic disparities when compared to historical data. Similar trends were found in school demographics, with Black and Hispanic students falling further behind historical levels, and white students performing as they did pre-pandemic. Older students, overall, appear to be moving closer to pre-pandemic levels of performance more quickly than younger students. Similar results were found in math performance, with most groups trending behind pre-pandemic levels. The authors offer some reasons for why the growth patterns may differ across groups, such as younger children missing out on opportunities to develop foundational skills during a critical period of time, interventions targeting more older students than younger students, greater caregiver support and resources for some groups, or different community responses to interventions. Research limitations are also discussed.

The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Social Development of Young Children, https://bit.ly/4flyDLL
This white paper by First Five Years Fund explains how COVID may have exacerbated Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in children who did not have access to nurturing and supportive relationships during this time. Social isolation made it difficult for children to practice group norms, negotiation skills, self-control, and decision-making, and children with underdeveloped social and emotional skills are more likely to exhibit challenging behaviors. Many children missed out on preschool and intervention services during the pandemic, which put them further behind. The article ends with several recommendations for state and federal policy changes. The most relevant to libraries is the increase in access to developmental screenings, which a number of libraries are now providing by making Ages & Stages Questionnaires and referrals accessible at their locations.

Old and New Books for Kids Who Can't Sit Still

Anthony, Steve. *Betty Goes Bananas*. Illus. by the author. Schwartz & Wade, 2014. 32p.
Bacon. Beth. *The Book No One Wants to Read*. Illus. by Jason Grube and Corianton Hale. HarperCollins, 2021. 176p.
Bigwood, Kira. *Secret, Secret Agent Guy*. Illus. by Celia Krampien. Atheneum, 2021. 32p.
Burk, Rachelle. *Stomp, Wiggle, Clap, and Tap: My First Book of Dance.* Illus. by Alyssa De Asis. Rockridge, 2022. 50p.
Clanton, Ben. *Ploof*. Illus. by Andy Chou Musser. Tundra, 2023. 56p.
Cotter, Bill. *Don't Push the Button!* Illus. by the author. Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 2013. 32p.
Dunlap, Cirocco. *Crunch: The Shy Dinosaur*. Illus. by Greg Pizzoli. Random House, 2018. 40p.
Fenske, Jonathan. *Something Stinks!* Illus. by the author. Penguin Workshop, 2021. 32p.
Fletcher, Tom. *There's a Dragon in Your Book*. Illus. by Greg Abbott. Random House, 2018. 32p.
Frost, Maddie. *Stir Crack Whisk Bake*. Illus. by the author. Sourcebooks Explore, 2019. 24p.
Grandy, Charlie. *How to Talk Like a Bear*. Illus. by Alex G. Griffiths. Flamingo, 2023. 32p.
Holub, Joan. *Every Bunny Dance Now!* Illus. by Allison Black. Scholastic, 2022. 10p.
MacDonald, Margaret Read. *The Farmyard Jamboree.* Illus. by Sophie Fatus, sung by Bob King. Barefoot, 2022. 32p.
Mory, Tristan. *Crack-Crack! Who Is That?* Illus. by the author. Twirl, 2022. 12p.
Robinson, Deana. *Do Your Eyes Open Wide: A Book to Get Up and Move To.* Illus. by Chaterine Piese. Deana M. Robinson, 2024. 26p.
Rubin, Adam. *High Five.* Illus. by Daniel Salmieri. Dial, 2019. 64p.
Rueda, Claudia. *Bunny Overboard.* Illus. by the author. Chronicle, 2020. 80p.
Tullet, Hervé. *Press Here.* Illus. by the author. Trans. by Christopher Franceschelli. Chronicle, 2019, 46p.
Vignocchi, Chiara, Paolo Chiarinotti, and Silvia Borando. *Shake the Tree!* Illus. by Silvia Borando. Trans. by Walker Books. Candlewick, 2018.
Woodward, Megan. *This Book Is Definitely Not Cursed.* Illus. by Risa Rodil. Aladdin, 2024. 40p.
Yale, Kathleen. *Howl Like a Wolf!* Illus. by Kaley McKean. Storey, 2021. 72p.
Yoo, Taeeun. *You Are a Lion!: And Other Fun Yoga Poses.* Illus. by the author. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018. 40p.

