

# Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for  
Library Service to Children

Volume 4 Number 2 Summer/Fall 2006 ISSN 1542-9806



2006 Awards Issue



Association for Library Service to Children  
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Newbery, Caldecott, Belpré & Sibert Speeches • Summer Reading Needs • A Place for Poetry

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## Editor's Note

### Childhood Favorites Can Be Timeless

Sharon Verbeten

Enjoy alphabet soup? Librarian Annette Birdsall of Ithaca, New York, presents a thought-provoking alphabet of reading in this issue—including everything from giving books as gifts to knowing the text of books by heart to reading at dinnertime.

Getting kids interested in reading starts at home—I'm sure most parents and librarians would agree. And it's never too early, in my opinion. As I await the arrival of my first child later this year, I've already stocked her bookshelf with the classics (of course) such as *Goodnight Moon*; more modern favorites, such as Lois Ehlert's *Fish Eyes*; my personal childhood favorites (Russell Hoban and Garth Williams' memorable collaboration in the Frances books); and a few Little Golden Books I couldn't resist.

What were your favorite books as a child (please provide title and author)? What made those books special to you? Did you go on to share those same books with your children and grandchildren? Did they enjoy them as much as you did? I'd love to run some of your responses on our letters page in an upcoming issue.

It's important to remember that not every book we loved will be greeted with the same enthusiasm by today's audience. But even if they're not, that's fine. It's just the act of reading—as Birdsall so eloquently promotes in her article—that holds the keys to our future. ☺



## Executive Director's Note

### Looking Back on New Orleans Memories

Diane Foote

Maybe it's just that I never grew up, but I'm one of those people who feels that each year begins anew in September, rather than January. The ALA calendar cooperates with my illusion; it's fitting that each "school year" culminates with the pomp of the ALA Annual Conference and the associated ALSC awards ceremonies. This year, New Orleans pulled off a tremendous feat in hosting a successful conference for more than 16,000 attendees. We had much to celebrate with the tenth anniversary of the Pura Belpré Awards and perhaps the beginning of a new tradition of harmonica-playing at the Newbery-Caldecott Banquet (for those of you who were unable to attend, we were treated to an impromptu performance by Norton Juster, the author of this year's Caldecott Medal-winning *The Hello, Goodbye Window*).

As summer draws to a close and a new "year" approaches, revisit New Orleans memories by reading the Newbery, Caldecott, Belpré, and Sibert Award acceptance speeches published in this issue. Looking ahead, we continue to do everything we can to help librarians serving youth in everyday work with articles on summer reading, celebrating poetry, encouraging family literacy, hiring the best storytellers, and more. ☺

# Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for  
Library Service to Children

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## 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 and spotlights significant activities and programs of the Association. (From the journal's "Policies and Procedures" document adopted by the ALSC board, April 2004.)

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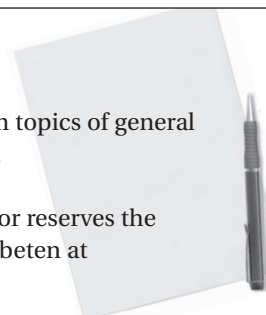


# Letters to the Editor

## Letters Guidelines

*Children and Libraries* welcomes readers to submit letters to the editor on topics of general interest to the profession or as comments on topics covered in our pages.

Letters should be no longer than 350 words and must be signed. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and space. Send letters to Editor Sharon Verbeten at CALeditor@yahoo.com or 820 Spooner Ct., De Pere, WI 54115.



## Author Applauds CAL Article

*Editor's note: The following letter was sent to CAL Advisory Committee member Jill Ratzan from author Barbara Park in reference to Ratzan's Winter 2005 article about Park's Junie B. Jones series. Park's letter is reprinted with her permission.*

To my new bestest friend Jill: Since meeting you in Princeton, I had been looking forward to reading your perspective on Junie B.'s grammatical (well, ahem, let's just call them) *challenges*.

The copy of *Children and Libraries* arrived in the mail last Friday. Today is Tuesday. The smile has still not left my face.

Fifteen years ago, when I began to develop this slightly out-of-control little girl, it never occurred to me that having a five-year-old speak in the voice of a five-year-old was anything other than logical. What a shock it was to receive my first angry letter (from a Midwestern grandmother) expressing moral outrage at the notion that a young child who is just starting out in school, might actually have some (gasp!) *learning* to do.

This particular letter was the first of what has become a small—but unbelievably mean-spirited—group of letters I've received over the years from irate adults complaining about Junie B.'s grammatical and behavioral mistakes. These people are convinced that, to be of value, a children's book must necessarily be instructional and didactic. ("Oh boy, children! Today's fun read will be the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style!*")

I can't say that it's ever fun to read these

letters. But I thought you might get a kick out of the fact that not one letter written in complaint of Junie B.'s flawed grammar has ever been devoid of grammatical errors. Likewise, not one letter written to complain about Junie B.'s lack of civility and politeness has ever been *remotely* civil or polite.

Life . . . ain't it a hoot?

Thanks again for your supportive article, Jill. You made my day. —*Barbara Park*

## Digital Art Is Not an Easy Way Out

*The following comments are in response to "Don't Judge the Book by Its Medium," Heather Lane's article on computer-generated art, which appeared in the Winter 2005 issue of Children and Libraries.*

Many artists use digital art as a tool, as described in Lane's article, but it isn't always using the computer in a creative and new way in terms of publishing. As far as book illustration goes, computer art is in its early stages, and the books I have seen use it as a backdrop, often static, and not an integral part of the page.

When my husband and I did the art for *Saturday Night at the Beastro* (HarperCollins, 2004), it took the publisher about a year to figure out how to produce the book because it was submitted in three dimensions as both computer art and traditional combined.

The artwork began as photos; the backgrounds, rendered in Adobe Photoshop. The drawn characters were hand-

produced on paper, scanned, rendered, and printed on acetate overlays, and painted on the computer, too. There was painting on the acetate as well as other layers. The collage was placed on top of the background or the acetate depending on the desired three-dimensional look. The individual backgrounds were all composite images of a number of photographs, but they never existed in our plane of reality. They were fantasy.

After getting the right angle of perspective and size, the scenes were shaded for color and density, allowing for gutter and character placement, and then painted on the computer pixel by pixel, just as an artist would use a brush, charcoal, or pencil. The canvas was first outside the computer, then inside, and finally outside again if you can imagine. We felt it was a multimedia piece of digitally manipulated art. I know for a fact not one reviewer knew or understood the time involved or what was actually done on our part. (Some thought we used original photos directly as art; we did not!)

It was not faster for us. It was meticulous and some of the hardest work I have ever done. The book took years. I am now happily doing a picture book on canvas with paint and a brush. Albeit, I am experimenting with sand, salt (both table and sea salt), Windex, Comet, bleach, oil, turpentine, and other materials in the backyard away from wires, electricity, and a mouse!—*Jane Breskin Zalben, author*

*For more information on the Zalbens' collaborative book, Saturday Night at the Beastro, see the Summer/Fall 2004 edition of Children and Libraries.*



# Outgoing President's ALSC Message

Ellen Fader  
ALSC President, 2005-06

## Moving Forward

In my last *Children and Libraries* column, I have the leisure to reflect on an amazing year as Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) president. I am staggered as I consider the commitment of ALSC members to this organization. Most spend significant time, talent, and funds on the organization's behalf, even as they cope with the demands of jobs and households to operate. Without the energy of its members, ALSC would not be the high-achieving organization we all call home.

It is customary for the outgoing president to recap the high points of ALSC's year. I've excerpted highlights from the annual report that I prepared, which is presented to ALA Council; ALSC also posts it on the Web site, [www.ala.org/alsc](http://www.ala.org/alsc). The Board had some large goals this year: to hire a new executive director and to revise ALSC's strategic plan. The plan has involved learning new ways of conducting business, allowing the Board to focus on mega-issues critical to the health of our division and profession while using the talents of our members to handle the many details of their committees and task forces. After hiring Diane Foote on January 17, 2006, as executive direc-

tor, the ALSC office became fully staffed. Filling our executive director vacancy allowed Aimee Strittmatter, who served for six and a half months as ALSC interim executive director, to return to her deputy director position. We warmly thank Aimee for the tremendous energy and good humor she brought to her temporary assignment. Aimee advanced many of ALSC's projects and initiatives, even though she herself was very new to ALSC, having joined the staff in April 2005.

## Customer Service

I've made progress on my goal to improve customer service by consciously committing ALSC to revise or create manuals for each award and evaluation committee. Much had changed since ALSC first created most of the original documents, and feedback from member leaders told us that committees needed up-to-date manuals for guidance. Former committee members and chairs, along with priority consultants, know these committees' procedures best so they are contributing to this ambitious project. We have fourteen manuals in various stages of revision or editing, and we posted the majority on our Web site by Annual Conference.

## Our Awards Program

It was thrilling to be part of ALA's first live webcast of the youth media awards press conference in January at Midwinter Meeting. Forty-seven thousand people logged on to learn who won the most prestigious children's book awards. The excitement continued when, for the first time in nearly a decade, the ALSC president, rather than the ALA president, represented ALA and ALSC on the *Today* show. On Tuesday, January 24, 2006, Newbery Medalist Lynne Rae Perkins (*Criss Cross*) and Chris Raschka, winner of the Caldecott Medal for *The Hello, Goodbye Window*, and I discussed their awards with host Ann Curry. We announced the very first Theodor Seuss Geisel award at Midwinter Meeting 2006, and we presented it to Cynthia Rylant, author of *Henry and Mudge and the Great Grandpas*, and the book's illustrator Suçie Stevenson, at Annual Conference in New Orleans. The winners

**Ellen Fader** is Youth Services Coordinator at Multnomah County Library in Portland, Oregon.

are the author and illustrator of the most distinguished contribution to the body of American children's literature known as beginning reader books published in the United States during the preceding year. We honored Mimi Kayden with a distinguished service award, and Russell Freedman as the 2006 Arbuthnot lecturer; he delivered his talk to an attentive crowd in Williamsburg, Virginia, on April 28, 2006. A gala celebration at Annual Conference, jointly presented by ALSC and REFORMA, marks 2006 as the tenth anniversary of the Pura Belpré awards, presented to authors and illustrators of the novels and picture books published in the previous year that best present the Latino cultural experience in a book for children. The new Odyssey award, for best audio books for children and young adults, was approved by ALA's Awards Committee at Annual Conference. ALSC and the Young Adult Library Services Association will jointly administer this new award, with sponsorship in part by *Booklist*. We will begin evaluating audio books produced in 2007 and present the first award in 2008.

## Our Biggest Grant

ALSC received an unprecedented fourth grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to promote *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* (Children's Day/Book Day) nationally. Usually known as *Día*, this family literacy initiative promotes our cultural plurality. Many communities hosted tenth anniversary celebrations on or around April 30, 2006, among them the Maricopa Library District in Phoenix. In 2006, ALSC-sponsored *Día* programs took place at Midwinter Meeting in San Antonio, the Public Library Association's National Conference, and ALA Annual Conference. Additional celebrations of *Día* are planned at the ALSC Institute in September, the Joint Council of Librarians of Color Conference in October, and the annual convention

of the National Council of Teachers of English in November. ALSC produced bookmarks, buttons, and stickers, and created a Web site dedicated to *Día*. We worked with ALA's Public Information Office to mount a national media campaign, including public service announcements by *Día* founder and author Pat Mora, and development of an icon linking to our *Día* Web page that our members and others interested in *Día* can post on their own Web sites.

## Outside ALSC

I was honored to represent ALSC at the Public Library Association and the American Association of School Librarians conferences and at National Library Legislative Day in Washington, D.C. I also represented ALSC in many media interviews, addressing such topics as ALSC award winners, early literacy, library funding, *El día de los niños/El día de los libros*, Harry Potter, ideas to interest preteens in reading, and summer reading activities. At Midwinter Meeting in San Antonio, ALSC announced and distributed fact sheets for its public awareness and advocacy campaign, Kids! @ your library®, which is part of ALA's Campaign for America's Libraries. We launched the campaign Web site at [www.ala.org/kids](http://www.ala.org/kids) in January 2006. The initiative moved into high gear with a program in New Orleans featuring singer-storyteller Bill Harley performing his song " @ your library," which he wrote especially for ALSC's campaign. Illustrator Michael White (*The Library Dragon*) created original artwork for a campaign poster and bookmark, which is available through ALA Graphics. ALA Graphics also carries pencils and stickers featuring the campaign logo: So Much to See! So Much to Do! @ your library.® We thank HarperCollins and Peachtree Publishers for underwriting the participation of Bill Harley and Michael White, respectively.

## Keeping ALSC Moving Forward

ALSC adopted a new strategic plan at Midwinter this year, which will carry the association from 2006 through 2011 in conjunction with ALA's Ahead to 2010 plan. The centerpiece of the ALSC plan is our primary goal: to lead the way in forging excellent library service for all children. Goal areas include advocacy, education, and collaboration. You can read the plan at [www.ala.org/ala/alsc/boardcomm/alscstratplan/alscstrategic.htm](http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/boardcomm/alscstratplan/alscstrategic.htm). ALSC's financial picture is healthy and bright, with strong award seal sales, successful continuing education programming, and an array of endowments helping to provide the revenue ALSC depends on to advance its many initiatives.

## Turning the Page for the Next Chapter

I give thanks to our smart, well-informed, and flexible board of directors; our member leaders, priority group consultants, committee and task force chairs, and discussion group conveners for their dedication, persistence, and expertise; and our members for continued enthusiastic, professional service to our association, and to their children, families, and others who work with them in our nation's libraries. I reserve the highest praise for the ALSC staff for their many contributions, their very hard work, and their grace as they coped with yet more transitions this year. It has been a pleasure working with all of them. ALSC will continue to thrive under the leadership of President Kathleen T. Horning, Vice-President/President-Elect Jane Marino, and the next group of leaders. Our members will ensure that ALSC continues to achieve remarkable results. Working with the ALSC members and staff has been exciting and invigorating—truly, a professional experience that is a highlight of my career. ☺



# Incoming President's ALSC Message

Kathleen T. Horning  
ALSC President, 2006-07

## Spreading the Joys of Reading

In April, I had the pleasure of representing the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) at a special performance of *Tomás and the Library Lady* in Phoenix, Arizona, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of *El día de los niños/El día de los libros*. The children's play was adapted from the picture book by Pat Mora that tells the story of a young boy from Texas whose parents labored as migrant workers in Iowa in the summer of 1944. While they were there, Tomás discovered the joy of reading at the local public library, thanks to the kindness of the small-town librarian. She gave him books, a comforting place, and a glass of cool water.

The play was performed, appropriately enough, in the original Carnegie building that housed the first public library in Phoenix. Adorning the walls were black-and-white period photos, including one from 1920 that showed the first library staff, comprised mostly of friendly looking young women wearing crisp, white dresses.

My host for the occasion was ALSC member Tim Wadham, youth services coordinator for the Maricopa County (Ariz.) Library District. He told me that from the

time he first read Mora's picture book, he knew it was a story he wanted to share with every child. Throughout the year, he read it to children at story hours and at school visits. But that wasn't enough for Wadham. He wanted the story to reach an even wider audience. He envisioned it as a play.

With the enthusiastic support of his library colleagues and with the author's blessing, Wadham made his dream come true. Adapted for the stage by playwright José Cruz González and produced by a local professional children's theater company, Childsplay, the play has been making the rounds to area schools where it has reached more than 70,000 children to date. The play has been such a success, in fact, that it will have a second run in the fall, where it is expected to reach twice as many children.

The story is based on a true incident in the life of Tomás Rivera, who grew up to become president of the University of California at Riverside. His life story is well known. But what of the "library lady" who had made such a difference in his life? He never knew her name. But thanks to one small detail he recalled, Wadham was able to track her down on a research trip he and his family took to north-central Iowa, when the play was in the works.

Rivera remembered that she wore tennis shoes. This small detail enabled the current staff of the Hampton Public Library in Iowa to identify her as Miss Bertha Gaulke, who had started working at the library in 1914, immediately after graduating from high school at age sixteen. When she died sixty years later, the obituary published in the local newspaper was just a few words long.

Thanks to Mora, Wadham, and González, Gaulke's legacy lives on. She has been immortalized, first in a book and now on stage. She never knew what a difference she had made in the life of one young boy—a stranger in her town—who came to the library with a thirst for knowledge. Her story serves as a reminder to all of us that the small things we do in our work on a day-to-day basis can make a big differ-

continued on page 11

**Kathleen T. Horning** is Director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center, a library of the UW-Madison School of Education. She can be reached at (608) 263-3721 or [kthorning@education.wisc.edu](mailto:kthorning@education.wisc.edu).





# *All Roads Lead to San Jose...*

The 2007 **PLA** Spring Symposium will be held  
March 1-3, 2007 in San Jose, California  
at the Fairmont San Jose  
170 Market St., San Jose, California  
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PLA's Spring Symposium offers an excellent opportunity for librarians and library workers to learn, network, and share ideas with colleagues. At the 2007 PLA Spring Symposium:

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- Learn directly from experts.
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on your calendar!**  
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# Newbery Medal Acceptance Speech

## Gifts from Fellow Travelers

*Lynne Rae Perkins*



I'd like to read you a poem. It was written by Denise Levertov; a friend of mine copied it out and gave it to me for Valentine's Day one year, and I keep it, framed, in my studio.

It's called "The Secret."

Two girls discover  
the secret of life  
in a sudden line of  
poetry.

I who don't know the  
secret wrote  
the line. They  
told me

(through a third person)  
they had found it  
but not what it was  
not even

what line it was. No doubt  
by now, more than a week  
later, they have forgotten  
the secret,

the line, the name of  
the poem. I love them  
for finding what  
I can't find,

and for loving me  
for the line I wrote,  
and for forgetting it  
so that

a thousand times, till death  
finds them, they may  
discover it again, in other  
lines

in other  
happenings. And for  
wanting to know it,  
for

assuming there is  
such a secret, yes,  
for that  
most of all.

In Michigan, where I live, there are mushrooms called morels that pop up through the earth for a few unpredictable weeks in the spring, sometime after the snow

*Lynne Rae Perkins is the winner of the 2006 Newbery Medal for *Criss Cross*, published by Greenwillow Books. Her acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans on June 25, 2006.*

has turned to rain and the sun has started to warm up the soil. They're a delicacy; all the local restaurants have ads in the newspaper offering to buy morels, and they feature dishes made with them.

Morels are a democratic delicacy, because they are free if you can learn how to find them.

Even people who don't especially like to eat morels like to hunt for them. When you see a car parked on the side of the road in the springtime, with nothing nearby but a tree-covered hill, you know that the driver of the car is in those woods looking for morels. People have secret spots they return to every year, and while they may be only too happy to hand you a grocery bag filled with morels, they will never tell you where they found them.

There is an art to finding morels, which are brown and wrinkled and blend in with the rippled bark and the fallen twigs and the dried-up leaves and the mottled lumps of dirt. They are nearly impossible to see. Until you see them. There are people who say they can find them anywhere, and other people (including me) who almost never find them.

It's an art most often described in mystical terms:

"You look for them by not looking for them."

"You have to unfocus your eyes."

Even resolute Polish Catholics become Zen masters when it's time to hunt mushrooms in Michigan. As for me, I tromp, focusing and unfocusing, looking and not looking, through last autumn's leaves flattened by the winter's snow, and I find myself thinking of the line from Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* about Bessie Bighead watching for Gomer Owen, "who kissed her once by the pigsty when she wasn't looking and never kissed her again although she was looking all the time."

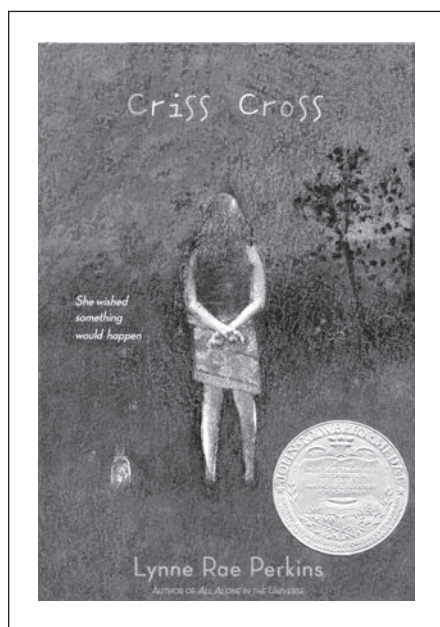
I think the secret of life does that. It hides, brown and wrinkled, among the dead leaves and broken twigs and the lumps of dirt. It kisses you when you aren't looking.

Okay, not always—sometimes it hits you over the head. With a baseball bat.

But I think a lot of us—most of us, maybe—are looking. Even if we're looking by not looking. Looking all the time. Believing there is such a thing.

We come across little pieces of it, all six-and-a-half billion of us blind people coming across gray and wrinkled pieces of the elephant in the room that is life, that is the world.

When we arrive here, as babies, we come into such very particular situations, which can be so very different from each



other. But we don't know how particular our situations are because we don't have anything to compare them to. Our world is the whole world; it's all that we know. We are pretty busy just figuring out how it all works and how we fit into it: what pleasures are there for us, what we will try to steer clear of. For a long time, our world grows larger as our parents, or those who are standing in for them, allow it to. We depend on them to help us understand it.

But all along, bit by bit, we begin to meet the world that is beyond our parents' explanations. We encounter people with ideas that contradict what we have been taught; we get new information that doesn't seem to dovetail with what we already know. We begin to try to

understand the world for ourselves. And we begin to be aware that we have our own ideas that are in some way separate and different from the ideas of those around us.

The extreme example of this, of course, is if you are one of those children raised by wolves, but it happens to most of us, I think. We realize that the world is larger than anyone told us. We find out that our parents are human beings, with strengths and limitations, that they don't know everything.

Some of them are aware of this even before we tell them. Others are harder to convince.

Either way, we head out on the road that is our own life.

So, what is it like out there?

It's scary and exciting, lonely and crowded. Noisy. Boring, sometimes. It's heart-stoppingly beautiful, with unexplainable ugliness. There is kindness, cruelty, and indifference, there is serendipity, and there is being in the wrong place at the wrong time. I could go on.

It's a lot to try to make sense of, and often the tools we have seem so inadequate. If we are lucky, we might find at times that someone is walking along next to us, and they say, "You're not crazy; I see it, too." Or they say, "Did you ever notice how . . ." and for a moment the discombobulated mechanics of the world organize themselves according to some principle we hadn't perceived before, and we even see that we are a part of it, we are connected.

We pocket these moments and string them up like beads on a rosary. Like clues to a mystery. They are gifts, given freely to us by our fellow travelers, and they come in many forms. A conversation. A meeting of glances. An embrace. A song on the radio. A story.

Stories entered my life early on—stories that were told on the porch or at the kitchen table. I heard the events of our family's life reshaped creatively to make them more interesting or to support a point of view.

In what seemed to be a completely unrelated development, reading also entered my life early on. My sister Cathie taught me to read when I was four and she was six. She had learned to sound out words, and she showed me how to do it, too. I don't remember this myself; it was one of the stories I heard.

I do remember finding both the drawings and the poetry of *Go, Dog. Go!* to be deeply compelling.

The stories and the reading seemed separate because the stories were so social, while reading was, on the surface, a solitary pleasure. My parents read newspapers and magazines; they only occasionally read books. I think my attraction to reading books was seen as a harmless eccentricity, good in the sense

about it as the time when the rules I had been taught no longer seemed to apply. There was a new social order, and I didn't like it or my place in it. I felt suddenly insufficient, and the advice I received on this topic, while given with love and the intent to reassure, did not often seem to help me find a satisfying way to be in the world I actually lived in. This, of course, was something I had to learn for myself over a long time.

Books, though, acknowledged that life was complex. They offered up the possibility that other things besides what was happening, could happen. And I think now that though I didn't fully understand it at the time, they showed me that whatever you encounter, if you can meet it with honesty, intelligence, compassion, and humor, on some level you win. To

*But if we only receive gifts, if we keep them all to ourselves, life dries up. If we share what we receive or give a gift of our own, however poor we think it is, life grows.*

that it was related to doing well in school. I was largely unguided, free to float down the stream of whatever reading materials came my way. I read *TV Guide* and *Little House on the Prairie* and the Childcraft encyclopedia with equal involvement.

I also watched TV and movies, and listened to music and rode my bike and had friends and stayed awake all night at sleepovers. Our family went on vacations to the seashore.

But books had a special place, an important place. I don't think I could have said why.

In junior high, when I went to the bookmobile I would pick out the thickest books I could find; if they had small, dense type and a lot of unfamiliar words, all the better. I can still picture my copy of *David Copperfield*. (This is because I still have it.) I'm sure a lot of what I read went over my head. When I reread these books now, I can hardly believe they are the same books I read then.

When I think about junior high, I think

tell the truth in an interesting way, a way that allows for real sorrow, a way that allows for real laughter, is to open a door where there had seemed to be only a wall. This is the opposite of spin, which paints a picture of a door and hangs it on the wall in a gilded frame.

I was looking for doors. Sometimes I found them. They appeared in different forms: a conversation with my dad. A song on the radio. A feeling of familiarity with someone I had only just met. A story that offered possibility. The secret of life in a sudden line of poetry.

I remember being smitten with the novels of Kurt Vonnegut, with sentences such as, "Her smile was glassy, and she was ransacking her mind for something to say, finding nothing in it but used Kleenex and costume jewelry." Or, "Her face . . . was a one-of-a-kind, a surprising variation on a familiar theme—a variation that made observers think, *Yes—that would be another nice way for people to look.*" I remember being struck by these sentences, these thoughts, these stories about the imaginary island of San

Lorenzo and one of the moons of the planet Saturn and feeling that they had something to do with my life, the life I was actually living.

All of these ideas, songs, and stories helped me to meet the world that was larger than, while also contained in, the specific little town where I grew up.

They were gifts from fellow travelers. But if we only receive gifts, if we keep them all to ourselves, life dries up. If we share what we receive or give a gift of our own, however poor we think it is, life grows.

We learn this in fairy tales. The two brothers who refuse to share their "beautiful" pancakes and wine with the gray old man have incapacitating woodcutting accidents. The youngest brother, who is considered a fool, offers to share his cake made with water and baked in ashes and his bottle of sour beer, and he finds that they have been transformed into fine cakes and wine—and the gray old man also directs him to the golden goose. If you share what you have, the roles of giver and receiver reverse themselves, like alternating current. There is a connection and electricity.

Writing and drawing are two of the ways I respond to the world. There are so many ways, so many wonderful ways, but words and pictures have always been important to me, so that's what I do. A lot of what I write and draw will never see the light of day, and that is fine; it's as it should be.

But as I go along, I find that there are stories and pictures and ideas I want to share, and so—at the risk of adding one more metaphor to this whole heap that is about to topple over—I put my pancake baked in the ashes into a bottle called a book and toss it into the ocean. Actually, since I live in the Midwest, I have to send it to Virginia Duncan in New York City, who tosses it into the ocean for me.

And then I steel myself for the very real possibility that it will get lost out there. It's a big ocean, I say to myself. And such a little bottle. The important thing, I say, is to do it, whether anyone sees it or not.

But writers write because they want to

connect. The agenda of a writer is simple. It is "I want to tell you something." Maybe it's a joke. Maybe a story. Maybe the secret of life. Or all three. So, try as I might to pretend it doesn't matter, I toss my bottle out there with the hope that it will be found, and even more, that someone who finds it will care about it. I have asked myself sometimes, how many people do I need to find it and care about it? And the answer I have come up with, in my moments of lowest expectations, is five or six. I've thought, if you really, really connect with five or six people, what more can you want?

And then in January of this year, I got kissed when I wasn't looking. In one short phone call, I learned that my five-person quota had been exceeded by two hundred percent, to fifteen people. And not just any fifteen people, but fifteen librarians—who in my experience are among the top one percent of humans on the earth in terms of being smart, funny, thoughtful, and principled.

That would have been enough.

But what this phone call also meant was that in a very concrete way, I get

to be a fellow traveler. I get to share my pancake. I get to say to someone who may be feeling as out of sorts as I did, as I still sometimes do, "It's okay. You're not crazy. I see it, too. But have you ever noticed . . . ?"

*It takes two people to make a book—a writer and a reader—and it's not clear-cut who is doing the giving and who is receiving. The roles of giver and receiver go back and forth like alternating current, when there is a connection.*

It takes two people to make a book—a writer and a reader—and it's not clear-cut who is doing the giving and who is receiving. The roles of giver and receiver go back and forth like alternating current, when there is a connection.

I'd like to thank the American Library Association, ALSC, and Barbara Barstow and the Newbery Committee from the bottom of my heart for giving me this immense opportunity to make that connection.

And because what I just said about it taking two people to make a book was a patent understatement of the truth, I also thank Virginia Duncan, my editor; Sylvie Le Floch, my designer, who made my book beautiful; and every wonder-

ful person at Greenwillow Books and HarperCollins Children's Books.

I thank Bill and Lucy and Frank.

And I thank those of every persuasion, from Polish Catholic to Zen master, who have shown me doors when I couldn't see them.

Thank you all. 🐾

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## INCOMING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, continued from page 6

ence in the lives of the children we serve, even though we may never know it.

And Wadham's story shows us that it is possible for all of us to dream big. In an era of dwindling budgets, particularly for the arts and for libraries, he found a way to make things happen by working with similar-minded organizations and businesses within his own community. It took five years for his dream to become a reality, but Wadham's persistence paid off.

There were many special guests in attendance at the Saturday afternoon perfor-

mance, including Mora, who was seeing the play for the first time. Also in attendance were children from a local homeless shelter, whose visit Wadham had arranged. They, too, were seeing the play for the first time. Their involvement in the performance was obvious, particularly when they called out encouragement to the actor playing Tomás as he was struggling to sound out the words he was reading.

After the performance, they all gathered around the author and the actors to have their picture taken. Each one left with

a personal copy of *Tomás and the Library Lady*.

Much has changed about libraries since those early days of the women in their crisp, white dresses, since Gaulke first offered a young boy refuge in a small public library. But our passion for connecting children with good books has not. For youth services librarians, every day is Day of the Children and Day of the Books. 🐾



Being thankful is easy, being happy is a little harder, but being useful is the hardest thing of all. Or so it seems to me.

In my life, the three are tied together in some way: one leads to the other or two stand together producing the last, or, simply, the third derives from the second, which derives from the first. I have never been exactly certain which stands where. Other problems I have solved by getting them down on paper.

even, I plotted the thematic movement of Wagner's *Parsifal*, where -x equals the subconscious, +x equals the conscious, -y equals faith, and +y equals reason. Dull work, but I have rarely enjoyed myself more. However, I have never managed to draw precisely the relationship of usefulness, happiness, and thankfulness.

When I left college, I spent a year in a little town in the province of Hessen, Germany, working in a home for children with physical disabilities. I joined

# Caldecott Medal Acceptance Speech

Of Charlie Parker...  
and Other Successes

*Chris Raschka*



*Chris Raschka is the winner of the 2006 Caldecott Medal for *The Hello, Goodbye Window*, published by Hyperion Books for Children. His acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans on June 25, 2006.*

For instance, in a large ledger book, I have charts of time spent on projects and time expected to be spent on projects; graphs tabulating projects completed satisfactorily, needing improvement, or failing; diagrams depicting the relationships between hours spent drawing, reading, painting, or writing; income from each book plotted carefully against its brothers; and comparisons of outflow of cash on paper versus tubes of paint versus Chinese ink and so forth. Perhaps my favorite tool is the x and y axis—let x equal my ability and y my desire. Once,

the home as a volunteer, becoming one of four charged with the care of nine children ranging in age from twelve to seventeen. Our group, Gruppe Steppenwolf, had rooms on one half of one floor of a four-story dormitory. The coworkers were split into two pairs, alternating biweekly between the early and the late shift, the shifts overlapping in the afternoon. So you see that two workers were needed to get nine teenage children up, breakfasted, and out the door to school and, at the end of the day, dined, washed, and to bed. This was not

impossible, as far as the physical care went, since only two children required complete help in rising, bathing, dressing, and so forth.

When I arrived, of these two I was given the responsibility for Jörn. My coworkers assured me that my job would not be difficult to learn as Jörn would tell me precisely—and they winked as they repeated “precisely”—what to do.

I saw Jörn on my first afternoon as he rolled down the wide tiled hallway in his electric wheelchair. He was a fourteen-year-old boy with dirty-blond hair, cut shaggily. He had clear blue eyes, an upturned nose, and a very sardonic mouth. In fact, he was much disliked by his dormmates for being a frequent taunter, dealing out wicked barbs to younger and older children alike. He was very round. He had a round head and a round torso. Each joint of each finger was round, and the small folds at the back of his neck were round. His toes were roundest of all, probably the result of never having been walked upon. Jörn saw to it that he was kept very clean and, as a result, he smelled good.

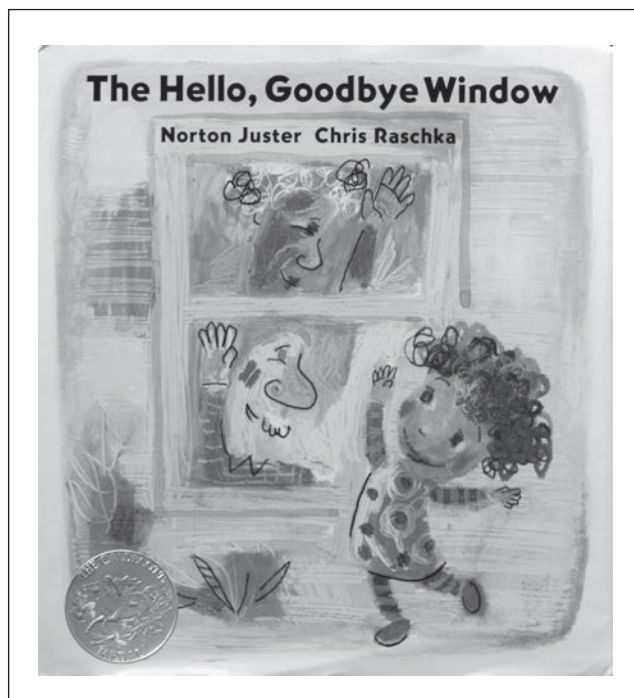
On my first morning rousing Jörn and his roommate Peter, I entered their room at 6:30. I gathered myself together and gently placed a hand first on Peter's and then Jörn's shoulder to wake them. Jörn groaned, and Peter slept on. Abruptly, Jörn called for his urine flask, which I stumblingly looked for in the half-light, then found. I stood expectantly beside his bed until Jörn said irritably, “Well, pull down my pants and stick it between my legs.” “Okay,” I said.

Then, following much precise instruction, I removed his pajama pants, *without* dropping his legs, pulled on his underpants, *carefully*, by gently rolling him toward me onto his right side, his great belly lolling, then to his left side, then back to his right side, tugging up his underpants as each side became free. Next I lifted him to a seated position *without* forgetting about his head, and pulled off his pajama top, then, select-

ing the correct pullover and T-shirt from his dresser, I pulled them down over his round head, *minding the ears*.

So the morning went, and all the while, after attentively receiving each instruction, I said, “Okay.” At last Jörn turned his blue eyes upon me and said through the slit of his mouth, “You are getting on my nerves with all of your *okays*.” And I said, “Okay.”

I determined then that the word I would use as a substitute anytime I felt the word *okay* bubbling up would be *mucus*. *Mucus*. *Mucus*, *mucus*. Jörn tried it. It



sounded like *moi-kooss*. This was agreeable to Jörn. Indeed, when I explained to Jörn precisely what *moi-kooss* meant, we became friends.

I spent a year with Jörn. I dressed him in the mornings. I bathed him. I learned to anticipate his melodiously trilled “Pinkeln,” which indicated a dash for the urine flask. I will never forget the special sound of the automated flask washers; I was so proud to know how to use them. By the second week I was lifting Jörn into and out of his electric wheelchair alone, Jörn in my arms like a great seventy-five-pound Jell-O mold. This was definitely against house rules and certainly dangerous to both of us, but we didn’t

care; we were too impatient to wait for the arrival of my coworker, too haughty to use the hydraulic lifter, and I never dropped him. In the afternoons, I sat with him and Peter, helping with their homework, doing my best to explain the proper use of negative numbers; supplying the answer to the question, What is the past participle of “to go,” or indicating, as well as I could, the difference between a *Phylum* and an *Order*.

Often, when Jörn was sitting on the toilet or tormenting some child in the opposite wing, I sat and wondered about him, gazing at his collection of posters on the wall above his bed, mostly of the rock band KISS. An assortment of these arrived each month in his teen magazines, and when one was deemed worthy, we removed it, with infinite care, from its center staples. Then, taking off my shoes, I climbed onto his bed and stuck it with pink wall gum to a critically chosen spot.

One particular afternoon, sitting next to Jörn as he puzzled out some piece of homework, I realized that all my years of education had exactly prepared me to do this work; that at this moment in my life, I was perfectly useful. And I could not help noticing that I was profoundly happy, probably as happy as I have ever been.

A few years later I was very unhappy. I had just gotten married, but this was not the reason. Lydie and I were on our way to Liberia in the Peace Corps, but a number of complications, including an imminent civil war, detoured us to St. Croix in the Caribbean. We began a job there that made us both very unhappy. In fact, we felt less than useless.

Our job was a good job, a job of service, but a job also of extreme stress. To put it too briefly, we were responsible for nine orphaned or foster children, aged three to twelve—beautiful children, but children who had already endured more than we ever could. Perhaps our feelings of uselessness came from the knowledge of our own guilt and entanglement in

New World history, the ills of slavery and its racism reaching across the generations to trip us. We, the descendants of the slave-owning race, fresh-faced, happy, healthy, well-fed, thrilled by an adventure in the islands; the children, the descendants of the enslaved race, dirty-faced, unhappy, unhealthy, unfed, caught already by the woundedness of the islands. We did what we could.

Thankfully, we were given some time off, seemingly scant, but in hours and minutes, one-third of our time was our own. The work schedule followed a three-week cycle: three days on, two days off, three days on, two days off, four days on, one day off, four days on, then two days off before beginning again. (We learned a couple of years ago that the Vista Volunteers who now form the staff changed this schedule to seven days on 8 A.M. to 8 P.M., then seven days on 8 P.M. to 8 A.M.—in other words, every day on for twelve hours—which they find much easier, which tells me that if that schedule is better than our old one, then my memory of grueling days must not be far wrong.)

A particularity of the old schedule was that the work shift began and ended at 2 P.M. with a briefing of the new workers. Thus, during the dreaded and so-called four-one-four, the offgoing workers had exactly from the end of the meeting, sometime after 2 P.M. on a Sunday afternoon, to 2 P.M. on the following Monday afternoon to do whatever was necessary to heal themselves from the past four days and prepare themselves for the next four.

But this leads me from my point. My point is that I was unhappy. And Lydie was unhappy. In an effort to find an antidote, we turned to what had brought us together in the first place—painting. I can remember my father saying to us as we left for Detroit and then the plane south to the Caribbean, “I’m sure you’ll find a lot to paint.” And we did.

As our turn on a Sunday afternoon came, and we faced our scant twenty-four hours to ourselves, we asked ourselves, Where to? We answered, Out, out—open spaces are needed, air, sun, breezes. So thinking, we climbed into one of the

little cars kept for off-hour use and, quite literally, headed for the hills.

One afternoon, we found ourselves in the beautiful Danish colonial town of Christiansted on the other side of the island. We parked the car on a steep side street of charming, if dilapidated, Victorian gingerbread houses, tilting telephone poles, and much populated by great numbers of frightened stray dogs. We gathered up our big watercolor blocks, pencils, and X-Acto blades and simply walked out of town, uphill. Soon the red tin or tile roofs lay wrinkled below us, the overall yellow of the house walls peeking out between them and beneath the green of the palms, themselves revealed by the glory of the scarlet flamboyant trees in bloom. Should we stop here? No, a little further up; we wanted the island to ourselves. The

*Twenty-one years and six months have passed since we began painting pictures on St. Croix, and I sigh each time I think of that great joy we had. Painting was useless work, but, strangely enough, for those twenty-four hours, we were incredibly happy.*

air became clearer, the breeze stronger, and the whole of the town sat below us, cupped by the piercing blues of the Caribbean sky and sea.

We sat down on rocks among acacia trees, cooled by that perfumed breeze of mangos and rot, listening to and watching the life of the town, and drawing. The hours passed. At last, backs and knees creaking, we gathered our things, walked down the cooling hill and drove back to the west side of the island. There, from the brick steps of a tumble-down house not far from the apartment where we stayed, we again watched the life of a town, this time the poor town of Frederiksted, lit up by the horizontal rays of the setting sun in yellows and greens to stop all speech.

After the sun had plunged below the horizon, remarkably speedily, the way it does in the tropics, we turned the lights on, and the various chameleons and

cockroaches watched us as we painted late into the night, painting the scenes we had observed in the afternoon—painting not, however, in the colors of the Caribbean, but in emulation of their glory, we used the purples and oranges and greens of the *fauves* we loved so much and for a time produced paintings remarkably alike.

Twenty-one years and six months have passed since we began painting pictures on St. Croix, and I sigh each time I think of that great joy we had. Painting was useless work, but, strangely enough, for those twenty-four hours, we were incredibly happy.

A year and a half later, I faced a decision. I perched on the proverbial horns of a dilemma. It was four in the morning. I sat in the family room of my in-laws’

house in the town of the university where I was expected to attend the first day of orientation for that year’s matriculating medical school students.

You see my dilemma. Was I to seek usefulness by becoming a doctor, looking for the happiness that I know comes with usefulness? Or should I continue to paint, happy now, though useless, knowing that uselessness might one day end my happiness, going beyond uselessness to become selfishness, pointlessness, good-for-nothingness?

As you know, I chose to paint.

Let me talk about thankfulness. I was extremely thankful to open this letter dated July 3, 1991.

Dear Chris,

Thank you for *CHARLIE PARKER*. I quite love it, but need to talk with



you—or should I say: I quite love it and want to talk to you.

Please call me (collect is okay) . . .

Thanks.

Sincerely,

Richard W. Jackson, Editor

I remain ever thankful for Dick's wit, guidance, company, and wisdom.

Of course I am thankful that Norton Juster and Michael di Capua, our editor, together had the idea to invite me to illustrate Norton's wonderful text for *The Hello, Goodbye Window*. Their combined good humor, great experience, and will continue to delight me. Furthermore, I thank everyone at Hyperion, you who are here and you who stayed in New York; your expertise is everything this book required.

And I thank every editor I have worked with, every art director, every designer, in fact, everyone working in all of the several houses I have published with. I thank everyone, everyone, everyone, everyone. I thank you all.

Thank you.

But I say thank you a bit sheepishly. Why? Because I know that you do not really do the work you do for me, particularly. I know this. I am not dumb. If you are good at what you do, and I know you are, then you write, edit, and design books because it is what you like to do; you do it not for me but for yourselves.

I would feel equally foolish saying, "Thank you for eating that delicious oyster po' boy."

"Thank you for curling up with that Agatha Christie novel."

"Thank you for getting ten hours of sleep."

Or you to me, "Thank you for each day, nine to five, winter, spring, summer, and fall, fifty weeks of every year, day in and day out, painting hippos."

It just doesn't sound right.

No, I want to thank someone else.

I have in mind one person I would like to thank, and I hope she does not mind if I invest in her all the thanks I would express to all of you.

It was like this. You remember that lovely letter from Richard Jackson. *Charlie Parker Played Be Bop* was published a year later. It received mixed reviews; some glowing, some damning. Nevertheless, I was invited to read my book at a neighborhood bookstore (now driven out of business by the Barnes & Noble that opened a block away, prompting one friend to lament, "Now where will we go to be ridiculed and condescended to by the sales staff?") It was that kind of bookstore.) Still, someone there read my book, found me, and invited me to do a *story time*.

I had never done a *story time*.

I was willing, however, so at eleven o'clock on a Sunday morning in late fall, I wandered the nine blocks to the store. My audience consisted of a two- and four-year-old brother and sister, and another girl, also about four. My memory is a bit hazy, but certainly one of them toddled and mumbled, the other two spoke, and I remember leggings and a fair amount of stripes. I know the parents were not much in evidence, probably taking a breather in the self-help section. The toddler sat in my lap.

There was one more person in the audience, a rather taller person, but she only comes into focus later, as my attention was fixed, at that moment, at about knee level. As I had only one book to my name, I brought others along to read, including *Little Fur Family*.

I brought *Charlie Parker Played Be Bop*, of course, and its reading went very well. On the second time around the children "bopped" when I told them to "bop" and "boomba-ed" when I asked them to "boomba." The four-year-olds wanted to know about the cat. The toddler toddled.

So the morning went merrily.

After the appropriate half-hour spell, the

parents returned to gather their children, giving me a passing smile as they rooted in their baby bags for bagels.

Someone approached me; an elegant woman in blue, silver-haired and bangled.

She spoke quickly and with a bit of a pleasant twang that I could not quite place. She said to me, "I can't believe you're here."

I smiled blankly.

"Why not?" I said.