Recorded Songs Involving Lots of Movement

"Just about Anything" by Jim Gill, Hap Palmer, and Laurie Berkner!
"Musical Scarves & Activities" by Georgina Stewart
"Sing It! Say It! Stamp It! Sway It! V.3" by Peter and Ellen Allard
"Hold Still" by Yo Gabba Gabba
"Wiggle & Whirl, Clap & Nap" by Sue Schnitzer
"The Freeze, Bean Bag Boogie and Roll Rhythm Band" by Greg and Steve
"Mainly Mother Goose" by Sharon, Lois & Bram
"Second Line" by Johnette Downing
"Here We Go Loopty Loo" by Learning Station
"Plant a Little Seed" by Nancy Stewart

Indirect Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children Relate to the Child's Age and Experience, https://bit.ly/3YpCW2y
In this article from *Pediatric Research*, the authors begin by acknowledging the broad impact of COVID on child development, physical and mental health, social skills, and school readiness and point out how every child's pandemic experience could have been different. Prior to COVID, research highlighted the negative impact excessive screen time had on language development, social skills, the eyes, and even sleep. Increased interactions with digital tools during the pandemic compounded these effects. Babies born during the pandemic also faced unique experiences. Breastfeeding success and maternal bonding were challenging for some mothers due to COVID stressors. Many infants faced isolation from loved ones and may have had a hard time connecting with people whose smiles were hidden under masks. The article ends with a call for more research on the long-term impact of COVID on our youth and more vigilant pediatric screenings.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Development of Children's Executive Functions: Implications for School-Based Interventions, https://bit.ly/3A1TbsF
Executive Functioning is the ability to manage our attention, emotions, and behavior in pursuit of our goals. Focus, cognitive flexibility, working memory, and inhibitory (self) control are the core brain processes needed for success, and are highly vulnerable to stress. This article uses an ecological framework to describe the various factors impacting children's executive functions during the pandemic. At the macro level, we witnessed economic insecurities, daily news of virus dissemination and deaths, lack

of healthcare resources, and confinement, among other things. At the school level, there were closures, increased stress levels in teachers, remote learning, reduced student-teacher interactions, connectivity issues, etc.

At the family level, caregivers faced increased stressors, may have experienced job loss, had to homeschool, and in some instances, mistreated their own children. Children also felt the stress, had fears of becoming sick, had to deal with isolation, and also developed unhealthy habits. The article concludes with a number of strategies for lowering stress (e.g., creating routines, practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques, promoting healthy habits) and fostering executive functions (e.g., *improving attention* by varying stimuli or shortening the duration of activities; *improving inhibitory control* by using visual reminders or allowing children to reflect on their behavior or emotions; *improving working memory* by incorporating playful learning activities requiring children to memorize steps, and *improving cognitive flexibility* by teaching perspective taking and engaging in role play; *improving planning and organization abilities* by diagraming steps).

Voices from the Library

Ontarian Librarian: The Challenges of Post-COVID Storytimes, https://bit.ly/3WHH7W7
Adventures in Storytime: Make a New Plan, Stan - Storytime Planning in the New Normal, https://bit.ly/3AbuA4o
Two bloggers share their experiences returning to in-person storytimes and the adjustments they had to make to support children who may never have experienced any group programming. In response to shorter attention spans and limited experience interacting with others in structured settings, the librarians found success when they

- sat on the floor with the children
- reassured caregivers that children would eventually become used to the routine
- implemented behavior management strategies
- used fewer books and songs
- read shorter, attention-grabbing books
- repeated activities
- incorporated movement activities
- included time to calm down
- incorporated choice
- utilized a PowerPoint to increase caregiver engagement and keep everyone on track
- replaced crafts with activities

Professional Resources for Making Storytime More Interactive

***Books in Motion: Connecting Preschoolers with Books through Art, Games, Movement, Music, Playacting, and Props*, https://bit.ly/3Sv21oV**
Julie Dietzel-Glair shares a wide array of activities to use in storytime with preschoolers that are related to books that can be read aloud. The book is divided into six sections spotlighting different kinds of engagement: art, games, movement, music, playacting, and props.

***Move, Play, Learn: Interactive Storytimes with Music, Movement, and More*, https://bit.ly/3Su5RyK**
Alyssa Jewell discusses the benefits of music and movement and provides programming resources, including ready-to-use storytime plans and lists of books and media.