She clarified. "I was in town last night to hear Wayne Shorter," or perhaps it was another jazz personage. She went on, "And I just saw this book, and I couldn't believe my eyes, and then I look in the paper, and I see you're going to be reading here, and I was going to go home last night but I just had to stay over to see you this morning. I can't believe you're here."

What could I say? Nothing.

She said, "How did you write that book?"

I still did not know what to say, but I know I said something, for we spoke several minutes, and then, with a rustle of coats and scarves and well-wishes, she left.

I gazed after her. I knew that she mentioned she used to live in the city, now lived on Long Island, shared a place on 90th Street (my own street), and came in for concerts. I believe her husband was a pilot. I think she worked with books. I guessed she was into bookstores, libraries, schools, and lots and lots of jazz.

But I did not catch her name.

Her name is Karen Breen.

I mention this story not because it might be amusing, but because it is essential. I know now from many sources that Karen spent the next few weeks describing my book, reading my book, presenting my book to whomever she could make stand

continued on page 17



# Belpré Author Award Acceptance Speech

## The Beauty of Us All, Together

Viola Canales

Thank you. Thank you to the Belpré Committee, to REFORMA, ALSC, and ALA. Thank you to my beloved family and to Wendy Lamb, my wonderful editor, who made my book *The Tequila Worm* possible.

And thank you *especially* to Pura Belpré, whose life's work—as a children's librarian, storyteller, and author—is a beautiful, brilliant example of creating light to illuminate, and thus empower, a previously ignored, unappreciated, and misunderstood culture and people, through the magic of telling their stories. Her spirit still shines, both upon the Latino community—strengthening our children with self pride and the possibilities for living compelling, fulfilling lives—and upon this nation, this whole world, really, by introducing and sharing with others the wonders and riches of our cultural traditions, our treasures.



**Viola Canales** is the winner of the 2006 Belpré Author Award for *The Tequila Worm*, published by Wendy Lamb Books/Random House. Her acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans on June 25, 2006.

Studies show that parents bond with their children by telling them stories, especially stories about their own childhoods, and by sharing the books they read and cherished growing up.

For far too long, too many of the stories Latinos in America have told their children have been painful ones, and too

many of their school books have either not included Latinos at all, or misrepresented them altogether. For instance, the story I remember most vividly, one my mother told *me* as a child regarding *her* growing up, was about one Saturday morning—how after working hard all week, picking cotton in the hot fields of West Texas, she'd taken her younger brother and sister to a café for a hamburger and Coke—a special treat—and how after sitting down at a table there, they'd waited and waited and how no one ever came to serve them, to take their orders, until the manager hurried over, tapped her on the shoulder, and pointed to a sign. It read, "We don't serve Mexicans."

My mother said it felt like her whole world shattered that instant. That she felt like bursting out crying. But didn't, couldn't, for she also felt she *had* to stay strong for her younger siblings—all born in Texas, like her, like their mother.

When *I* was six years old, I did burst out crying, almost every morning before leaving the breakfast table at home for the scary world of school. See, I didn't speak or read English, my Anglo teacher didn't speak or read Spanish, and back then, it was a time when we were punished for speaking Spanish, even in the school playground. Yes, my parents were both born here and both spoke English fluently, but they spoke only Spanish at home, out of traditional respect for my grandmother, who lived with us.

As for our school books, well, they seemed to always show people doing the strangest things as if on a completely different planet. They had these color pictures of Dick, Jane, and Sally with their dog Spot, and where they were forever telling Spot to run, or to *stop* running, *my* grandmother was forever telling the big statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe that occupied the bedroom we shared to make it rain or to perform some other miracle. Where Dick, Jane, and Sally lived with their parents as a nuclear family in a quiet suburb, I lived with tons of forever coming and going *tios, tias*, cousins, godparents, and *comadres* in a bubbling barrio, not to mention the *curanderas*, who sometimes came out of the clouds to cure cases of *susto* with a broom or

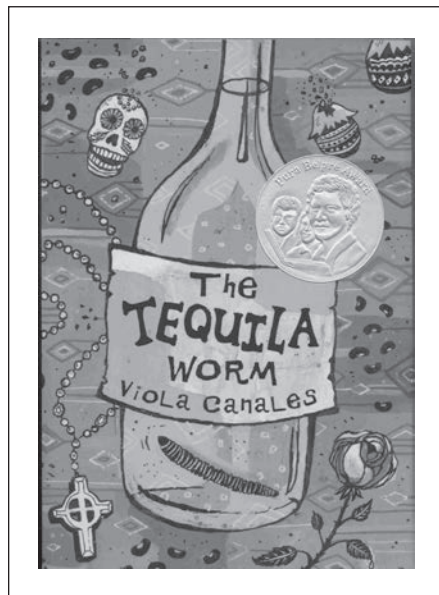
*The truth is we are one family. And this truth is at the very soul of Pura Belpré's vision, I believe: how through the telling and the sharing of stories—everyone's stories—we come to see how we're really all in this together.*

evil eye with a chicken egg, when the town's doctors couldn't.

The family name of Sofia, the heroine in my novel, is Casas, which means houses, or homes, in Spanish. In the book, Sofia only comes to appreciate the true riches of *her* home, when she finally leaves it, her barrio, *her world*, to attend a faraway boarding school on scholarship. There, she experiences taunting and racism, but she also discovers a new world of fabulous books, friends, and teachers, who help broaden her understanding of the wider world, of her own culture, and ultimately, of *herself*.

Over and over, as I've spoken to people who've read *The Tequila Worm*, I've kept hearing—from young and old, male and female, Latinos and others—how they too want to become part of Sofia's family, her home, which they find welcoming with warmth, wonder, and meaning. They long to sit at her family's table, to enjoy her Mama's delicious enchiladas and crispy *buñuelos*, but especially to partake in the telling of stories after-

wards, at the *sobremesa*, while drinking cup after cup of frothy Mexican chocolate, and reconnecting as a family.



The truth is we *are* one family. And this truth is at the very soul of Pura Belpré's vision, I believe: how through the telling

and the sharing of stories—*everyone's* stories—we come to see how we're really all in this together.

In a time when far too many think we should be erecting bigger and bigger walls to close our borders, it is literature that inspires us to build broader bridges instead—ones that open our eyes, our minds, our hearts. And in a time when a prominent person can dare suggest that people who have lost their homes to the horrors of Katrina are actually better off living on the artificial turf of the Astrodome, it is literature that we turn to—to remind us of the importance of remaining rooted in real communities, rich with the mystery, warmth, and magic of music, food, family, and cultural traditions, as well as those stories that can illuminate and strengthen our souls. For it's now time to begin building that beautiful, brilliant forever home, for *all of us*, together.

Yes, thank you, Pura Belpré for this. And thank you all. 🌹

## CALDECOTT MEDAL ACCEPTANCE SPEECH, continued from page 15

still for it, regardless of age or desire. She pushed, she shoved, she cajoled on behalf of that book. I have heard many times of her remarkable persuasion at that year's Notables meeting.

I know that if Karen had not spoken then, there, I would not be speaking here, now. I have no doubt that one little thing has led to another thing and another thing until it is a big thing. I am sure it happens this way all the time—one person has an enthusiasm for one book, thereby creating success or failure.

You may say, "Well, someone else

could have come along and discovered that book."

Yes, perhaps. But that is not what happened. What happened was that Karen Breen liked my first book, gave it a start in the world of librarians—the most important world for children's books—and made my career.

I know Karen is not the only person to do this. Of course not. You all have or you all will for my books and for many others. So I thank all of you. I thank all of you, with special thanks to all of the members of the Caldecott Committee.

So now, finally, I must finish this discussion. It is inconclusive, as it is only anecdotal. Still, I can say that over the years my happiness levels for painting have remained steadily high. My usefulness levels go up and down but now, with this award, are at a peak. I assert, and I hope it is clear, that my thankfulness to all of you is off the charts.

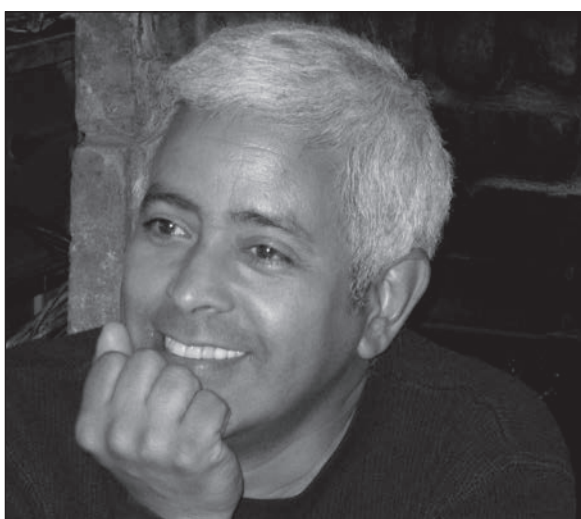
I know I am happy. You are telling me I am useful. And for that I am very, very thankful.

Thank you. 🌹

# Belpré Illustrator Award Acceptance Speech

## The Art of Picture Books

Raúl Colón



**Raúl Colón** is the winner of the 2006 Belpré Illustrator Award for *Doña Flor: A Tall Tale about a Giant Woman with a Great Big Heart*, published by Knopf/Random House. His acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans on June 25, 2006.

What is art? Can you always tell? Who decides what it is? Is it the shared experience between the one who makes art and the one who takes a look at it? In today's visual world, children's picture books must certainly be art. I've always thought of picture books as if they were movies, every scene frozen in time. Just as in a Hollywood film, you need a script, a picture book has its own story. Just as a film director blocks out scene after scene, the illustrator needs to pick and choose the final pictures to visualize the story. And just like in film, where you need to have the right actors playing their part, the picture book artist has to give each character his or her face. Heck! The artist has to design the costumes, the background, the décor (or lack thereof) that appear in each scene. It's a whole movie production. That's what's *fun* in illustrating a book! On the other hand, *dead-*

*lines*—not fun! But then again that's part of the experience, that's the challenge, and challenge keeps the blood running!

Good writing keeps the blood running, too. When the story is great, it makes an illustrator's job much easier. When I read a good story, picture after picture will pop into my head, almost automatically. Ideas start flowing like a constant river, nice and easy. They keep coming, and there's no stopping them.

(Except if the phone suddenly rings, which is another challenge for any creative person.) But once your creative mind is on track, you know this is the story you want to illustrate. And that's the way I choose the picture books I illustrate.

The editor sends a manuscript, I read it, I love it, I choose it.

Pat Mora made life easier for me when she wrote *Doña Flor*. I had worked with her before on the *Tomás and the Library Lady* picture book.



I practically sketched the initial ideas without any revisions. The writing was so clear, precise, and beautiful that every visual arrived effortlessly. *Doña Flor*'s face and figure were inspired by the art of a great American artist, Francisco Zúñiga, whose work I've admired for years.

I also did a bit of research on Southwestern art to get the mood for the story. So I guess all this Southwestern and Latin American flavor makes it appropriate to accept this Pura Belpré award.

Being what some fellow *boricuas* (Puerto Ricans) would call a "Newyorican," I was pleasantly surprised to know that the award bears the name of the first Latino librarian to serve in the New York Public Library system. So, needless to say, it's a great honor to receive this acknowledgment.

I thank my editor Isabel Warren-Lynch for pairing me with *Doña Flor*'s creator, Pat Mora, once again. I thank Melissa Nelson for her invaluable assistance as designer and art director, and of course all of the ALA members, and voters who must have read hundreds and hundreds of beautiful picture books to impossibly decide on which one to choose for this great award.

To all librarians out there, keep those kids reading. I promise I'll do my best to help you out; I'll keep drawing and reading.

Thank you. &



# Sibert Medal Acceptance Speech

## Unlocking a Sub's Inner Secrets

Sally M. Walker



**Sally M. Walker**, author of *Secrets of a Civil War Submarine: Solving the Mysteries of the H. L. Hunley*, published by Carolrhoda Books/Lerner Publishing, is the recipient of the 2006 Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award. She delivered her acceptance speech at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans on June 26, 2006.

On Sunday, January 22, 2006, at 9:45 P.M., our telephone rang. Given the late hour, I assumed it was one of my children. But the response to my "Hello," wasn't the "Hey, Mom" I was expecting.

Instead, a woman's voice asked, "Is this Sally Walker?" I replied, "Yes." Then she asked, "Is this Sally M. Walker, the author?" Although I again politely answered, "Yes," I was really thinking, "I can't believe a teacher is calling at almost ten o'clock on a Sunday night to ask if I'm available for a school author visit."

The woman went on to identify herself as Kathy Simonetta, chairperson of the 2006 Robert F. Sibert Award Committee. That's when my heart started pounding. By the time Kathy said, "I am pleased to inform you that we have selected *Secrets of a Civil War Submarine* as the winner of the 2006 Sibert Medal," enough tears to sink the *Hunley* for a fourth time were rolling down my cheeks. I can only describe my emotional response to Kathy's news as the same exhilarating mix of laughter and tears that I experienced

following the birth of my two children.

The next day, a friend sent me a congratulatory e-mail addressed to "Sally Walker, Queen of the World!" That pretty much sums it up.

The *Hunley* submarine has had several crews during her lifetime. They include the men who invented and operated her, as well as the crew of scientists who discovered her and are conserving her now. *Secrets of a Civil War Submarine* was greatly enriched by the *Hunley*'s scientific crew, who generously shared their time and knowledge with me.

Like the *Hunley*, *Secrets of a Civil War Submarine* would never have left port if it hadn't been for its capable crew at Carolrhoda Books. Shannon Barefield, my extremely talented editor, steered me with wisdom and humor. Danielle Carnito's design was as elegantly streamlined as the submarine's hull. It marvelously conveyed suspense and mystery. Laura Westlund's illustrations and Cynthia Zemlicka's photo research provided readers with detailed images of the submarine, her recovery, and the exploration of her interior. I owe all of them a million thanks for their contributions.

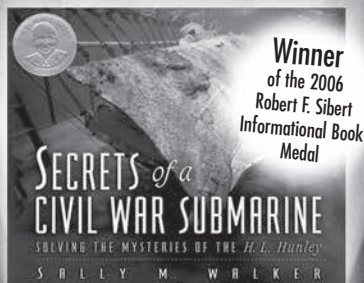
I first met the *Hunley* in 1995, when I read a small newspaper article that stated the submarine had been found. My story radar started blipping. The ingredients for a good story were there, but I recognized that the time to tell the *Hunley*'s story hadn't yet arrived. The *Hunley*'s discovery was an interesting fact, but to properly tell her story, I needed to know her inner secrets. At that point, no one knew what was buried inside.

Eight years passed. By then the *Hunley* rested in a state-of-the-art research laboratory. The archaeologists had excavated many intriguing objects, including eight skeletons and a warped twenty-dollar gold coin with a message inscribed on it. Clearly, the *Hunley* was ready to talk. That meant it was time for me to begin serious research.

For me, every research project is a marvelous adventure, jam-packed with



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surprises. In South Carolina, I lay on the platform beside the *Hunley* and stuck my head inside. As I peered into the crew’s claustrophobic compartment, I quickly realized that I would *not* have been brave enough to climb aboard for a dive.

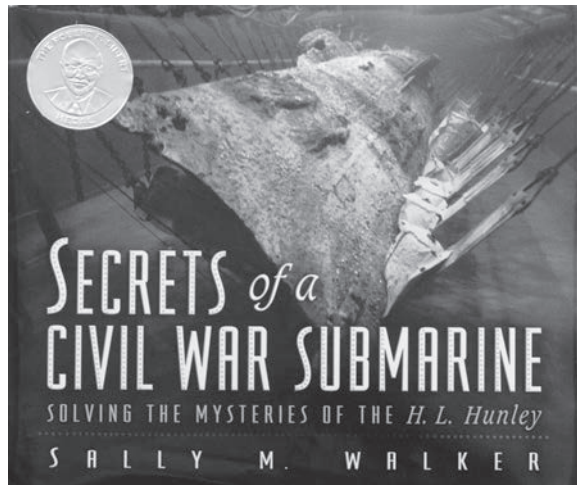
In the National Archives in Washington, D.C., I held original documents handwritten by the men who had built and served on the *Hunley*. Touching those documents was like being struck with tiny lightning bolts. Each document charged me with delight.

One unexpected research moment in the National Archives has become a treasured memory. As I waited for *Hunley* documents to be delivered to my table, I thought about my family. My father was a brilliant storyteller who told riveting nonfiction stories, mostly about American history. He would have loved *my* stories about the *H. L. Hunley*. I suddenly wished he was in the archives with me for my *Hunley* research adventure. Unfortunately, my father passed away more than twenty years ago.

As I thought about him, I decided to take a short research detour. My father had often told me stories about my great-great grandfather’s service in the Civil War. So, instead of requesting more *Hunley*-related documents, I asked to see my great-great grandfather’s Civil War records. They arrived at my table inside a trifold envelope. The first thing I

saw when I opened the envelope was my father’s handwriting. He had accessed the same records, and on the inside of the envelope’s flap, had signed his name, address, and the date: June 1950. Although time and death separated us, the connection was there. I am truly baffled when people say research is boring.

The best informational books, the ones that stick with you long after you close



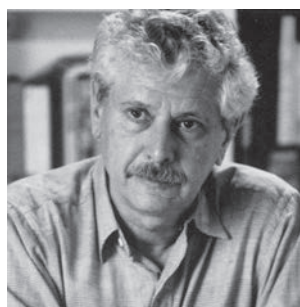
the book, are more than a collection of facts. They are stories carefully woven to worm their way into a reader’s heart. I am grateful that the *H. L. Hunley* and her various crews, past and present, gave me the material to weave such a tale.

I am also grateful to the Association for Library Service to Children and the 2006 Sibert Committee. In awarding me this medal, you have given me stories that I will tell for the rest of my life. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I’m glad you enjoyed your ride on the *Hunley*. 🐙

# May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture

## The Past Isn't Past: How History Speaks and What It Says to the Next Generation

*Russell Freedman*



**Russell Freedman** is the author of many books, including *Children of the Great Depression*, *The Life and Death of Crazy Horse*, and *Lincoln: A Photobiography*, and the 2006 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecturer award recipient. He delivered the Arbuthnot address on April 28, 2006, at the historic Kimball Theater in Williamsburg, Virginia.

As someone who has written a number of books about American history, allow me to say at the outset that I am thrilled to be standing here, about to deliver the Arbuthnot lecture in Williamsburg, where the spirit of so much of that history resides. I wish to thank Noreen Bernstein and everyone else at the Williamsburg Regional Library for making this evening possible. And I'm grateful to the members of the Arbuthnot Committee for including me among the select band of authors, editors, critics, and librarians who have given this lecture in the past. It is an extraordinary honor.

It's also, I must admit, a sobering responsibility. The Arbuthnot lecturer is charged with, and I quote, "preparing a paper considered to be a significant contribution to the field of children's literature." Now, that's enough to give anyone pause.

Once you get over the initial rush of being anointed by the Arbuthnot committee, the realization dawns that you will be facing an audience waiting expectantly to hear your own personal significant contribution to children's literature. That's when vanity crumbles in the face of doubt and apprehension, when you begin to feel that you might want to head for the hills.

The truth is, when I sit down to write, I simply want to capture the reader's attention and tell a story about a person, an event, or a series of events that for some reason happen to interest me. I want to lose myself in the world where those events took place, and through the transformative power of language, make that world, that person, those events live again for my readers. If I said to myself, "Today I'm going to make a significant contribution to children's literature," I would probably lose my mind. Certainly, I would never get a word written.

So this evening, let me begin with a story. When I think about the past—why it beckons to us, what it has to say—I sometimes recall the opening scene in Giorgio Bassani's novel, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*. A group of friends are on a weekend outing in the countryside north of Rome when the child

among them, a nine-year-old girl named Giannina, asks, "Where are we going?"

Her father takes a hand off the steering wheel and tousles Giannina's black curls. "We're going to take a look at some tombs that are more than four or five thousand years old," he replies, in the tone of someone about to tell a fairy tale, unconcerned about the accuracy of his figures. "Etruscan tombs," he adds.

"How sad," Giannina sighs, pressing her head against the back of the seat.

"Sad? Why? In school, haven't they told you about the Etruscans?"

"In our history books, the Etruscans are right at the beginning, next to the Egyptians and the Jews."

On the road up ahead, groups of local young people, boys and girls on their Sunday stroll, are walking toward them. Some are strolling arm in arm, some are singing, and they're all laughing, chattering, and staring with curiosity through the windows of the strangers' car.

"Papa," Giannina asks, "why is it that ancient tombs are not as sad as new ones?"

"It's obvious," her father says. "People who've just died are closer to us, so we love them more, you see. The Etruscans, after all, have been dead for a long time, so long it's as if they had never lived, as if they had *always* been dead."

Giannina is silent as she watches the last of the laughing young people pass the car and continue down the road. "But now that you've said that," she says softly, "you remind me that the Etruscans were also alive once, and so I love them as much as everyone else."

In this way, the child reminds her elders that, however long ago, the Etruscans did really live; they were alive once, just like everyone else. And the tombs they visit that afternoon bear out Giannina's simple reflection, the remarkable tenderness of what she said. The walls of the tombs are decorated with polychrome plaster casts of all the familiar, trusted objects the Etruscans used in their everyday

lives—axes and hoes, ropes, scissors, spades, and knives, bows and arrows, even hunting dogs and marsh birds, concrete evidence of the activities that distinguish the quick from the dead.

Looking at those artifacts, the visitors can imagine what the Etruscans' frequent visits to this ancient cemetery must have meant to those who are lying there now in their funeral beds arranged in niches along the limestone walls. They would have come from their nearby homes, probably on foot, in family groups, as troops of young people such as those the visitors had just encountered on the road, as pairs of lovers or friends, people alone—just as today, in provincial Italian villages, the cemetery gate is still the place where every evening stroll is bound to end.

And so the questions arise: What does it mean to have lived? Why do we feel such a strong connection with the past? "It was Giannina who prepared us to understand," says the narrator of Bassani's novel. "It was she, the youngest, who somehow guided us."

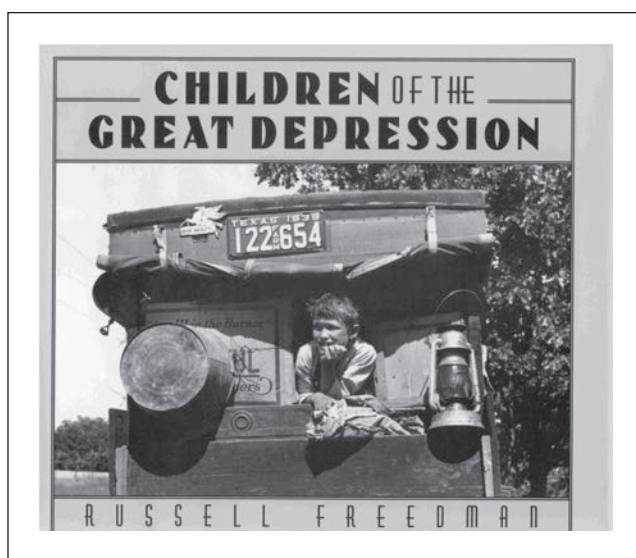
Recently I was chatting with my ten-year-old godson, Jacob, when he startled me by asking, "Uncle Russell, do you realize that there are people alive today who were born in the nineteenth century?" Jacob had been poring over his copy of the *Guinness Book of World Records*, and among all the superlatives—the biggest, the fastest, the strongest, the smartest—he had chosen the oldest survivors among us as a topic of conversation. He was fascinated by people who had lived in what to him must seem the ancient past. "Have you known anyone who was born in the nineteenth century?" he asked.

"When I was growing up," I told him, "I knew many people who were born in the nineteenth century." Jacob looked at me with amazement. "That's awesome," he said.

My stepmother, Rose, celebrated her one hundredth birthday in November. Every Sunday, Rose completes the *San Francisco Chronicle* crossword puzzle in

ink—and that's before breakfast. She's an avid political junkie who watches CNN, listens to NPR, and worries about the state of the nation. She disapproves of George W. Bush, and yet she is quick to show every visitor the telegram she received from the president when she turned one hundred.

Among the visitors to her assisted-living apartment are small groups of teenagers, two or three at a time, who want some contact with older people and have volunteered to take part in an intergenerational program. They meet with Rose, as they do with other elders, and interview her. They ask about her life, her parents



and grandparents, and what it was like to be young in San Francisco so long ago. Rose sits in a wheelchair, but her voice is sprightly, her memory sharp, and her sense of story better than ever.

When I was born, Herbert Hoover was president. I remember reading his obituary when he died in 1964. And I came across the most remarkable fact. When Hoover was an infant, his nanny was an elderly woman who was born while George Washington was still alive. The history of the United States encapsulated in a couple of lifetimes!

I once read (I believe it was in Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock*) that if a person could stand at one end of a city block and hold the hand of someone from the previous generation, who in turn is holding the hand of someone from the gen-

eration before that, and so on down the line, Socrates could be standing at the end of the block with room to spare. You could yell to him down there, and maybe he would reply. "Hey, Socrates! Here's a question I've been meaning to ask you!" The distant past, ancient history, isn't all that distant.

What accounts for our yearning to be connected to the past? Developmental psychologists tell us that we come into the world with the desire to know where we came from, and with the powerful human need for narrative, what Vivian Gornick has called "the compelling hunger to make sense of experience through words spun out in a story." That's how we understand our own lives, by telling stories about the things that happen to us. We tell stories in order to affirm our being and our place in the scheme of things. The human brain seems programmed to do this. "All sorrows can be borne," said Isak Dinesen, "if you put them into a story."

Storytelling is what unites all genres; fiction, nonfiction, war reporting, lecturing, whatever—it's all storytelling. Anyone can tell a joke, that's storytelling. So is history. That's why the word "history" is made up mostly of the word "story." Historians have always been storytellers. Going all the way back to Homer and beyond, historians have been men and women who were telling, singing, reciting epic poems about the past. They were storytellers sitting beside the fire inside the cave, holding their audience spellbound on a winter's night.

When Christopher Columbus stepped ashore in the Caribbean on his first voyage of exploration, he met a people called the Tainos, the dominant ethnic group in the West Indies at that time, the first Native Americans that Europeans encountered. The Spaniards were astonished by the Tainos' elegant and reverent sense of history. They preserved their ancient cultural traditions at feasts called *areytos*, which means "remembrance" or "to recall." The purpose of these feasts, with their festive songs and



dances, was to bring back to mind and heart everything that gave these people an understanding—an appreciation—of their roots on earth. “Their songs,” wrote a Spanish observer, “are their books and memorials, transmitted from generation to generation, from fathers to sons, and from those who are alive today to those who will arrive . . . Thanks to their *areytos*, they could recall things of their past.”

When I was researching my biography of Crazy Horse, I discovered that a cousin of his, a fellow named Amos Bad Heart Bull, was a tribal historian who recorded the history of his people, the Oglala Sioux, by means of pictographs, or picture-writing. I was able to use many of his pictographs as illustrations in my book.

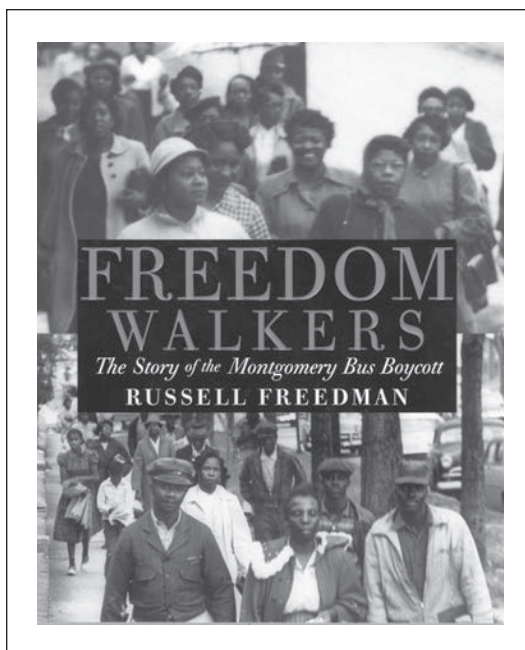
Amos was working in an ancient tradition. Every Sioux band had a duly appointed historian who drew picture histories of important events. The pictures were drawn on deerskin, on buffalo or elk hides, or later, toward the end, on cloth or paper, or in the pages of ledger books, as was the case with Amos. Those pictures told the stories of battles, hunts, ceremonies, buffalo stampedes, and all sorts of memorable happenings. The Sioux had a saying: “A people without history is like wind on the buffalo grass.”

On ceremonial occasions, or when important visitors were present, the band historian would be called on to recite the story of some great deed or testing. Unrolling his big picture skin, he would recount the event with oratorical flourishes and with the aid of his pictographic portrayal. As the story unfolded, it took on subplots, unexpected twists, and turns. The magic was in the telling, as it is today.

Children would gather round and sit at the historian's feet as he told the Sioux hero tales that he himself had heard as a child. He was telling them stories about the past, their own past—the history of the Oglala Sioux. It's clear why those stories held their attention, why those youngsters leaned forward in joyful anticipation: they wanted to find out what was going to happen next in the past.

If some kids today feel that history is

boring, it may be because they are subjected to boring accounts of the past, delivered by bland, noncommittal, committee-written, politically approved textbooks. Some textbooks I've seen convey no personal voice, no clearly stated point of view, no coherent vision. Often there seems an uncertainty about how much to include, an anxiety about what groups might object. And with the current emphasis on standardized testing, youngsters are being force-fed names, dates, and facts, stripping historical events of all human meaning. That's not history. History should be as compelling as any adventure story.



Kids want to know how their world came to be, how events in the past affect their lives today, how the experiences of others can help them understand themselves. A knowledge of history can give youngsters a sense of their place in the world, a sense of home. When you lose your connection to the past, you lose your sense of place. You become a refugee, a wanderer in no-man's land.

I believe it was William Faulkner who said, “The past is not dead. It isn't even past.”

Unfortunately, for an alarming number of American youth, the past scarcely exists. A few years ago, graduating seniors from the nation's top fifty universities were asked to name the American general who won the Battle of Yorktown—that

crucial battle which secured the colonists' triumph over British forces in the Revolution. To make things a little easier for those graduating seniors, they were given four choices: William Sherman, Ulysses Grant, Douglas MacArthur, and George Washington.

So which general was at the Battle of Yorktown? Two out of three graduates didn't have the faintest idea. Many of them picked Grant. And six percent picked MacArthur.

According to another survey carried out for the National Constitution Center, an independent nonprofit group, more young Americans could name the Three Stooges than the three branches of government.

So it appears that many of our country's educated youth are suffering from historical amnesia. America's historical memory is fading. Some educators say that the problem is getting worse because history and civics are receiving less attention in public schools, the result of a nationwide focus on reading and math, which are the easiest and least controversial subjects to test, and which take up an increasing part of the school day. Thanks to the No Child Left Behind Act, which imposes sanctions on schools where students fail to make annual progress on reading and math tests, many schools are reducing the time spent on history and social science, geography, music, and art, or even eliminating those subjects.

David McCullough, the popular historian, is one of many who have faulted the law. In testimony before a U.S. Senate committee last summer, McCullough said, “Because of No Child Left Behind, sadly, history is being put on the back burner or taken off the stove altogether in many or most schools, in favor of math and reading.”

My current book, *Children of the Great Depression*, is about an era that rarely makes it onto the schoolhouse stove, much less into the kitchen. It's an era that shaped the nation we live in today, that still exists in living memory, and that most kids know little or nothing about. And it's an era that I personally

can remember. I was born two weeks before the stock market crashed in 1929. According to a family story, I once asked my mother what time of the day I was born. "At 11:30," she replied.

"At night or in morning?"

"You were born at 11:30 at night."

"Did I wake you up?" I asked.

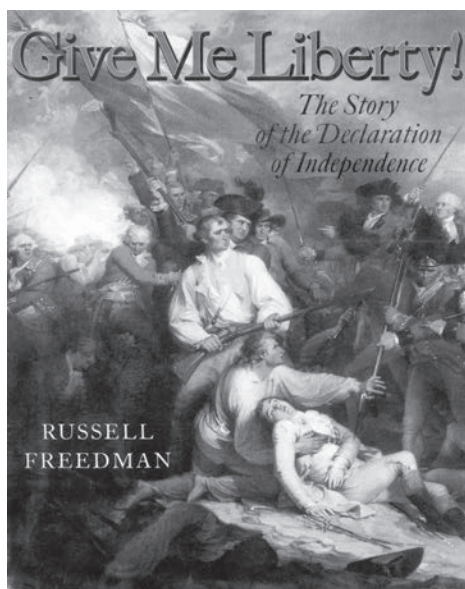
When I entered Mrs. Springer's kindergarten class at Cabrillo Elementary School in San Francisco, the United States was still struggling to emerge from the Depression, the worst economic catastrophe in the nation's history. My family was fortunate. My father had a good job as manager of the West Coast office of the Macmillan Publishing Company. But I can remember the shabby clothes worn by some of my classmates, the kids who had nothing to eat at lunch except the free orange and carton of milk handed out by the school, and the closed and shuttered shops along Geary Street.

One day my mother took me with her when she visited a friend who lived up a steep flight of stairs in a neighborhood I had never visited before. I sat quietly in a corner as they talked. When we rose to leave, the two women embraced. And I watched as my mom pressed some money into her friend's hands. Outside, down the stairs, back on the sidewalk, my mother began to sob. She turned to me, tears smudging her makeup, and commanded, "Don't you dare mention this to anyone!"

Early one Sunday morning, while my mother and sister were still sleeping, my father said, "Let's take a drive." We drove out along the old Bayshore Highway toward south San Francisco, over a rise in the road, and in a valley down below, we saw an encampment of the homeless—a Hooverville, as they were called—hundreds of ramshackle shanties, crude tarpaper shacks built of loose boards and flattened boxes, and people moving among them, mostly men, as I recall, but families, too, and some kids, and here and there, wisps of smoke spiraling up toward the highway, where cars were speeding past.

"What are they doing down there?" I asked my father. "They're making coffee," he said. It was that small detail—making coffee, something I observed every morning in my own warm kitchen—that put the scene down below into a meaningful human perspective.

I knew early on that I wanted to be a writer. I was lucky enough to be growing up in a house bursting at the seams with books. And not only that, Dad often invited authors home for dinner. John Masefield, the poet laureate of England, had dinner at our house when I was a boy. So did John Steinbeck, Margaret



Mitchell, William Saroyan, and others famous and not-so-famous.

My father would stand at the head of the table with a huge leg of lamb, my mother's specialty, on a platter before him. He would cut and bone and slice that impressive hunk of meat with artful flourishes and with a running commentary on the finer principles of carving. Propped up on the dining table beside him as he carved and talked was a book, a book on carving, published by Macmillan, no doubt. As I said, books played a big role in our household.

We fed some well-known authors, but when I was in the fourth and fifth grades, their books didn't mean much to me. My literary hero at that time was Howard

Pease, who wrote exciting adventure stories about boys who ran away from home and sailed all over the world in the merchant marine. Howard Pease was my J. K. Rowling. And Stuart Ormsby, the hero of *Shanghai Passage*, was my Harry Potter. I believe that I read every book Howard Pease ever wrote. Sure, Margaret Mitchell, William Saroyan, and John Steinbeck had dinner at my house, but Howard Pease—he was a *real writer*! When I learned that he actually lived in our neighborhood, San Francisco's Richmond District, I wanted my father to invite *him* to dinner. But no luck. I guess he wasn't a Macmillan author.

At that time, I wanted to be an author like Howard Pease. Howard and me, traveling all over the world, gathering material for our books. Eventually, my writing ambitions changed. You have to figure out what your strength is. You have to find your voice. But I'm lucky that I've always known what I wanted to do. How many people can say that? Writers and artists, who are rumored to be so loony, are actually the most stable people in the world, because they've known all along how they want to spend their lives.

One rainy autumn evening a few months ago, I visited the Children's Book Council in New York, where I discussed my work with a group of young editors. One of them asked, "Why do you choose to write for children rather than adults?" I tried to explain what attracts me to this field. But the best answer, the answer I wish I had given, if only I had thought of it at the time, is, "Why do *you* choose to edit books for children rather than adults?"

A book of history or biography for young readers offers an author unique challenges and opportunities. Such a book is essentially a distillation of the subject for an audience eager to be introduced to that subject. It need not be comprehensive or definitive. It isn't expected to offer a bold new interpretation of its subject or troves of previously unknown information. On the contrary, it aims for brevity and tries to avoid oversimplification. It attempts to probe deeply, if not at great length. It seeks to avoid stereotypes. And it strives to evoke the past,

even the distant past, with the vitality, the immediacy, of a personal memoir.

I welcome the discipline a book such as that imposes on the author. It's something like writing a sonnet: your words must fit within a certain format, and every word counts. And I regard such books as a specialized and demanding art form. The art lies in the selection and arrangement of documented facts, in

father, a third grader, who says that he loves history and that you're his favorite author. They drove all the way from Houston because he wanted to meet you. So pay special attention to him."

So I was properly alerted when this rather short third grader and his dad reached the signing table. The kid was holding two of my books, my biographies of Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Delano

"Well then, why was he able to become president?" I expected the kid to say something such as, "Because he was such a strong leader," or "Because he made such good speeches." But no, his answer was: "Roosevelt became president because Herbert Hoover wasn't able to handle the Great Depression."

So the moral is, never underestimate a young reader.

*When I sit down to write I simply want to capture the reader's attention and tell a story about a person, an event, or a series of events that for some reason happen to interest me. I want to lose myself in the world where those events took place, and through the transformative power of language, make that world, that person, those events live again for my readers.*

the closely observed and painstakingly constructed narrative, and in the imposition upon those facts of the author's unique sensibility. It requires a feat of the imagination as well as diligent research to make the past live again for the reader. It's a much greater challenge to convey the spirit and essence of a life in a hundred pages than to write a multivolume, "definitive" tome that includes every known detail about that life.

I'm sometimes asked what age level I write for. I suppose it depends on what you mean by "age." Anyone who writes for kids, whether fiction or nonfiction, is writing for the kid that still resides within himself. So, the reader looking over my shoulder as I write is me. I write for myself and for other kids just like me. I write for Miss Tennessee Kent, the fifth-grade teacher who once encouraged me. And I write for my grown-up friends. If a book isn't good enough for them, it isn't good enough for kids, either. My books are aimed at anyone who can read at that level—all the way up to senility.

Speaking of age levels: Recently I was signing books at Texas A&M when Donna Norton, who organized that conference, came over and whispered to me, "There's a boy standing in line with his

Roosevelt. He handed me the Lincoln biography to sign.

"Were you able to read this yourself?" I asked.

"Sure!"

"Did you find it difficult?"

"Not really. Ask me a question."

"OK. How tall was Abraham Lincoln?"

"He was six feet-four inches tall."

"You're right," I said. "And what is Lincoln especially famous for?"

"He signed the Emancipation Proclamation."

"Now how about that book," I said, pointing to the Roosevelt biography. "Were you able to read that one yourself?"

"Sure! Ask me a question."

"What was wrong with Franklin Roosevelt?" I asked.

"He couldn't walk, because he had been crippled by polio."

Biographies have always held a powerful attraction for readers of every age. It's not difficult to understand why. We are fascinated by other peoples' lives because we are constantly learning how to live our own lives. And those people who have had to struggle in some way, to overcome personal weakness or character flaws, to confront adversity, to reach a goal—they are the ones who engage our imaginations most deeply. Their stories offer the most profound insights into human character and behavior. And of course, biography lends itself to the art of narrative, to the endlessly fascinating spectacle of character meeting circumstance and either changing events or being changed by them.

It's been said that writing a biography is almost like falling in love. Maybe it's more like being married, because you live with your biographical subject for such a long time. And while you know what attracted you to that subject in the first place, the person changes and reveals aspects of him or herself that you certainly didn't anticipate. It becomes an authentic emotional relationship. The person you are writing about comes to life in your imagination.

Phyllis Rose, the biographer of Josephine Baker and Virginia Woolf, has observed, "Biographies *are* a little like marriages. You really only have room for one or two." So I guess I'm in real trouble since, at last count, I had written fourteen full-length biographies.

I've learned that no matter how well-documented a life may be, there are always plenty of missing pieces, unresolved questions of motive and behavior that can never be answered. The biographer is inevitably confronted with the mysteries of personality, the inconsistencies of



character, the paradoxes and ambiguities and contradictions of human behavior. For example, some folks are unusually inclined to fabrications about their past. At least three of my own biographical subjects lopped a few years off their ages at one time or another. As Elizabeth Hardwick has noted, it's the biographer's job to unstitch the embroidery with which so many people decorate their lives.

Babe Didrikson Zaharias was, in her time, the most famous woman in America after Eleanor Roosevelt. But when she died in 1956, the press didn't seem to know how old she was. Over the years she had changed her birth date a few times—on her application for the 1932 Olympic Games, on visa applications, in interviews, even in her autobiography. She was so successful in this deception that confusion over her true age followed her right to the grave.

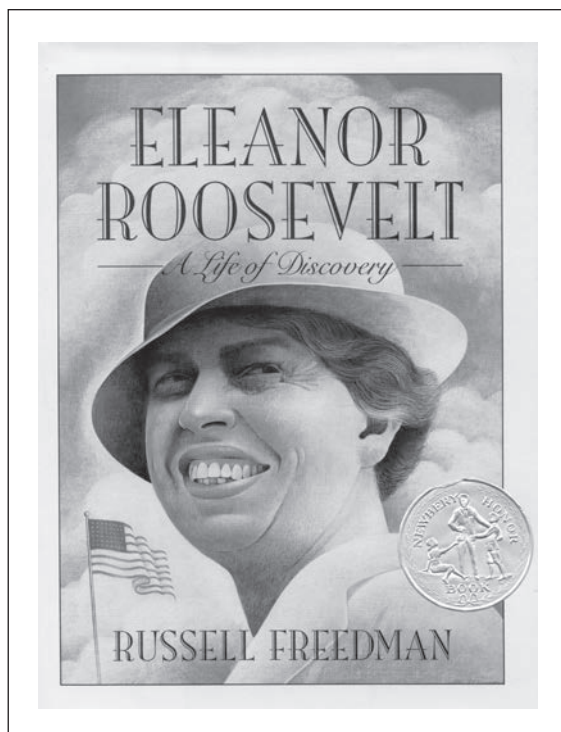
I visited Babe's grave in Beaumont, Texas. At the entrance to her burial plot in Beaumont's Forest Park Cemetery, an official Texas state historical marker informs the visitor that she was born in 1914, the birth date claimed in her autobiography. Just a few steps away, engraved on her marble tombstone, her date of birth is given as 1911. According to her baptismal certificate (her birth certificate is missing), she was born on June 26, 1911.

No life can be recaptured wholly as it was. Every one of my own biographical subjects has been described by a close friend or associate as so complex a personality as to be ultimately unknowable. Abraham Lincoln was, and I quote, "The most secretive—reticent—shut-mouthed man that ever lived," according to his law partner, William Herndon, who knew him as well as anyone. "Franklin Roosevelt was not a simple man," said Francis Perkins, FDR's secretary of labor and one of his oldest friends. "He was the most complicated man I ever knew."

While I've never considered writing a biography of Ronald Reagan, I was surprised to find that Edmund Morris, his official biographer, called him—the Ronald Reagan we thought we knew

so well—"the most mysterious man I have ever confronted. It is impossible to understand him. I went through a year of depression because I felt that with all my research, how come I can't understand the first thing about him? I only came out of this despair when I found out that everybody else who had ever known him, including his wife, is equally bewildered."

Writing biography is an art because there is no clear-cut way to do it. A convincing narrative of a life relies as much on imagination and intuition as on scholarship and research. You study the documented



evidence, you immerse yourself in your subject's life and times, and as you work, a picture slowly emerges in your mind, almost as though the person is present with you in the room. At some point, the material begins to speak to you, and you begin to make choices, to shed your preconceptions and rid your mind of stereotypes.

That's essential if you want your subject to live on the page. It's vital to get rid of stereotypes when you are writing for children. A stereotype is alienating. It makes it more difficult to understand the experiences of others. A good book should make it easier.

I don't pretend to aim for total "objectivity" when I'm writing about the past. Historians always maintain a double vision, of the past and the present, trying to recreate the past as truthfully as possible, while enjoying the privilege accorded to posterity—the ability to judge and evaluate. Truth has to be sought not only by scholarship but, I believe, by fair-mindedness, an attempt to measure the subject against certain ethical, social, and historical ideals. The historian endeavors to be objective. He does his best. But he knows that his assessment of the evidence is inevitably colored by his own life experiences and system of values.

When I'm working on a book, I try to visit many of the places where the events I'm writing about took place. In Washington, D.C., at the boarding house across the street from Ford's Theater, I saw the four-poster bed in which Abraham Lincoln died. They had to lay him out diagonally across the cornhusk mattress that wasn't long enough for his six-foot, four-inch frame. In the French village of Coupvray, I saw the bed in which Louis Braille was born, built into an alcove of a two hundred-year-old stone cottage that is now a small municipal museum. They've tried to keep everything in that cottage just as it was when Louis, blinded at the age of three, was growing up there during the early 1800s.