***Nonfiction in Motion: Connecting Preschoolers with Nonfiction Books through Movement*, https://bit.ly/3LIFUrd**
Julie Dietzel-Glair identifies two hundred nonfiction books across five themes (animals, concepts, construction and things that go, science and the world around us) that can be used in conjunction with art, movement, music, and props to activate learning.

***Stories, Songs, and Stretches!: Creating Playful Storytimes with Yoga and Movement*, https://bit.ly/4d0iSIB**
Katie Scherrer introduces readers to yoga, provides guidance for creating yoga storytimes, and shares twelve ready-to-use yoga storytime plans. &

THE LAST WORD

Tortoise by Flashlight

By Melanie Lyttle

Sometimes the best events are those that face unexpected challenges. Like the day a downpour threatened to shut down storytime and the library.

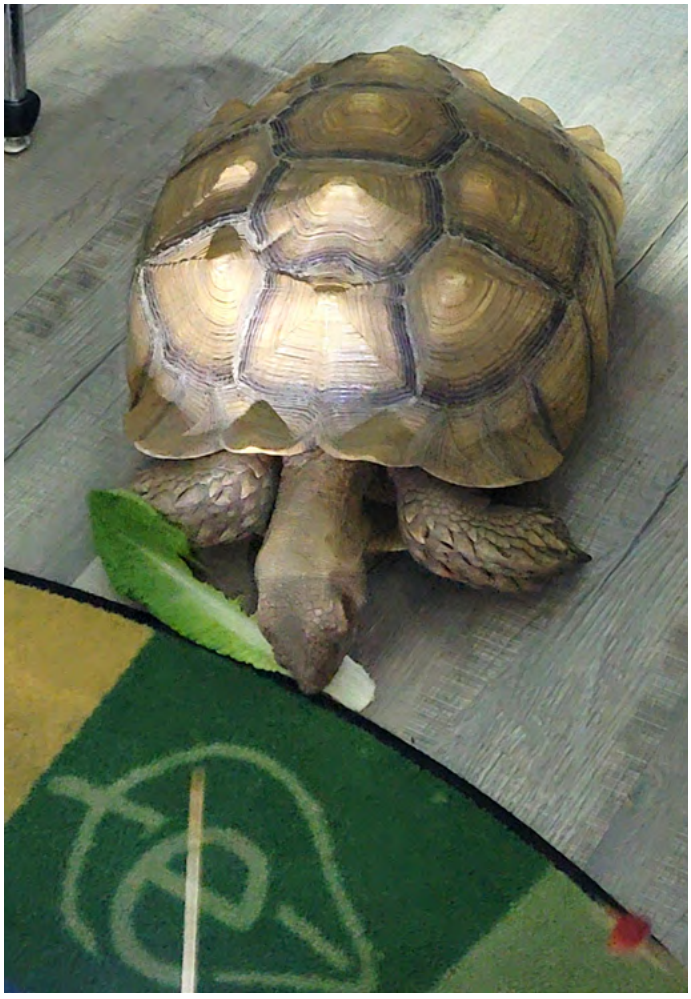
We had booked a guest tortoise named Grevy for our 3 p.m. storytime. But the lights started flickering about 2:45 p.m. with the nearby back-up batteries screeching due to continual power fluctuations.

At 2:55 p.m. there was one child in the room, and Miss Kylie was concerned there would be no one to feed a tortoise. She asked the group of tweens doing an entrepreneurship program in another room if they would like a "tortoise break" so poor Grevy would get something to eat and some attention. They were happy to oblige.

By 3 p.m., the room was full of storytime kids and tweens. People were arriving dripping wet from the deluge outside. A few minutes later, the power went out, and colleagues descended with flashlights and camp lights, thinking the kids (or the tortoise) would be scared, but neither seemed to care!

We weren't going to let a little darkness stop tortoise tales! The kids didn't even want to hear the stories; they just wanted to feed Grevy! He ate strawberries from the ends of bamboo skewers, carrots, and lettuce.

Thank you to Grevy and his owner for going with the flow and to the parents who weren't bothered by storytime by flashlight. And most importantly, thank you to Kylie Bowyer, storytime leader extraordinaire, for reminding us of the magic of storytime, whether you have electricity or not!



Melanie Lyttle *is Head of Public Services at Madison (OH) Public Library.*

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

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