I pressed my hand against the cool stone walls inside that cottage. I felt the wooden stools and heavy wooden table that stand in front of the fireplace, ran my fingers along the worn sink with its stone drainpipe running along the wall, climbed the narrow stone stairs to the garret bedroom, which Louis shared with his brother and two sisters. Outside in the courtyard, I entered the workshop where Louis's father made saddles and harnesses, where his tools are still neatly arranged on the wall above the worn wooden workbench, and where Louis, playing one day with those forbidden tools, accidentally blinded himself with an awl.

Venturing beyond the cottage, I listened to the gurgling brook, crossed the old

stone bridge, and climbed the steep stony street leading up to the village square, where today a monument to Braille stands. Later, back in New York, in my study, with the aid of my remembered impressions, I tried to recreate the scenes two centuries ago in which Louis, tap-tap-tapping with his little blind boy's cane, feeling his way, listening to every sound, learns to find his way around his home and the village beyond.

Research for my book about Confucius took me much further back in history. I traveled to mainland China, to the ancient market town of Qufu in Shandong Province, where Confucius spent most of his life twenty-five hundred years ago. Since Qufu today has no airport and no nearby train station, the old town, while flourishing at the center of a rich farming area, has remained relatively unchanged over the years. I was astonished to learn that the two main streets of Qufu intersect today exactly where they did when Confucius lived there. And not only that. Because this particular region of China has never been settled by invaders or conquerors, the ethnic makeup of the local people is pretty much the same as it was in Confucius's day. I would stand at that main intersection and study the faces in the passing crowd and imagine that those were the faces Confucius saw as he stood at that exact same spot two-and-a-half millennia ago.

Despite some difficulty in reaching Qufu, people do come from all over the world to pay homage to the philosopher. I spent a week there, drinking Confucius brand bottled water, eating Confucius cookies, buying Confucius souvenirs, and visiting the various temples, museums, and shrines dedicated to Qufu's favorite son. If I smoked, I no doubt would have been smoking the Confucius brand of cigarettes that were on sale everywhere. I visited the philosopher's birthplace, a small farming village about twenty miles outside the city. I lingered in the temple courtyard where he once held forth under an apricot tree as he lectured to the students who crowded around and sat at his feet. And I stood before his grave in a forest preserve just north of Qufu, where his son and grandson and other members of his family are also buried. It is said to be the oldest family cemetery in the world.

Standing there with a friend, I felt unaccountably moved.

Before leaving Qufu, I went back to that historic intersection for one last look. Overhead, a huge banner stretches across the street, displaying, in Chinese ideograms, a famous Confucian saying: "Isn't it a joy to greet friends who come from afar." That's what attracted me to the man—the uncanny sense that he could be a contemporary, for his voice rings clear and true down through the centuries. Surely he would have had something to say about the current culture of spin that has infected our language with toxic terms such as "collateral damage,"

closer than his contemporary Socrates, who is standing there down toward the end of the block.

"I just finished reading your book on Confucius," a boy in Brooklyn wrote recently. "It was very interesting. My favorite part was when Confucius went out to a field to practice archery, then went to the river to fish and sing. I was amazed that he knew 305 songs by heart."

Confucius wouldn't need an iPod!

So that's what made this ancient philosopher seem real to this kid—singing songs, shooting arrows, fishing in the river—

*History should be as compelling as any adventure story. Kids want to know how their world came to be, how events in the past affect their lives today, how the experiences of others can help them understand themselves. A knowledge of history can give youngsters a sense of their place in the world, a sense of home. When you lose your connection to the past, you lose your sense of place. You become a refugee, a wanderer in no-man's land.*

terms that are intended to conceal rather than inform.

"What's the first thing you would do if you could take over a government?" Confucius was asked.

"Without a doubt," he replied, "I'd want to call things by their right name. If we don't call things by their correct names, then words don't mean a thing. When words don't match reality, what is said isn't the same as what is meant. And when what is said isn't the same as what is meant, we can't think clearly and nothing is accomplished. Calling things by their right names makes it possible to speak truthfully about them."

As I read and reread Confucius's sayings in *The Analects*, he seemed to be almost leaping off the page, grabbing my arm, looking me in the eye. He seemed even

just as bas reliefs of bows and arrows, of hunting dogs and marsh birds, made the ancient Etruscans seem so real to Giannina, made her realize that, however long ago, the Etruscans really did live, like everyone else.

"I liked your book very much," the boy from Brooklyn continues. "What gave you the idea to write this? Was it the paper saying in a fortune cookie?"

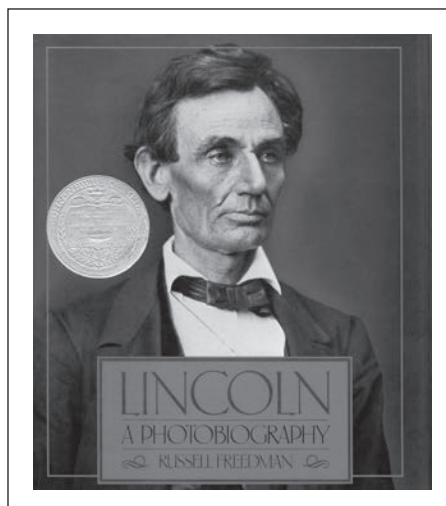
I often wonder if we ask too much of history. We want to believe that if we study history closely enough, we can avoid repeating it. Is that true? By studying the past, can we really avoid the errors of the past?

Would our nation's leaders have committed the United States to a futile war in Vietnam, a watershed event of my generation, if they had truly understood

that country's history and culture, its tenacious thousand-year struggle against foreign domination—domination by China, by France, by Japan? Today, three decades after the pointless loss of more than fifty thousand American lives and God knows how many Vietnamese lives, Vietnam is independent, the sky did not fall, and the biggest hotel in Hanoi is the Hilton.

Would the United States have invaded Iraq if our leaders had listened to the advice of people who actually know something about Iraq's history? Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser to President Gerald Ford and the first President Bush, warned the current administration, publicly and persistently, that an invasion of Iraq would open a Pandora's box of tribal and religious conflict. An invasion, Scowcroft predicted, would require a large-scale, long-term military occupation, possibly result in civil war, and "seriously jeopardize, if not destroy, the global counterterrorist campaign we have undertaken." Scowcroft did not look into a crystal ball. He made those predictions based on his deep understanding of the history of Iraq and the Middle East.

"If you study the past and use it to understand the present," said Confucius, "then you're worthy to be a teacher."



What finally matters most to me about the reading and writing of history is the way it deepens us, allows us to glimpse worlds so different from our own—the way an understanding of history extends our own feelings and compassion, enlarges our ability to recognize everyone's humanity.

Isn't that what all literature—novels, poetry, history, biography—wants to convey: a shared sense of humanity, a sense of the mysterious connections that link each one of us here today to all those who have come before?

The challenge for anyone who writes history for young readers is how to present the world to children honestly, as it has been in the past and as it is today, without fostering optimistic illusions and yet without threatening the safety of childhood; how to encourage the idealism of eager young readers, the better angels of their natures; how to shield them from cynicism and yet still give them forthright history.

At its best, a forthright book of history can be both inspirational and subversive. Reading such a book, an idealistic youngster may feel inspired to go out and change the world.

Surely, that is a goal we can all share. ☺

## The Women's National Book Association-Ann Heidebreder Eastman Grant

OPPORTUNITIES

**The Women's National Book Association-Ann Heidebreder Eastman Grant** is available for librarians interested in learning about the relationship between the library and publishing professions.

The WNBA offers a grant of up to \$750 for a librarian to take a course or participate in an institute devoted to aspects of publishing as a profession or to provide reimbursement for such study completed within the past year.

**Eligibility:** Librarians holding an MLS or its equivalent and having at least two years of post master's work experience in a library are eligible to apply. The primary criterion will be the likelihood of career benefit to the person taking the course.

**Deadline:** November 1, 2006

**For More Information:** Guidelines are available at [www.ala.org/work/pubs/eastman.html](http://www.ala.org/work/pubs/eastman.html) or contact the Grant Administrator, American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611; fax: 312-280-4380; [rtoler@ala.org](mailto:rtoler@ala.org).

PUBLISHING GRANT



# Serving Summer Reading Needs

## Twenty Years at the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library

*Robert Lehnert and Chris Cairo*

The Indianapolis-Marion County (Ind.) Public Library (IMCPL) has offered a summer reading program for children in Indianapolis since the end of World War I. In 1984, IMCPL began collecting performance data on this program. In 1990, it expanded and integrated this data and reporting activity by creating a system of library indicators to manage and report on the outcomes of its summer program. This quantitative data is viewed in conjunction with thousands of participant evaluations (qualitative data) to identify strengths and isolate weaknesses in the program. Based on this information, new targets for program enhancement are developed and implemented the following year. Using this method, the program continues to grow as unreached audiences are identified and added to the participant base.

In this way, IMCPL has established a twenty-year record of achievement serving the families of Indianapolis and successfully targeting special interest audiences. This article describes the summer reading program as it has evolved, the key features of the summer reading program performance indicator system, some notable successes, and several challenges now facing the program.

### The Indianapolis Summer Reading Program

IMCPL serves the city of Indianapolis, Indiana, and all of surrounding Marion County, with the exception of the small towns of Speedway and Beech Grove, as a result of the Uni-Gov reform of local governments implemented in 1973 by then-mayor (now United States Senator) Richard Lugar. The Uni-Gov legislation integrated all city and county services, with the exceptions of public safety and public education, into a unified city-county sys-

tem called the city of Indianapolis. As a result, IMCPL now serves the entire area of Marion County, currently a population of more than 860,000, through a system of twenty-two branches, a central library, and bookmobile services. Through a partnership, IMCPL extends the reach of its summer reading program to the Beech Grove Library, which began participating in 2003. The target population of the summer reading program is families with children. Although the program enrolls participants of all ages, the majority are juveniles between the ages of zero and fourteen.

The summer reading program uses two measures of participation to judge the success of the program: the student participation rate and the youth participation rate. The participation rate for both measures has remained between 23 and 25 percent during the past five years, meaning that the summer reading program presently serves about one in four individuals in the target population.

The student participation rate is the number of students in the primary or middle school grades participating divided by the total number enrolled in all public, private, religious, and charter schools in Indianapolis. In 2004, the number of participating students was 29,557 and the number enrolled was 122,044, for a student participation rate of 24 percent (29,557 divided by 122,044).

The youth participation rate is calculated as the number of youth ages zero to fourteen years participating in the program divided by the number of youth of this age residing in Marion County. In 2004, there were 43,913 youth ages zero to fourteen participating, and according to the census of 2000, 187,144 individuals ages zero to fourteen residing in the county, producing a youth participation rate of 24 percent (43,913/187,144). Of



**Robert Lehnert** is Professor of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis. He has worked with the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library (IMCPL) since 1990 to develop a system of performance indicators for the summer reading program. His other work on government performance indicators includes developing school district report cards in Indiana and measures of criminal victimization for the U.S. Department of Justice. **Chris Cairo** is Director of Project Development at IMCPL and has worked in public libraries for thirty-two years. In 1984, she began working for IMCPL as Coordinator of Children's Services and has developed the summer reading program in addition to other programs at IMCPL for the past twenty-two years.

the two measures of participation, the student participation rate is the more accurate one because of the difficulty of obtaining accurate population counts during intercensus years.

The eight-week program typically begins the first week of June and ends in early August. In Marion County, most schools are dismissed for the summer around Memorial Day. Branch librarians attempt to visit all public, private, religious, and charter schools in their service areas during the closing weeks of the spring school term to promote the program and encourage registration. During these visits, children are invited to register at their local branch immediately.

Branches are prepared to register these students and their family members three weeks before the program gets underway. Books can be checked out and read, but cannot be exchanged for points until the official start of the program. The age, gender, and zip code for every participant, as well as the school the student will attend in the fall, is carefully documented in each branch by staff, using laptops that are located at special summer reading registration tables. Additionally, branch librarians work onsite with the local daycare centers to register the classes of children and their caregivers in the program.

During program year 2004, IMCPL registered 45,571 children ages zero to seventeen and 13,484 adults who were eighteen or older for a total participation of 59,055 individuals during the program. In the ten-year period of 1996–2005, participation in the program has been stable. The average change in total participation has been zero percent, and it has averaged 59,049 participants.

Each year's summer reading program is organized around a theme and is incentive-based. Youth participate by earning points based on the difficulty of the library books they have read. These points are spent on a variety of prize incentives. In 2004, the theme was space exploration inspired by NASA @ your library,<sup>®</sup> a nationally touring exhibit that was awarded to IMCPL and displayed at a branch library. The prizes ranged from pump rockets to Mars mud to vouch-

ers and coupons for admission to local venues.

Even though the framework of the program remains the same, special initiatives may be developed that target certain groups of individuals whose participation has been tracked through the performance indicator system. For example, the Reading Giants and Junior Reading Giants programs, which serve high-school age and middle-school age young adults, respectively, target teen participation. The Reading Giants initiative is intended to raise participation among the difficult-to-reach teen readers. The Reading Giants program empowers teens to read to younger children and serve as their mentors for up to two hours of reading time. For their time commitment, volunteers can earn a savings bond. Local banks typically underwrite the savings bonds, and participants must write an essay on their experience as their final part in the program. In the first three years of offering this initiative, the Reading Giants read stories to seventeen thousand children, and the program issued nearly one thousand small-denomination savings bonds.

## Program Performance Indicator System

IMCPL began systematically collecting performance data about its summer reading program in 1984. In 1990, however, it expanded and integrated its data collection and reporting activities into a more comprehensive database system. By 2004, the data collection and analysis system had evolved into the performance indicator system now used to improve the overall comprehensiveness, effectiveness, and quality of the summer reading program. The following sections discuss the core values shaping the summer reading performance indicator system, illustrating the reasons why sources of information are collected and how they are used.

## Serving Every Child's Family in Indianapolis

The goal of the program is to motivate all families with children in Indianapolis ages zero to fourteen to join the program. Incentive programs such as summer reading serve as a relaxed structure

for families to learn to use books and follow a reading routine at home. In addition, a special bonding occurs between the adult and child who read together, which is critical to creating the desire to read and to form good reading habits. This reading partnership is core to the mission of the summer reading program in Indianapolis. Parental registration as a measurable indicator of the success of the program is just as important in the statistical landscape as is youth participation. To that end, including and tracking adult participation in the program has become a crucial performance indicator.

## Serving Families Living in Poverty

The summer reading program has traditionally targeted families living in poverty by undertaking special programs to enhance participation in this constituency. Staff members serving lower-income neighborhoods target families using their branch and make a special effort to visit all Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) classrooms to promote the program. Their special efforts include presenting entertaining promotional skits to students, providing literature and information about the program, and showing students examples of the summer reading program incentives and prizes.

## Achieving Gender and Age Equity

Recent studies indicate that girls and boys of differing ages read for various reasons and that girls are more prone to participate in reading than boys. Typically, boys need more tangible incentives beyond the value of reading a good book. To mitigate these differences, IMCPL has made efforts in its themed programming and in its selection of prizes that appeal to both genders.

## Working through Community Partnerships

The program relies on a set of partnerships developed throughout the years between IMCPL and the IMCPL Foundation (IMCPLF). Schools and daycare centers promote the program to their constituencies, businesses make important contributions of cash and in-kind products, and IMCPLF raises money each year to help cover the costs of the program. In 2004, IMCPLF con-

tributed 16 percent of the total cost of the summer reading program (see figure 1). In sum, the IMCPL summer reading program is an elaborate set of opportunities, partnerships, and relationships among local schools, daycares, businesses, and the library's foundation that are designed to motivate families and children to read.

### Achieving a Cost-effective Program

Although achieving the program goals mentioned previously is of primary importance, these outcomes must be attained within budgetary constraints. With the assistance of IMCPLF, the library monitors the costs of each year's program to ensure that a cost-effective approach to delivering the program is achieved.

The data derived from the performance indicator system provide information for two general types of reports—external reports that inform various constituencies about the summer reading program and internal reports that are used to manage the program and evaluate its quality. The primary external report is the summer reading program *Annual Report*, a multicolored publication that the library and the foundation share with community sponsors as a tool to cultivate additional donor support. Furthermore, the summer reading program figures reported in this article are used in the library's annual report and in other media releases.

The internal reports provide information to manage the program and assess quality of the information. One useful series of management reports is the branch-school and school-branch reports, which list by library branch how many students from each school registered at that branch. Because branches are organized to serve schools in their areas, this information is useful to determine whether the participation base is localized. The central library, for example, serves a large number of inner-city students residing nearby, but a substantial number of its participants come from throughout the city. Other branches, however, have almost 100 percent locally based participation.

Another internal report details which daycare centers are active from year to

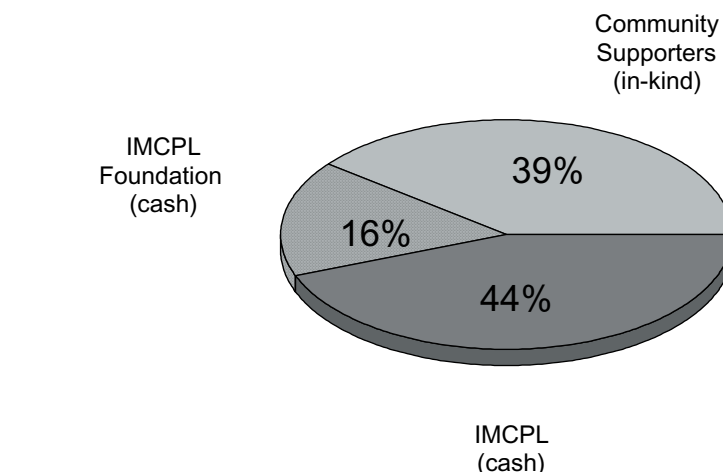


Figure 1: Contributions to the summer reading program by source and type, 2004

year. Library staff has found that the list of participating daycare centers is dynamic, because of the high failure rate of these businesses and their many organizational changes (consolidation, renaming, and reorganization). A similar report is done for all participating public, religious, private, and charter schools in the county. Schools, to a lesser degree than the daycare centers, show some turnover and change, especially among the religious schools. Since religious schools are the second-largest customer of the program, accurate information on the participating institutions is essential to program success. Finally, a series of data quality control reports is used to validate the information base used for the many external and internal reports.

The combination of external and internal reports makes up the performance indicator system for IMCPL's summer reading program. This system of multiple databases, analyses, and reports creates an information network with a high level of quality, strong internal integrity, and external validity. The system serves both external and internal constituencies and permits tracking of performance between years.

### Some Successes throughout Twenty Years

#### Serving Every Child's Family in Indianapolis

The summer reading program has expanded from a modest beginning in 1984, a year in which fewer than four

thousand children and no adults were enrolled, to one of nearly sixty thousand participants, including forty-six thousand children. Youth ages zero through seventeen years account for slightly more than three-quarters (77 percent) of participants (see figure 2). The program serves one in every four (25 percent) of all public, private, religious, and charter school students attending elementary or middle schools in Indianapolis; this figure has been stable for the past six years. In sum, IMCPL's summer reading program has a major influence on reading among the children of Indianapolis.

The effect of the summer reading program on library operations is clearly demonstrated by circulation figures for both children (birth through age seventeen) and adults (age eighteen and older), reported in figure 3. June and July show a spike in children's circulation, the period in which the program is operational. Although not all of children's circulation occurring in these summer months may be the direct result of the summer reading program, a mathematical model fitted to these historical data suggests that about 70 percent of the increase is because of the program. In March 2004, total library circulation reached nearly 1.1 million items, of which 347,788 (32 percent) were from the children's collection. In June 2004, total library circulation reached nearly 1.25 million items, of which 531,000 (43 percent) were from the children's collection. Average monthly children's circulation per summer reading participant was approximately twelve items.



## Increasing Participation among Families Living in Poverty

Although the summer reading program makes a special effort to increase participation among families living in poverty, the challenge to the performance indicator system has been to effectively measure that effort. Because IMCPL follows strict policies about the use of personal information to protect the privacy of users, no information on an individual's poverty level is collected by the summer reading program. Consequently, comparisons between the poverty level of participants and participation in the summer reading program are done at the aggregate, or group, level.

Since 1990, the summer reading program has used two methods to compare the poverty levels of users to their participation in the program: median household income and National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The former compares the median household income in zip codes with aggregate participation counts in those zip codes; the latter compares the number of students qualified for free lunch through the NSLP in IPS elementary and middle schools with the aggregate participation counts in those schools. NSLP provides free school lunches to children from families whose incomes are at or below 130 percent of the poverty level, according to the NSLP fact sheet at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/AboutLunch/NSLPFactSheet.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/AboutLunch/NSLPFactSheet.pdf).

Each method presents a somewhat different picture of the relationship between poverty and reading. The median household income method provides an estimate of the relationship for children ages zero to fourteen years, whereas the NSLP method estimates the relationship between poverty and reading for school-aged children. Both methods provide similar findings, but the best poverty indicator is the method that has the most current statistics. This changes from year to year. The data that follows is based on 2004 findings made using the NSLP method.

IPS students are the summer reading program's best customers, accounting for 23 percent of total student participation. IPS also has the largest percentage of students

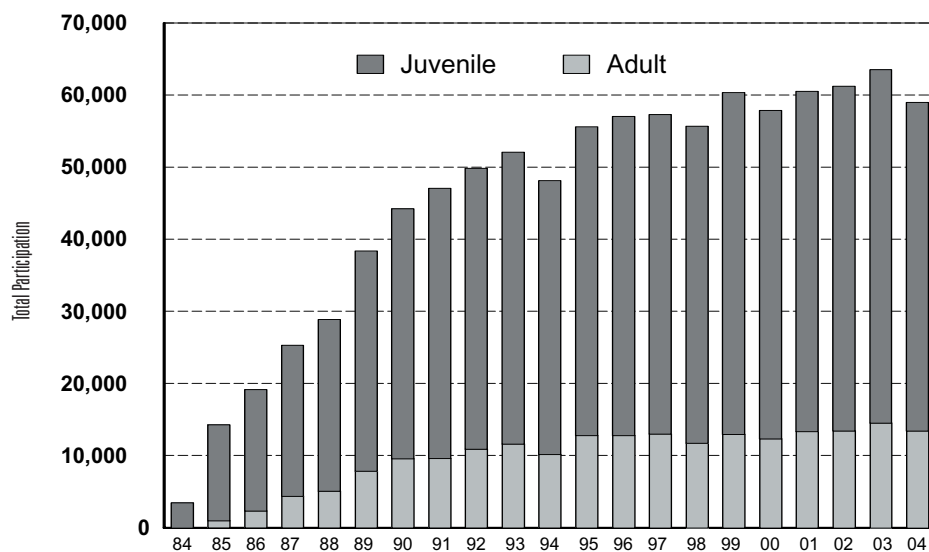


Figure 2. Total participation in summer reading program, 1984–2004

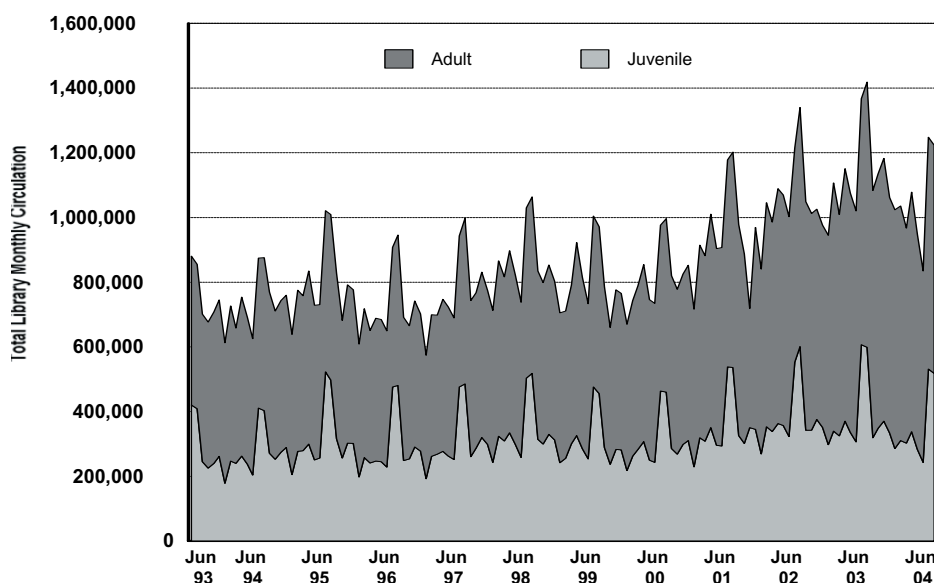


Figure 3. Juvenile participation and circulation, 1993–2004

living in poverty among all public, private, religious, charter, and home-school students in Indianapolis. Free NSLP data reported by the Indiana Department of Education at <http://mustang.doe.state.in.us/SAS/sas2.cfm?type=s&tab=sl&already=> for the seventy-two IPS schools showed that the median percentage of students living in poverty was 70 percent. In other words, half of the seventy-two schools had poverty rates greater than 70 percent and half, below. Dividing these schools into quartiles (groups of eighteen schools), the schools

with the lowest levels of poverty had free NSLP rates between 38 and 64 percent. The second quartile had poverty rates between 64 and 70 percent, the third quartile schools ranged from 70 to 75 percent poverty rates, and the poorest schools (fourth quartile) had free NSLP rates between 75 and 92 percent.

Figure 4 compares summer reading program participation rates in these seventy-two IPS schools with their free NSLP rates. Given the extremely high levels of poverty in these schools, the

expectation might be that their summer reading program participation rates would be extremely low. In fact, IPS has comparable summer reading participation rates to five of the eight other public school districts in Marion County that have substantially lower poverty rates. It is also noteworthy that the summer reading participation rate in the IPS quartile with the highest poverty rates (15.8 percent of students enrolled) is equivalent to that found in the quartile with the lowest poverty rates (16.8 percent). In sum, the indirect evidence provided by free NSLP data—and supplemented by the median household income data—suggests that the effort of IMCPL to increase the predicted level of summer reading participation of children living in poverty has been consistently successful.

It is a matter of institutional pride that each year the summer reading program has achieved this remarkable record. Yet some caution must be taken in these findings. IMCPL cannot control the data reported by the Indiana Department of Education, the Bureau of the Census, and the commercial vendors that reprocess the data collected by the census bureau. Since 1990, however, both state and federal statistical agencies have made substantial strides in improving the poverty data available to libraries today, which is encouragement to other libraries interested in examining the connection between poverty and reading.

### Achieving Gender and Age Equity

For the past twenty years of the program, girls and boys have participated at nearly equal levels. For the entire target population of youth from infants to fourteen years of age, the girl-boy ratio is fifty-three to forty-seven. Girls and boys participate equally in the preschool years (infants through age five), but the girl-boy ratio shifts as the participants reach school age. By the middle school years (ages eleven through fourteen), the girl-boy ratio is fifty-seven to forty-three (see figure 5). These figures have been stable since 1990, when the information became available.

### Working through Community Partnerships

Community partnerships are the lifeblood of IMCPL's summer reading program. The relationship with the city's

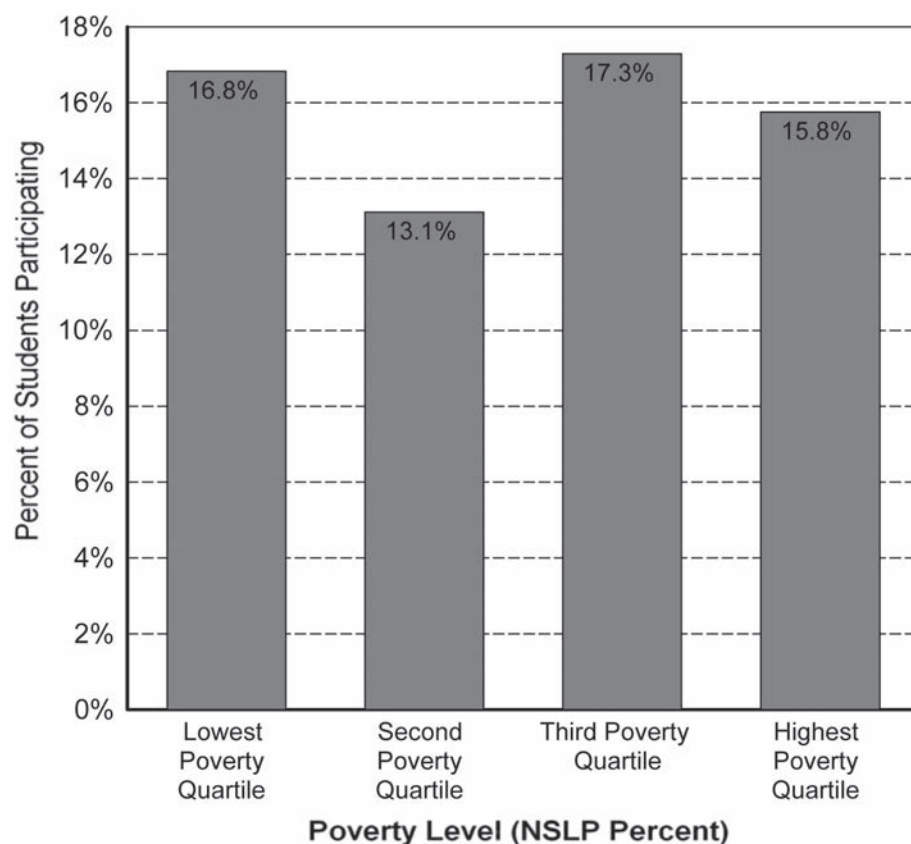


Figure 4. Poverty and participation, 2004.

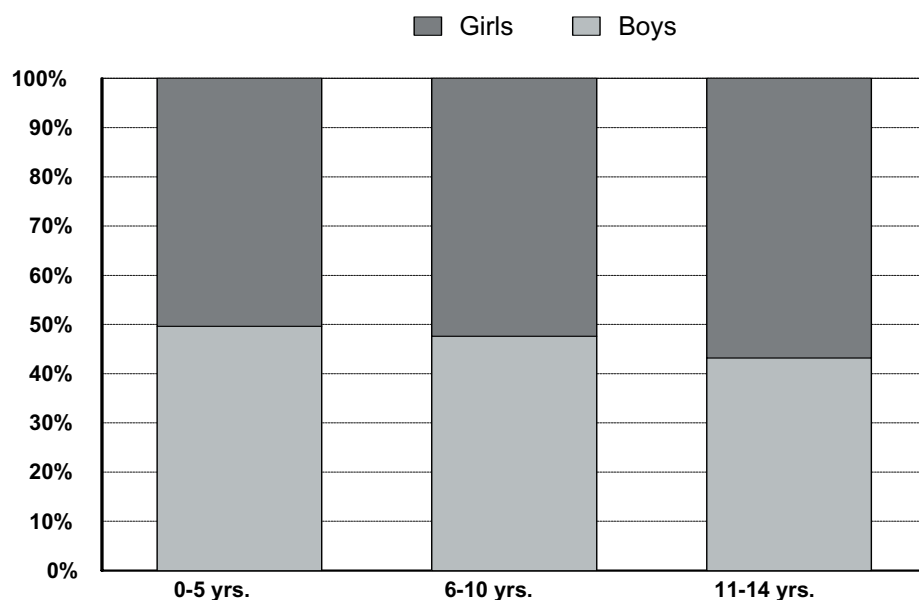


Figure 5. Participation by sex and age groups, 2004.

daycare centers is a good example of one partnership. In 2004, 121 daycare centers in Indianapolis registered more than forty-six hundred participants—children and adults—in the summer reading program. The median number

of registrations per daycare center was twenty-four. Registrations through daycare institutions accounted for 10 percent of children's registrations, and these participants were concentrated in the preschool age group.

In-kind contributions from businesses and private funds raised by IMCPLF provided support for this program. The library is fortunate to have a skilled foundation committed to raising money strictly for IMCPL purposes. The business community is also responsive to literacy needs and provides in-kind products as reading incentives. These two sources accounted for 56 percent of all resources expended on the summer reading program. Businesses, for example, provided Bowling for Fun prizes valued at \$88,000 and vouchers to the Indianapolis Indians Triple-A baseball team's Library Night, worth \$59,000. Other businesses and organizations gave IMAX movie passes, food and drink coupons, and admission passes to various entertainment venues, such as Indy Parks pools.

IMCPL maintained the summer reading program's quality and popularity while limiting its reliance on the library operating funds. Almost all of the library contribution represented additional summer help hired to deal with the administration of the program and the increased work load of the circulation desk, where more than 1 million items moved through due to the summer reading program.

Public, religious, private, and charter schools in the city are major partners in the program. In 2004, there were 315 schools, including 205 public schools in nine public school districts, eighty religious schools, twenty-one private schools, and nine charter schools that had at least one student participate in the program. Additionally, nearly thirteen hundred home-schooled students participated. In sum, the IMCPL summer reading program has a major influence on reading among the children of Indianapolis.

## Challenges

The system of library indicators and data developed since 1990 to serve the constituencies of the summer reading program has evolved. A changing library environment and shifts in priorities make the performance indicator system dynamic. At the close of the 2004 program year, IMCPL faced a number of challenges that called for a review of the reporting system that has served IMCPL well in the past. Three of these challenges deserve special note: budget constraints facing the library system, the emergence of new constituencies, and the need for information on new programs.

### Budget Constraints

It is not news to say that all local governments, and especially public libraries, face constant budget pressures to reduce costs and do more with less. In spite of its successes, the summer reading program performance indicator system is not immune to these pressures. Because the system of reports has grown in an organic manner, reflecting shifts in priorities, some parts of the system may not be as useful to the program as they once were. Presently, IMCPL is reviewing the utility of the indicator system to identify those parts that could be eliminated, reduced, or combined without sacrificing the integrity of the performance indicator system.

### New Constituencies

Indianapolis is now experiencing the arrival of new constituencies who speak English as a second language (ESL). These ESL populations are the fastest growing in the Indianapolis community, and the summer reading program has begun to adapt its program to the special

needs of the ESL populations through the efforts of a library immigrant outreach specialist. The present data collection system, however, does not yet incorporate measures of the size or impact of the program on these ESL constituencies.

### New Programs

Program participation among older teens has been encouraged in recent years by the Reading Giants and Junior Reading Giants programs, as discussed previously. Though these programs appear to be effective, there is only anecdotal information about their strengths and weaknesses. As in the case of the ESL programs, additional data and indicators on these teen-oriented programs are needed to keep the indicator system responsive to program needs.

At the close of the summer reading program each summer, IMCPL undergoes a program review and starts another cycle of program planning, data collection, analysis, reporting, and evaluation using its performance indicator system. The community looks forward to this annual program and depends on the library to design an activity that continues to provide a quality reading experience for local children. The program now has second-generation readers with participating parents who fondly remember their personal summer reading experience. There is an expectation from the community that the summer reading program will maintain its vitality. Through careful analysis, this significant evaluative effort is safeguarding the program for future generations. &

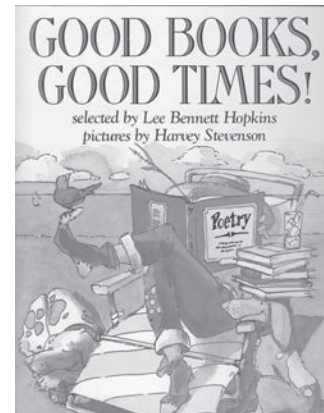
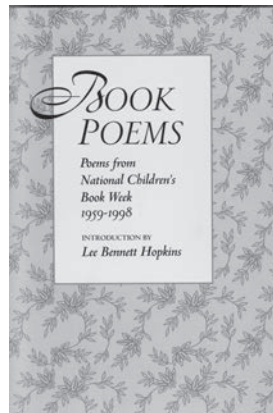
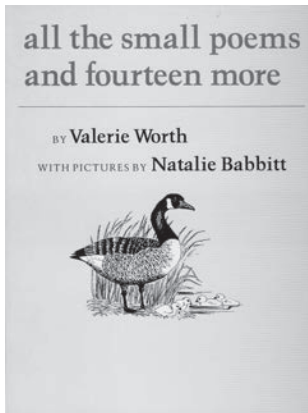
*The authors wish to recognize Melanie Wissel, Tami Edminster, and Dale Drake for their contributions to the annual compilation of IMCPL's Summer Reading Report.*



# A Place for Poetry

## Celebrating the Library in Poetry

Sylvia M. Vardell



Contemporary poetry for children is available on many topics, including the topic of the library itself. Poetry can be the vehicle for highlighting the unique resource that is the library while providing a reminder of the special power of the genre for children, too.

Because poems are generally short, they lend themselves to quick sharing as openings or closings for story times or special events. Because they are spoken word art, they lend themselves to oral or choral reading and can involve children in active participation in the poem performance. And because poems are intense containers of images and experiences, they can make a powerful point (about libraries, books, and reading) in very few words.

Finally, by choosing poems showcasing libraries, we can also celebrate both the library and poetry itself, during National Poetry Month, National Library Week, and School Library Media Month (all taking place in April), or any other time of the year. Here we will consider a selection of several poems about libraries and librarians as well as creative ways to share and promote poetry with children.

In recent years, we have experienced a renaissance in the pub-

lishing of poetry, with greater general interest in poets, poetry books, poetry jams and slams, poetry Web sites, and National Poetry Month. Why? What does poetry do for us? What is it about life's big and little moments that calls for a poem? At weddings. On greeting cards. In the movies. At moments of great happiness or deep sadness.

Bernice Cullinan, Marilyn Scala, and Virginia Schroder remind us that "Poetry is a shorthand for beauty; its words can cause us to tremble, to shout for joy, to weep, to dance, to shudder or to laugh out loud."<sup>1</sup> Poetry is brief and full of interesting language, but the emotion or experience in a nutshell is what gives poetry its power. Amazingly, poetry does this in fewer words than any other genre. Unlike other genres, we often return to the same poems again and again. We can cherish one poem throughout a lifetime, gaining new meaning from it as life experiences color our perceptions and understanding.

### The Value of Poetry

Why make poetry a priority when there are so many things competing for our time and attention? It is a rich tradition that has stood the test of time and nurtured us from the cradle



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onward. Nursery rhymes and playground verse are a natural part of childhood. They help children move forward in their literacy development. Indeed, children's book author and literacy expert Mem Fox writes, "Rhymers will be readers; it's that simple. Experts in literacy and child development have discovered that if children know eight nursery rhymes by heart by the time they're four years old, they're usually among the best readers by the time they're eight."<sup>2</sup>

Poetry does so much for children still developing their language skills. It introduces new vocabulary and figurative language, reinforces phonemic awareness, is rich in imagery and sensory language, and is stimulating to the imagination.<sup>3</sup> It is meant to be spoken and heard and thus provides practice for oral language development, listening, oral fluency, and choral reading and performing. Poetry has value for anyone at any age, but for children, it offers even more benefits. As children grow in their knowledge of language and literature, poetry is ideal for their developing minds and hearts.

In addition to all these cognitive benefits, exposure to poetry also provides emotional benefits. Sharing poetry can reduce stress, increase laughter, provide comfort, offer inspiration, give relief, mirror emotions, and reinforce identification—even for adults. Sharon Korbeck reminds us, "As librarians and teachers, we need to set this pattern. Don't analyze [poetry] too much, but rather enjoy it for what it is—a unique presentation of timeless and universal topics. Think of [poetry] as psychology without the guilt, songs without the music, art without the illustration."<sup>4</sup>

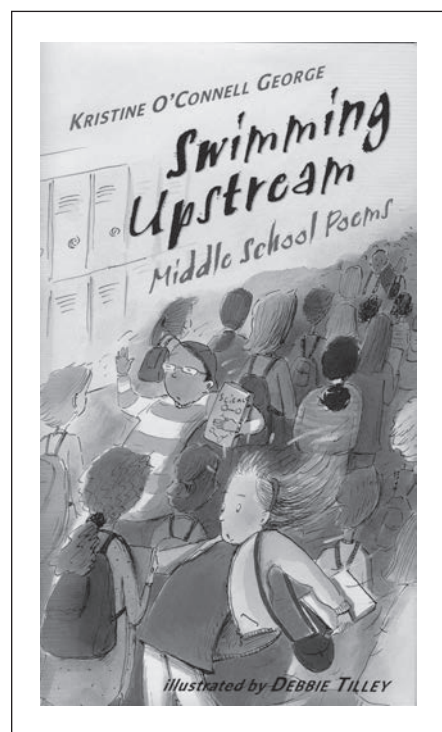
## Poetry at the Library

Poetry can be just the vehicle for highlighting the value of libraries for celebration events such as National Library Week, School Library Media Center Month, or other times throughout the year. By choosing poems for showcasing the topic of libraries in particular, we are celebrating libraries as well as poetry itself. What follows is a selection of thirteen contemporary poems for children by some of the most acclaimed poets writing for young people, focusing on

libraries, librarians, and library books. Each poem is briefly described and suggestions are provided for reading the poem out loud, as well as for possible follow-up activities to use with children.

**Dakos, Kalli. "When the Librarian Reads to Us" from *Put Your Eyes Up Here: And Other School Poems*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003.**

In the three stanzas of this poem, Dakos uses strong rhythm and repetition to convey the "goose bumps" that children get from hearing good stories. It's a perfect poem to chant together or read aloud, echo-style, with the children repeating



each line after you read it aloud. Gestures can be added for effect, shivering and rubbing their shaking arms every time the words "goose bump" are spoken. Make a poster of the poem with illustrations provided by the children themselves. Display it at the entrance to welcome guests to the library or in the story-time area to use as an opening for group sessions.

**George, Kristine O'Connell. "School Librarian" from *Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems*. New York: Clarion, 2002.**

In this quiet, sensitive poem, George paints a picture of a particularly caring

librarian who knows just what books to recommend to each reader. Read it aloud, softly with a long pause between stanzas. Even better, have a student volunteer to read it out loud. This may prompt a discussion of favorite sad stories, complete with tissue bookmarks. As a follow-up activity, make bookmarks listing favorite sad stories or gather a collection of unusual bookmarks you can find.

**Giovanni, Nikki. "ten years old" from *Spin a Soft Black Song*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1971.**

Giovanni's poem is from the perspective of a ten-year-old African American child making a scary solo trip to the library. After reading the poem aloud, use four voices or parts to read the poem in parts: one for the first-person narrator, one for the boy's dialogue, one for the librarian lines, and one for the line spoken by "another lady." Mark each reader's lines with a highlighter to help them see their lines clearly. Find a copy of one of the Doctor Dolittle books by Hugh Lofting that the poem refers to and share it with the children. (They may be more familiar with film adaptations.) If possible, locate a stereoscope or viewfinder to demonstrate this device mentioned in the poem. Consider working together to create a National Poetry Month time capsule to capture today's poems for the future. Students can submit favorite poems or their own original writing. Put them in the time capsule and have a ceremonial sealing, not to be opened until National Poetry Month the next April.

**Glenn, Mel. "Eddie Sabinsky" from *Split Image: A Story in Poems*. New York: HarperCollins, 2000.**

This poem is from a verse-novel full of poems, many focused on a teen volunteer, Laura Li, working in the school library. Although the book as a whole is best suited to teen readers, this stand-alone poem is appropriate for audiences of all ages. It's the musing of one student (Eddie Sabinsky) on the role of libraries as places for work or as places for escape. This poem lends itself to reading in two groups in a call-and-response style of choral reading, alternating line by line, until the final stanza of three lines that the whole group can read together.

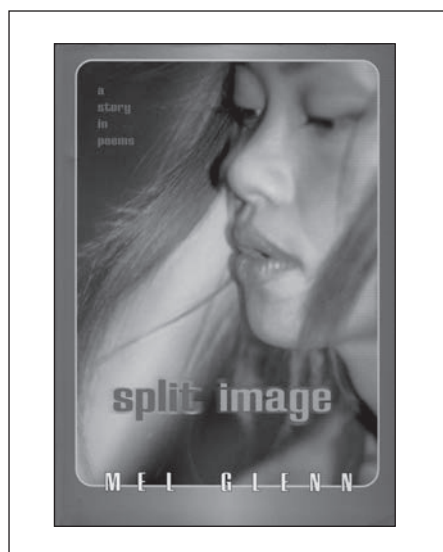
Afterward, following the formula of Eddie's poem, children may enjoy working with a partner or as a group to create their own, using the couplet openers:

*"If there were . . ."*

*"There would be . . ."*

Then, read their poems aloud and type, print, post, and distribute them—with the poets' permissions, of course. Send these poems to your state or local representative or another government official to demonstrate the value of libraries to children. Read the poem as part of the morning announcements or feature it in a library newsletter.

**Grimes, Nikki. "At the Library" from *It's Raining Laughter*. New York: Dial, 1997.**

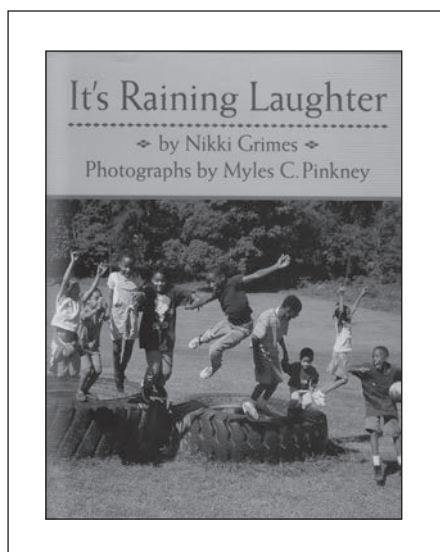


In this poem, we see examples of how library books can both stimulate the imagination and empower the reader. This poem also lends itself to reading in two groups, by couplets. One group reads the first two lines, the other group reads the next two lines; for the rest of the poem, continue to alternate couplets between the groups. Afterward, children could work together to create a mural or sidewalk-chalk art depicting the wonders found in books (for example, those mentioned in the poem: crystal seas, hiding pirates, talking birds, flying children, and walking trees, among others). Pair this poem with Grimes' Danitra Brown books about a "strong and brave brownskin

girl." Children can discuss other favorite characters they see in themselves from poems or stories.

**Herrick, Steven. "Lord of the Lounge" from *The Simple Gift*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.**

This is one freestanding poem from a verse-novel about an Australian teen living on his own, here finding comfort in a library. This free-verse poem seems best suited to a solo voice reading. Try reading it seated in a soft lounge chair holding the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, which Herrick refers to in the poem. With older kids who are familiar with the novel, discuss the points of view presented in the poem (rule makers, rule breakers, and rule avoiders). Look for other verse-novels that include references to books and read-



ing, such as *Love That Dog* by Sharon Creech or *Shakespeare Bats Cleanup* by Ron Koertge.

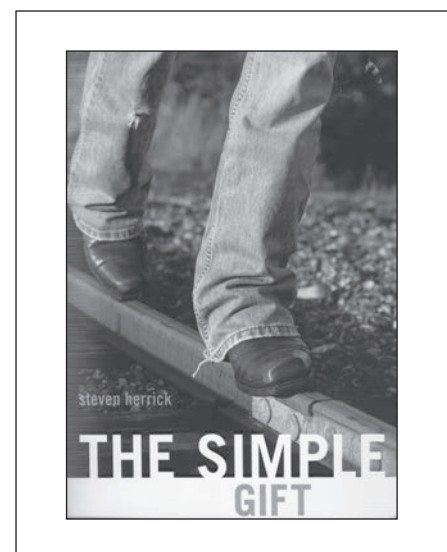
**Lewis, J. Patrick. "Necessary Gardens" from *Please Bury Me in the Library*. Orlando, Fla.: Gulliver/Harcourt, 2005.**

This eight-line poem is an acrostic with each letter of the word "language" used to begin a line of the poem. After reading the poem aloud once, find eight volunteers, one for each word and line, to "pop up" and read each line wherever they are seated. In fact, with each word and line on a large card or mini-poster, this

poem can be performed "popcorn" style, with the words shouted out in nearly any order, for a spontaneous, creative alternative. This is one poem among many gems about books, reading, and the library—the theme of the anthology. If children enjoy this acrostic form, challenge them to try writing their own acrostic poems with book-related words of their choosing. If you have a button-maker, this poem can even fit on a button to promote the library, books, reading, and poetry.

**McLoughland, Beverly. "Surprise" from *Good Books, Good Times!* ed. by Lee Bennett Hopkins. New York: HarperTrophy, 1990.**

This short poem describes the reader's surprise at how closely one can identify with a good book. After reading the



poem aloud, invite the children to whisper the parenthetical line "the hidden you" for greater effect in subsequent readings. For a real twist, the words to this poem can also be sung to the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell." Just replace the song lyrics with the words of the poem. You don't have to be a vocal virtuoso to lead a singing version of this poem, just have fun matching the poem to a childhood jingle familiar to many kids. Afterward, ask them to share the library books they've most identified with or enjoyed.

**Medina, Jane. "The Library Card" from *My Name Is Jorge on Both Sides of the***



**River: Poems.** Honesdale, Pa.: Boyds Mills Pr., 1999.

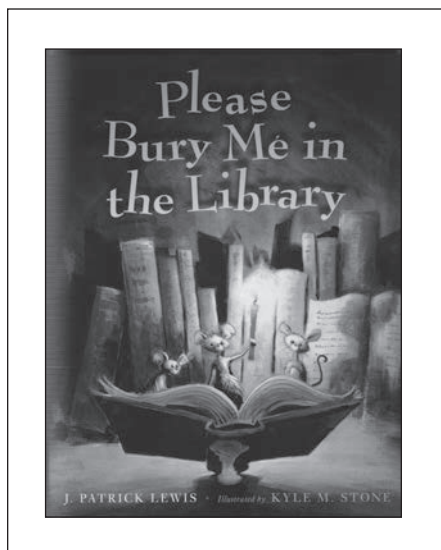
This poem offers an unfortunate indictment of a librarian who is less than helpful to a Spanish-speaking mother and son applying for a library card. Gently point out that this is *not* how you feel or how most librarians behave. Read the poem aloud in Spanish or invite a Spanish speaker to read it; the poem is provided in both Spanish and English. He or she could also read the Spanish phrases and dialogue interspersed in the English version while the children join in on the eight-line refrain beginning “Free books,” which is repeated three times throughout the poem. Finally, remind the kids that the library welcomes everyone and invite them to apply for public library cards; have applications on hand and ready to distribute.

someone with knowledge of American Sign Language to translate the poem into sign and teach it to the children. Merriam, an award-winning poet, wrote the poem especially for National Children’s Book Week, sponsored by the Children’s Book Council (CBC). CBC produces bookmarks with original poems for National Children’s Book Week every year as well as for Young People’s Poetry Week in April. Look for these materials online at CBC’s Web site ([www.cbcbooks.org](http://www.cbcbooks.org)) or create your own.

**Nye, Naomi Shihab.** “Because of Libraries We Can Say These Things” from *Fuel: Poems*. Rochester, N.Y.: BOA Editions, 1998.

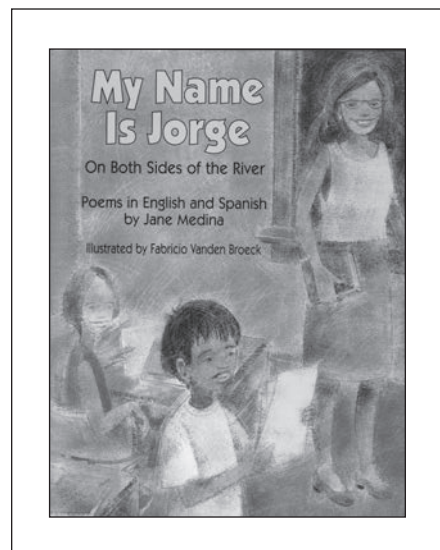
In this serious poem, a third-person narrator describes the life of a little girl and the power of the library book she

This long “ode” poem is almost a short story—it shares so many details about a small-town library. Its description of the physical space of the library mentions the rooms, the books, the globe, the maps, the fish tank, the pencil sharpener, and so on. Talk about the details of your library that children might note in a poem about it. It might also be helpful to provide the English translation for the Spanish words embedded in the poem: *jeta*, meaning “thick lips,” as in pouting, and *mis abuelitos* for “my grandparents.” For an artistic follow-up, children might enjoy creating an illustration of the library described in the poem. Suggest developing a comic strip illustrating the poem’s many scenes: dropping a globe in the library; the librarian reading; a child studying about the Incas; the three birds “talking”; the phonograph and the headphones; and the fantasy sequences of



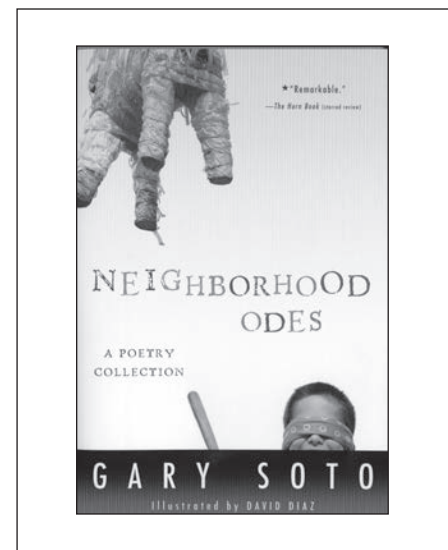
**Merriam, Eve.** “Reach for a Book” from *Book Poems: Poems from National Children’s Book Week, 1959–1998*, ed. by Mary Perrotta Rich. New York: Children’s Book Council, 1998.

This poem celebrates the many reasons that readers choose books and uses clever wordplay and word-coining to express why people enjoy reading. Each of the five stanzas of the poem begins with the line “reach for a book,” an ideal refrain for the children to perform while a narrator reads the remaining lines. In repeated readings, add gestures and facial expressions to convey reaching, dancing, and so on. Consider recruiting



holds. Each of the five stanzas can be read aloud by a different reader once the poem is familiar to the group. Older children may want to talk about the conflicts (long days, two homes) and promises (good book, new life) described in the poem. This poem is also particularly effective for sharing with adult patrons and library colleagues. Link it with short stories about the power of books and libraries available in *When I Went to the Library*, edited by Debora Pearson, or *In the Stacks*, edited by Michael Cart.

**Soto, Gary.** “Ode to My Library” from *Neighborhood Odes*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1992.



the imagined airplane trip, the remembered summer read-a-thon, and the mural painting.

**Worth, Valerie.** “library” from *All the Small Poems and Fourteen More*. New York: Farrar, 1994.

For readers who love the physicality of books—the cover, the paper, the ink—this poem is a tribute to those qualities. Worth’s poem is also a wonderful example of poetry that doesn’t rhyme, but still has an inviting rhythm and structure. As a recipient of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children,

Worth's poetry is also an opportunity to highlight this special award in the genre of poetry. To learn more, visit NCTE's Web site, [www.ncte.org/about/awards/sect/elem/106857.htm](http://www.ncte.org/about/awards/sect/elem/106857.htm).

## Sharing Poetry Out Loud

The first step in inviting children into the oral world of poetry is very simply to read poems aloud. Reading poems aloud helps children attend both to the sounds of the words and lines, as well as to their meaning. It also sets the stage for child participation in the read-aloud process. It familiarizes them with what the words of the poem should sound like and engages their listening comprehension in making sense of the poem's meaning. In addition, there is an effective benefit in that one can also communicate to children a personal pleasure in poetry, in the sounds of words, in the rhythm

Familiarize yourself with the poem by reading it aloud to yourself several times. Get the feel of the words and rhythm. Mark words and phrases you want to emphasize. Read to the group in a natural style. Follow the rhythm of the poem. Note how the physical appearance of the poem on the page dictates the rhythm and mood. Stop for a moment at times when it pleases you and when it fits with the content and mood of the poem. Use your normal voice, as if describing a daily event. Be sincere. Stay quiet at the end of the reading.<sup>6</sup>

Cullinan, Scala, and Schroder recommend we read a poem at least twice, although children may often ask for even more.<sup>7</sup> Poet and teacher Georgia Heard says make sure there is a lot of silence around this first reading.<sup>8</sup> Try mentally counting to five, if needed, as we are often uncomfortable with quiet at first.

*Poetry is a shorthand for beauty; its words can cause us to tremble, to shout for joy, to weep, to dance, to shudder or to laugh out loud.*

of the lines. By librarians' willingness to share poems out loud, we subtly extend an invitation to the children to follow our lead in reading and enjoying poetry.

Poetry is meant to be read aloud. The poem's meaning is more clearly communicated when both read and heard. As poet Brod Bagert has said, just as songs are not just sheet music, poetry is not just text.<sup>5</sup> The rhythm or rhyme of poetry can help children begin to get a sense of the sound of words and phrases using artful, yet natural language. When children participate in the oral reading, they have the opportunity to develop their own oral fluency. Experimenting with various vocal arrangements can also help provide an outlet for self-expression and build student confidence.

Poet and anthologist Lee Bennett Hopkins suggests the following approach for reading a poem aloud:

Choose a poem you like that you think the audience will enjoy too.

Give children a few moments to absorb the words and meaning of the poem. In poetry sharing, the emphasis should be balanced between the poem and the response, allowing for time to read, think, and talk.

A variety of strategies for involving children in reading poems aloud can be found in *Poetry Aloud Here! Sharing Poetry with Children in the Library*.<sup>9</sup> Caroline Feller Bauer suggests additional poem presentation techniques in her book, *The Poetry Break*.<sup>10</sup> She proposes a wandering poetry presenter who drops in to share a poem throughout the school, throughout the day. The suggestion of a poetry break is an outstanding way to infuse poems throughout a school or library program. Whether it's a poem for beginning the day, starting off the hour, transitioning to lunch or a break, or for wrapping things up, the idea of "breaking" for poetry is very practical.

Another excellent resource for selecting poems for a variety of occasions and top-

ics is Lee Bennett Hopkins' book, *Days to Celebrate: A Full Year of Poetry, People, Holidays, History, Fascinating Facts, and More*.<sup>11</sup> In *Tiger Lilies, Toadstools, and Thunderbolts: Engaging K-8 Students with Poetry*, Iris McClellan Tiedt reminds us that "children's reactions to poetry at all ages will be influenced greatly by your presentation as their interpreter of poetry, for attitudes and values are reflected in your voice as you read, in the way you introduce the poem, and in your enthusiasm."<sup>12</sup> Often, the best way to end a poetry sharing session is to take a few questions and responses, then return to the poem: "Shall we read it again?"

## Promoting Poetry

How do we guide children in discovering poetry books in the library? Think about what books you have in the children's and young adult area of your library. Consider these questions as you assess your promotion of poetry:

- Are the poetry books as easy to find as the fiction and nonfiction?
- Are the poetry books in a child-friendly location, easily reachable, with the area well-labeled and quickly identified?
- Do poetry posters and poetry book displays invite children to browse through poetry even if they're not immediately seeking it out?
- Are some poetry books displayed face out?
- Is there room on the poetry shelves for expansion?
- Are the poetry books on the shelf current?
- Are the poetry award winners represented and highlighted?
- Are there multiple copies of the most current and popular poetry titles?

If we're serious about helping children discover poetry and then return to it again and again, we need to make this gem of the library obvious and easily accessible—even unavoidable. One

elementary school library media specialist noted an increase in poetry circulation after sharing a single poem with students each week as they entered the library.<sup>13</sup> You may find yourself surprised that some children who never responded before perk up when you open the door to poetry.

We all know that a good visual display also generates interest in library materials. When was the last time poetry for children was a priority in your display? Highlighting new poetry books, low-circulating poetry gems, featured poets, and children's favorite poetry are all ways to make poetry for children more visible in the library. This can be through traditional shelf, tabletop, and showcase book displays or in other creative ways.

Favorite poems can be made into poem posters (please follow fair use practices) and displayed on doors, in hallways, at entrances, and so forth. One enterprising teacher displays poems on the wall by the pencil sharpener or the water fountain where children often have to stand and wait (and read idly).

Heard encourages children in the schools to create a "living anthology."<sup>14</sup> She says:

Instead of collecting poems we love and putting them in a book, we'll make an anthology out of the walls and spaces around the school. It will be our jobs to make sure poetry is all around the building so that other students and teachers can have a chance to read some poetry.<sup>15</sup>

## Poetry and Technology

Finally, if you have access to a school or library Web site, consider adding a poetry presence to that display. A poetry quote can easily be featured on a rotating basis. If more space is available, showcase children's original poems (with their permission), information about new poetry acquisitions, lists of children's favorite poems or poetry books, or a featured poet of local fame or national stature. Posting published poems generally requires permission from the poet and the publisher, unless the poems are in the public domain.

## Poems about Libraries: A Baker's Dozen

Dakos, Kalli. "When the Librarian Reads to Us" from *Put Your Eyes Up Here: And Other School Poems*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003.

George, Kristine O'Connell. "School Librarian" from *Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems*. New York: Clarion, 2002.

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Nye, Naomi Shihab. "Because of Libraries We Can Say These Things" from *Fuel: Poems*. Rochester, N.Y.: BOA Editions, 1998.

Soto, Gary. "Ode to My Library" from *Neighborhood Odes*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1992.

Worth, Valerie. "Library" from *All the Small Poems and Fourteen More*. New York: Farrar, 1994.

Once again, children themselves can assist you with taking your poetry display efforts online. They often have very creative ideas and the technology skills to translate them into reality. Using these technological tools to share children's responses to poetry can have powerful results. For example, children can use simple audiotope recorders to tape themselves reading their favorite poems or capture the voices of their friends, families, or others reading poems, much like former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky's Favorite Poem Project ([www.favoritepoem.org](http://www.favoritepoem.org)). Obviously, the same

is true of digital or video photography, but here we can add a more artistic element. A PowerPoint slide show can achieve a similar effect with still photography and audiotape with voice, music, and sound effects. Any of these productions can be broadcast on school or community audio or cable networks or presented at such special occasions as open houses, community meetings, or poetry celebrations.

Poetry is a powerful genre that adds richness to a reader's diet of fiction and nonfiction. The unique musicality of



poetry is particularly appropriate for children who are learning the sounds and rhythms of language. Here, we have considered creative alternatives for sharing poetry out loud and for promoting poetry books in general. Looking for poetry about libraries is one way to combine our celebration of libraries with a celebration of poetry. In addition, it highlights a genre that is often neglected, but full of possibilities for reaching readers and listeners of all ages. As Brountas has said, "Poetry is a lovely gift we give to children that appreciates in value and lasts throughout their lifetime."<sup>16</sup> 📖

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## Carnegie-Whitney Awards Up to \$5,000

GRANTS

The American Library Association Publishing Committee provides a grant of up to \$5,000 for the preparation of print or electronic reading lists, indexes, or other guides to library resources that promote reading or the use of library resources at any type of library.

Funded projects have ranged from popular, general-reader proposals such as "ReadMOre," a reading list for Missouri's state-wide reading program, to more specialized, scholarly proposals, such as "Librarianship and Information Science in the Islamic World, 1966-1999: An Annotated Bibliography."

The application deadline is **November 5, 2006**. Winners will be notified by the end of February.

**Guidelines** are available at [www.ala.org/work/pubs/carnegie.html](http://www.ala.org/work/pubs/carnegie.html) or contact the Grant Administrator, American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611; fax: 312.280.4380; [rtoler@ala.org](mailto:rtoler@ala.org).

LIBRARY RESEARCH

# Is There a Reader in the House?

## Raising a Reading Family

Annette Birdsall

**H**ow do you know whether you are raising a reader amid the daily stuff of grocery shopping, cleaning house, arranging play dates, fixing meals, getting to preschool on time, fitting in naps, and winding down for bed? Based on my family's experience and my experience in the library, I've compiled this alphabet that might indicate you have a reader in the house.

**Adding.** The number of books requested before bed or before naptime keeps adding up—a great strategy for kids trying to delay bedtime, but also an ideal strategy for encouraging reading.

**Books** in every room. If books are in your bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, laundry room, car, and everywhere else, you can be sure someone is reading them. Not sure if this is a good reading indicator or just lackluster housekeeping? Just move one and see who goes searching.

**Cereal** box reading. I had to applaud General Mills when they started putting books in with the Cheerios! What an improvement over just reading the box every morning.

**Dinner.** Your kids beg for a dinner where they can read instead of talk about their day. In our house, this only happened when one family member was away, and they still ask for reading dinners whenever this happens. We had to modify this a little, or we'd never have a nonreading dinner with the eldest off at college.

**Every** wish list includes a book.

**Fact-finding.** You are learning more about (fill in the blank) than you ever imagined. In your house, it might be dinosaurs, whales, baboons, or wind. For us, it's trains. Have you ever heard of the Waukegan Turn-Around?

**Going** out of the house is always delayed by the need to choose the right book to bring, and the question of how many titles will be enough to get through the ride, the wait, the end?

**Hiding** titles you've read too many times to count. Honestly, how many times can you read Janette Sebring Lowrey's *The*



Annette Birdsall reads to her daughter, Margaux, circa 1987.

*Poky Little Puppy* (Golden, 2003)? When you can still recite “roly-poly pell-mell tumble-bumble to the green grass” after twenty years, it's probably too many for you, but just right for your growing reader.

**Instead** of your favorite restaurant, you find yourself thinking of Maurice Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* (HarperCollins, 1996) when you want a late-night bite.

**Just** one more time. For some wonderful books, “the end” always means “read it just one more time, please.”

**Knowing** at least one library book won't make it back to the library on time, because it had to be read again, or maybe won't make it back at all because even though spaghetti sauce shouldn't be shared with a book, you simply pay the fine or replacement fee because sometimes a book such as Cynthia Rylant's *The Relatives Came* (Atheneum/Richard Jackson, 2001) just can't be put down.

*Annette Birdsall is Youth Services Consultant in the Finger Lakes Library System in Ithaca, New York.*

**Looking** at books alone, then making a selection for you to read. I can still hear my daughter's feet running down the hall, and her calling, "Read 'em, Mom, read 'em, book-a-book-a-book."

**Memorizing.** How many books does your child know by heart? If you don't think your child does this, ask yourself whether you've misread a page and been corrected.

**Newspaper** readers. One of my favorite pictures is of my eighteen-month-old daughter snuggled up next to her dad with the comics section. She put this picture in her senior yearbook, and everyone recognized her because she was the baby *reading*.

**Out** loud. Of course, you read to your children, but do you ever see them *reading* to their stuffed animals? To their siblings? To you? Prereaders love to read to you by narrating the pictures they see.

**Print.** It's everywhere . . . and developing readers will notice.

**Questions?** What does that spell? What does that say? When they notice the signs and words around them, kids are well on the way to reading. Some kids may never be avid book readers, but if they read signs, computer screens, and magazines, they are still readers.

**Rules** to limit reading. Really! Some readers just won't stop and need to know that the shower isn't the best place for a book; neither is walking down the stairs. I've heard rumors that for the fourth Harry Potter, a sibling was enlisted to prop the book and turn the pages for a shower reader so the book didn't get too wet.

**Stacks.** Your child may spend time with books stacking them like blocks until finally selecting one to read.



Margaux Birdsall reads to her cousin, Sam Nelson, in 2005—sharing the love of reading her mother instilled in her many years ago.

**Time** to read is as necessary to your child as time to play, eat, and sleep.

**Until.** "Can I read until I finish this page, this chapter, this book?" Those questions are asked by every reader hungry for words.

**Verse.** You've relearned every nursery rhyme and fingerplay you knew as a child. And your child can now recite them with you.

**Write** it down. My daughter hated bedtime because she didn't want her stories to end. When I offered to write them down and read them to her in the morning, bedtime was easier, and I got a glimpse into her two-year-old imagination. What a treat for me, and she loved hearing her stories in the morning.

**X.** "X is very useful if your name is Nixie Knox. It also comes in handy spelling ax and extra fox" (from *Dr. Seuss's ABC* [Random House, 1960]). Did I remember

this bit of usefulness when I chose to spell my daughter Margaux's name with an X?

**You** create opportunities to read to everyone in your family, not just the little ones. In our house, I read my childhood favorites aloud to my husband and kids, who all wondered if Jean and Mary would ever be found in Carol Ryrie Brink's *Baby Island* (Aladdin, 2003). All my relatives know they will hear Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales* (Holiday House, 1985) on Christmas day. This year, our two-year-old nephew asked, "Auntie, did you say the fish were sleeping?" as he sat listening.

**Zoos** now remind you that even the animals are reading; see *Wild about Books* by Judy Sierra (Knopf, 2004) or *Good Night, Gorilla* by Peggy Rathmann (Putnam, 1994). 🐼





# The Grand Canyons

Artists Christopher and Jeanette Canyon Share Their Inspiration

Roxanne Myers Spencer

Over in the ocean  
Far away from the sun  
Lived a mother octopus  
And her octopus one.

"Squirt," said the mother.  
"I squirt," said the one.  
So they squirted in the reef  
Far away from the sun.





Children's book artists and husband-and-wife team Christopher and Jeanette Canyon met twenty years ago while they were students at the Columbus (Ohio) College of Art and Design. They currently reside, along with three cats, in German Village, a historic neighborhood in downtown Columbus.

Christopher's most recent book is *John Denver's Take Me Home, Country Roads* (2005), part of a series of picture book adaptations of lyrics by the late singer-songwriter. He is currently working on the next title, *Grandma's Feather Bed*, due for fall 2007 release. Jeanette's newest book, *City Beats: A Hip-Hoppy Pigeon Poem* by S. Kelly Rammell, was released in spring 2006. In the works for her is *Over in the Jungle* by Marianne Berkes, scheduled for spring 2007 release. All books have been or will be published by Dawn Publications.

This spring also saw the release of the board book editions of two of the Canyons' recent picture books, *John Denver's Sunshine on My Shoulders* (illustrated by Christopher), and *Over in the Ocean: In a Coral Reef* (illustrated by Jeanette). More info on all of these titles can be found on Dawn Publications' Web site, [www.dawnpub.com](http://www.dawnpub.com).

In 2005, the Canyons spoke at the Kentucky Writers Conference at Western Kentucky University. The couple provided perfect foils for one another—Christopher came across as the friendly, low-key, seasoned pro offering sage advice to aspiring illustrators; Jeanette was lively and energetic—her animated movements, expressions, and enthusiasm compelled the audience to listen to her perspective as someone newer to the field of children's book illustration.

I asked the Canyons about their inspirations, motivations, and reflections on their work and philosophies of children's book art.

**What led you to become children's book artists?**



Jeanette Canyon

**Christopher Canyon:** I'm glad you referred to us as "children's book artists." Picture books are indeed a genre of fine art. My first experience that led me to this career was when I was in middle school. I was not a very good student academically, but at every chance I would go into my school library to look at books. I loved to draw, and I was always enraptured with the pictures.

**Opposite Page (Top):** Artwork from *Take Me Home, Country Roads* (2005), adapted from John Denver's song and illustrated by Christopher Canyon. **Bottom:** Artwork from *Over in the Ocean: In a Coral Reef* (2004), written by Marianne Berkes and illustrated by Jeanette Canyon. Artwork courtesy of Dawn Publications.

One day, the librarian chose a handful of students to attend a young authors conference. Much to my surprise (and much to the chagrin of some of my teachers) she selected me! It was an overwhelming and intimidating experience to be in the company of such great literary minds. At this conference, I first recognized the connection between the visual arts and the written word. I am forever grateful for my librarian who recognized the interest of an awkward boy who loved drawing and looking at pictures in books.

I later received a scholarship to the Columbus College of Art and Design, where I majored in illustration. I loved composing pictures to tell a story. After art school in the late 1980s, I knew I wanted to be an independent artist.



Christopher Canyon

There were three things I was certain of—I wanted to have total creative freedom in my artistic intention, I wanted my work to have a long shelf life, and I wanted my art to have a positive and enriching purpose in my life and in the lives of others. I was naturally drawn to picture books and children's literature. In the early 1990s, I decided that creating picture books would be my direction. My first picture book was published in 1994, and year after year, I find more fulfillment, joy, and gratitude in creating picture books.

**Jeanette Canyon:** As a child, I loved to share my stories through pictures, songs (that I would make up), drama (acting my stories out with my sisters and friends), dance, and the written word. My parents and teachers supported this passion by not only humoring my theatrics but also by providing me with opportunities and encouragement.

My love for picture books started as a young child when my parents regularly took my sisters and me to our public library before we started preschool. I absolutely loved story times. In our quaint library, there was a small but powerful door hidden behind the bookshelves; during story time, all of the children were invited inside the Hobbit-sized door. When we entered, the librarian would often be adorned with costumes and props to begin our story adventures. I always felt like Alice going through the rabbit hole, and I couldn't wait to find out where our next adventure would take us. Those magical experiences sparked my imagination and strengthened my creative path.

**Roxanne Myers Spencer** is Assistant Professor and Coordinator at the Educational Resources Center at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green.

I attended the Columbus College of Art and Design, majoring in fine arts. After I graduated, a new magical door opened. I was introduced to an educational philosophy from the preprimary schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy. This philosophy has changed the way I look at the world, relationships, education, languages, the arts, and most importantly, the capabilities and rights of children. I will forever be inspired by the words of Loris Malaguzzi, philosopher and founder of the early childhood schools in Reggio Emilia,

Children have the right to be recognized as . . . both source and constructors of their own experience, and thus active participants in the organization of their identities, abilities, and autonomy, through relationships and interactions with their peers, with adults, with ideas, with objects, and with the real and imaginary events of worlds (Loris Malaguzzi et al. *The Hundred Languages of Children*. [Reggio Emilia, Italy: Dept. of Education, 1987]).

This philosophy transformed the past fifteen years of my life as both an artist and arts educator of young children.

I absolutely love inspiring and being inspired by children, so I began my new creative adventure in the world of children's picture books. The first book I illustrated was *Over in the Ocean: In a Coral Reef* by Marianne Berkes (Dawn, 2004). My second book *City Beats* by S. Kelly Rammell (Dawn, 2006) was released this spring, and *Over in the Jungle* by Marianne Berkes (Dawn) will be released in spring 2007.

#### Who and what were your early influences?

CC: My family. To be a great picture book artist, one not only has to be a great visual artist but a great storyteller as well. I was lucky to be raised in a household filled with music and great stories. I was the only member in my immediate family who took to drawing, so I guess my upbringing filled with stories and my love of making pictures fused my artistic creativity in some way.

I wasn't very good at drawing as a child. My parents gave me a John Gnagy art kit when I was in the fifth grade, and it was the first art instruction I received.

JC.: A tremendous early influence was my great grandmother, who lived to be 90 years old. She was always an inspiration to me—always filled with so much joy, happiness, silliness, courage, and strength. She truly respected me as a child, always ready to stop what she was doing to share one of her stories, at my request, or to listen to one of mine. I, too, hope to share with children joy, respect, and the belief that the world is filled with endless possibilities.

#### How do you research a new book project? What is the creative process like for each of you?

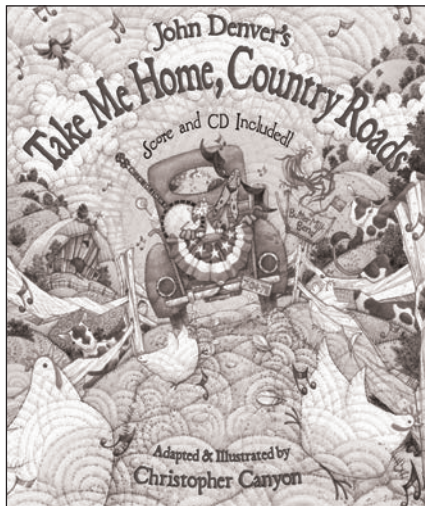
CC: Each book project presents its own challenges, so I approach each project differently. Research varies from deep to general depending on the subject matter and story. And my process is continually changing and shifting. I trust in my creativity, and I always seem to find an exciting journey to explore with each book.

JC: I embraced my first book project with arms, mind, and spirit wide open—I was so excited to be creating my first published book. For my first book, I received a travel grant, which allowed me to research in a protected coral reef off of the Dutch Caribbean island of Bonaire. I literally *dove* right into this new career! Before and after my coral reef adventure, I conducted my research on ocean creatures at my public library, at an aquarium, and on the Internet. Research is an invaluable part of the art that I create, and it is always so much fun. I trust in my creative spirit and know that each new project will bring exciting new challenges to solve, stories to tell, and worlds to explore.

#### How did you come to focus your illustration work on the environment and nature?

CC: My connection with the natural world probably has something to do with growing up in a rural environment. Though many of my books deal with nature themes, and I have worked for many years with Dawn Publications, which primarily publishes nature and environmental books, I don't consider myself a nature or wildlife artist. I remember an incident where I was the keynote speaker at a literature conference and was introduced as a wildlife artist. I was a bit taken aback. Being a part of this world and sharing the wonders of it with children is probably why nature and environmental themes often run through my art and books.

JC: I have always been drawn to the natural world, and I know how much





children are intrigued by nature around them and the natural world that they discover through books. When I accepted my first book manuscript about coral reef creatures, I was delighted to be able to be a part of provoking such inquiry for both children who live near the ocean as well as for the children who have never experienced it. I am delighted to be able to help children travel to amazing destinations through my books.

**The subjects of your books have positive, affirming messages. Do you believe children have a greater need for acceptance?**

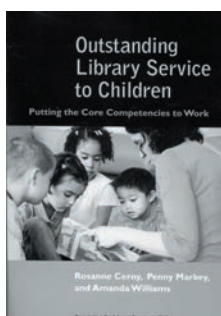
CC: There are many ideas of what acceptance is and what it means to each child. Many children have a strong need to be accepted by a group, their peers, family, community, or others, while some children struggle with trying to accept themselves. Children's books are, of course, a very positive genre of literature, which is a primary motivation for me and my work. I hope the books I create help children feel good, happy about themselves, and respectful of others.

JC: My intention is to continue to provoke, inspire, and encourage children to look at the world and themselves in a positive light and to see and believe in the endless potential they have.

**What are children's reactions to your picture books?**

CC: The reactions of children to the colors, details, imagery, and compositions are remarkable. They really get it—and often see and read in my pictures certain aspects that I'm not even consciously aware of—then they point it out, and I see it too! Children are the greatest audience that any artist can work for. Their book reviews are the ones that matter most.

JC: They ask me hundreds of questions and want to know every detail in how I create my pictures with polymer clay. Children also share how my work has inspired them to create their own art and illustrations with clay. I absolutely love discussing the creative process with children. They have an amazingly innate sense of expression, style, design, and composition. 🐸



## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT LIBRARY SERVICE TO CHILDREN?

ALSC has identified seven core competencies—skills that are the building blocks of professional development for children's librarians. Each chapter of *Outstanding Library Service to Children: Putting the Core Competencies to Work* focuses on one of those competencies and gets new and experienced librarians up to speed fast by offering explanations, examples, and a substantial bibliography for more in-depth learning. 0-8389-0922-1 \$25; \$22.50 (members)

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# Where Did You Get Those Guys?

## How to Hire Storytellers that Sparkle

*Carla Morris*

With the recent push of emergent literacy research, story time standards in public libraries have been substantially raised.

Story times are becoming models for reading behavior. In turn, parents of preschoolers can utilize the basic components of reading readiness displayed in story time at their local library: print motivation, vocabulary, print awareness, letter knowledge, narrative skills, dialogic reading, and phonological awareness. Story times must include these methods, yet still appear to be fun, relaxed, and display the “you-can-do-this-at-home!” feeling.

Provo (Utah) City Library (PCL) offers more than twenty children’s story times each week. Age-appropriate story times are offered at the same time in various rooms. Three- and four-year-olds gather

The secret? For the past eleven years, PCL has hired storytellers solely for the purpose of performing story times. They each work ten hours a week for \$10 per hour, and they each spend five hours performing. The remaining five hours are spent in prep time, rehearsal, set up, and clean up.

The storytellers work in pairs, with each pair assigned to teach a certain age group. A program coordinator (a part-time, twenty-hour employee) oversees the planning and implementation of the story times. Currently, the library employs two pairs of storytellers plus one Spanish storyteller. These employees are trained in both storytelling techniques and emergent literacy.

A rigorous schedule of twenty story times each week is offered during the months of January through April and again in September through November. The annual cost for PCL’s five part-time storytellers is approximately \$14,000 (\$2,800 each). PCL started with one paid storyteller in 1995. It took five years to gradually increase that number.

## Why Not Use Volunteers?

Paid storytellers, rather than volunteers, provide the same happy face and consistency each week. The storytellers allow librarians to increase the number of hours they spend on professional duties. This arrangement also lightens the load and reduces the burnout factor for professional librarians.

Trained in emergent literacy, storytellers can demonstrate skills and activities for parents to try at home. Working with a program coordinator, storytellers book talk and “sell” new titles. In an interview with the author, PCL Children’s Program Coordinator Sharon Kuttler said, “Paid tellers who are trained and involved in planning sessions are less likely to be absent. It is important that children see the same people each week. It’s an integral part of the routine, which is a source of comfort and security. The children count on them. Planned story times with substance give adult patrons an added respect for the library and the library’s place in the community.”



Students Stephen Gashler, left, and Alicen Hickey really get into character for their performances.

in one room for a half-hour session, while two-year-olds and infant siblings attend a separate twenty-minute session with parents and caregivers. With two story times at 10 A.M. and again at 11 A.M., the library is able to offer four sessions before noon each day. More than nine hundred children attend these story times each week. With a staff of three full-time and five part-time employees, this feat would appear unattainable.

*Carla Morris is Children’s Services Coordinator at Provo (Utah) City Library.*

Having paid storytellers eliminates the problem of volunteers not showing up. Having a pair work together also maintains the consistency by allowing coverage for illness or other absences. If one storyteller is sick, the other is still a familiar face. A librarian can fill in for the missing storyteller and can carry on with the regular routine.

With our arrangement, there is also an increase in creativity. Put five heads together, and the result is fresh and entertaining programs. With the increase in quality comes an increase in attendance. Before we hired storytellers, about twenty-five to thirty children attended story times. Currently, an audience of more than two hundred attends each session of our Toddler Time programs, geared for two-year-olds and their parents and caregivers.

## What about the Librarian Who Wants to Tell Stories?

Many librarians enjoy storytelling. "Doing story time is the fun part of my job," said Sheila Nielson, children's librarian at PCL, in an interview with the author. Although employees do not perform in our regular story times, they still have a chance to read stories to children who visit the library in tour groups, help in outreach programs, or fill in during emergencies.

## What about Turnover?

Many of our storytellers are younger college students who graduate and move on. The turnover is not as high as might be expected because an increase in pay to \$12 per hour is offered to storytellers after one year of service. Many storytellers have worked at PCL for two or three years, and currently, two have remained on staff for four years.

## Is There a Decrease in Professionalism?

Some have voiced the concern that because the storytellers are not librarians, they do not have the necessary knowledge of books. That's why we have a professional story time coordinator. Storytellers



Superb storytellers are a perfect way to hold a large audience of kids captive, as well as get them involved!

are trained to refer parents' questions to trained librarians. When performing in outreach programs, a coordinator professional who can answer questions and represent the library as a librarian always accompanies the storytellers.

The storyteller coordinator gathers a balanced collection of children's books and materials based on a chosen theme. Out of this collection, storytellers choose the books they feel comfortable presenting—the books that they personally like. This freedom ensures creative and charismatic presentations.

The coordinator is responsible for parent handouts and children's take-homes. The combination of the coordinator's library skills and the fanciful skills of the storyteller is perfect for the final result of the print motivation message—"Reading is fun! I love it and so can you!"

The coordinator at PCL is paid \$16 per hour, and she also oversees all children's programs, takes care of publicity and press releases for the program, and also invoices and assists visiting performers and those conducting special programs.

## Provo's Situation: A History

When the author was hired as children's services coordinator in 1991, she was given the charge to double the number

of story times offered at the library. At that time, one staff member presented both story times each week. Although remaining staff members were willing, their talents were better used behind the desk.

As job openings in the children's department became available, the author convinced the library director to replace a part-time regular librarian position with two employees whose primary responsibility was storytelling.

Although most grant monies do not cover salaries, PCL did receive a grant for a new program, in which it stipulated the need for salaries to complete the project. This is how PCL's infant programs were started. The library hired a young mother to perform songs using finger puppets based on Mother Goose rhymes. This decision proved to be the key that unlocked the door to entertaining and fun story times. The Book Babies program, as it was called, grew from an initial group of four to five mothers to a group of forty to fifty mothers within a year. New mothers were given an invitation to Book Babies in their diaper bag from the hospital, as well as at pediatrician offices, and on visits at the county health care center.

After the grant monies were used, the public demanded a continued offering of infant story times. Slowly, with each additional storytelling position added,



PCL was able to gradually increase the number of story times held each week.

Storytellers were hired for their entertainment skills rather than their skills in librarianship. Such skills might include singing, playing an instrument, puppetry, dramatics, ability to read with expression, and ability to do voices and mimic animal sounds.

Gene Nelson, current PCL director, originally came from a much larger library system in Las Vegas, Nevada. In an interview with the author, he said, "I was skeptical at first. It didn't seem to be the most cost-effective practice. I had to be convinced." After attending story times and talking with parents, many who traveled long distances to attend the story times, he became a believer. "I could see the increased amount of interaction between the storytellers and the audience," he said. The quality of showmanship was evident. Story time was not a quiet reading of a book, but a big dra-

The circulation department gears up by increasing staff before and immediately following story time.

Nelson said, "Storytellers who are hired specifically for their entertainment value can be trained as effective teachers of emergent literacy. They emulate how parents can work with their children at home. Our professional librarian acts as a checkpoint for materials used, determining age appropriateness and subject content, and highlighting new materials for both parent and child."

## How Do You Find Excellent Storytellers?

A frequently asked question is "Where did you get those guys?" Posting the job description of "storyteller" often produces applicants who are soft-spoken. They picture themselves sitting in a rocking chair surrounded by quiet, well-behaved children intent on hearing a story. But in actuality, an extroverted,

summer months, PCL concentrates on summer reading programs and offers outdoor story times for all ages, as well as a pared-down schedule of age-appropriate story times.

## What Kind of Job Description Do You Use for Storytellers?

Throughout the years, PCL has fine-tuned the following job description, which seems to attract the outgoing story time performer with "sparkle ability."

The story time performer will be required to perform in front of large groups of people using a head microphone. Audiences may range from fifty to two hundred people of all ages, including infants, children, and adults. The performers must be able to entertain the audience by reading stories, talking about authors and illustrators, singing songs, and telling stories. Their performance might include dramatic presentations that may include wearing costumes, dancing, using puppets, and other ad-lib performances. Individuals must also be able to perform crowd control techniques, project their voices, and have no fear of theatrical and singing performances. In addition, employees may be required to perform at outreach locations including elementary schools in front of large groups of children, parks, and other venues as needed.

*It is important that children see the same people each week. It's an integral part of the routine, which is a source of comfort and security. The children count on them. Planned story times with substance give adult patrons an added respect for the library and the library's place in the community.*

matic reading with acting, singing, and locking in attention spans with the use of large movements and puppets.

The popularity of PCL's story times spread by word of mouth. People come from several cities away simply to attend the events, and attendance continues to soar. "We are now concerned about the large number of children and parents and caregivers who attend our programs. It's a wonderful problem to have," said Nelson.

Story times can be the engine that drives attendance and circulation for the entire library. As nine hundred children stream into the children's department each week, both parents and children check out thousands of books and materials.

high-energy, animated, "way out there" performer seems to work better.

Public library story times are currently in fierce competition with the Internet or anything moving with a louder voice. The position needed is for a story time performer rather than teller.

Although Provo is a university town with a large student population, most communities have theater groups with members who would welcome a small performing job or people interested in working just a few mornings each week. The library provides an intensive story time schedule from September through November. PCL always takes a break in December and gears up again in January through April. May is used to prepare for summer reading programs. During the

## The Interview Process

Two questions tell the library most of what its staff needs to know: "What previous experience have you had in working with children?" and "Show us why you are qualified for this position."

PCL asks interviewees to present a three-minute program that includes a story, a song, a finger play, and puppet demonstration appropriate for a three-year-old. From this, PCL staff can determine both performing abilities as well as the applicant's understanding of a three-year-old. To ascertain creativity and the ability to perform under pressure, PCL gives potential hires a choice of several ran-

dom objects (ball, bell, sock, monkey) and asks them to improvise something entertaining for a three-year old.

The true, kid-loving, kid-approachable story performers will emerge from this process.

## How Do You Choose the Best Applicants?

The library uses the following as qualifiers after seeing the presentation of each storyteller:

- Was the applicant prepared?
- Did the applicant use new materials and books? Old? Age-appropriate?
- Did the applicant project confidence?
- Did he or she make eye contact?
- Did he or she have an easy smile?
- Did the applicant use puppets or finger plays?
- Did he or she perform songs? Use instruments? Was he or she not afraid to sing?
- Did the applicant seem flexible?
- Did he or she show an ability to recover from mistakes?

PCL staffers have been surprised to see the variety of backgrounds of our performers. Some of the best performers have been from such eclectic disciplines as business, graphic design, and even a foreign language teacher. For this reason, the library interviews every applicant. It's impossible to discern from a resume whether or not the applicant possesses the sparkle, charisma, and magic necessary.

Although performers have basic qualities in place, training in various storytelling



Nycole Larsen, left, and JoAnn Garlock are moms as well as story time performers.

techniques is a must. A basic course in emergent literacy is also mandatory. The story time performer must be willing to talk with parents following story times to discuss and answer questions about preschool age children and emergent lit-

ing of emergent literacy skills. But they *must* be fun! They *must* be irresistible.

By hiring story time performers, librarians can bring the two diverse entities of professional librarianship and high-

*Storytellers who are hired specifically for their entertainment value can be trained as effective teachers of emergent literacy. They emulate how parents can work with their children at home.*

eracy skills. This training, feedback, and guidance is provided by the children's program coordinator.

The options for entertainment today are numerous. Library story times must compete with high-speed interactive toys and computer software, musical, and entertaining media available with one push of a button. Librarians know from research that story times are excellent opportunities for the teach-

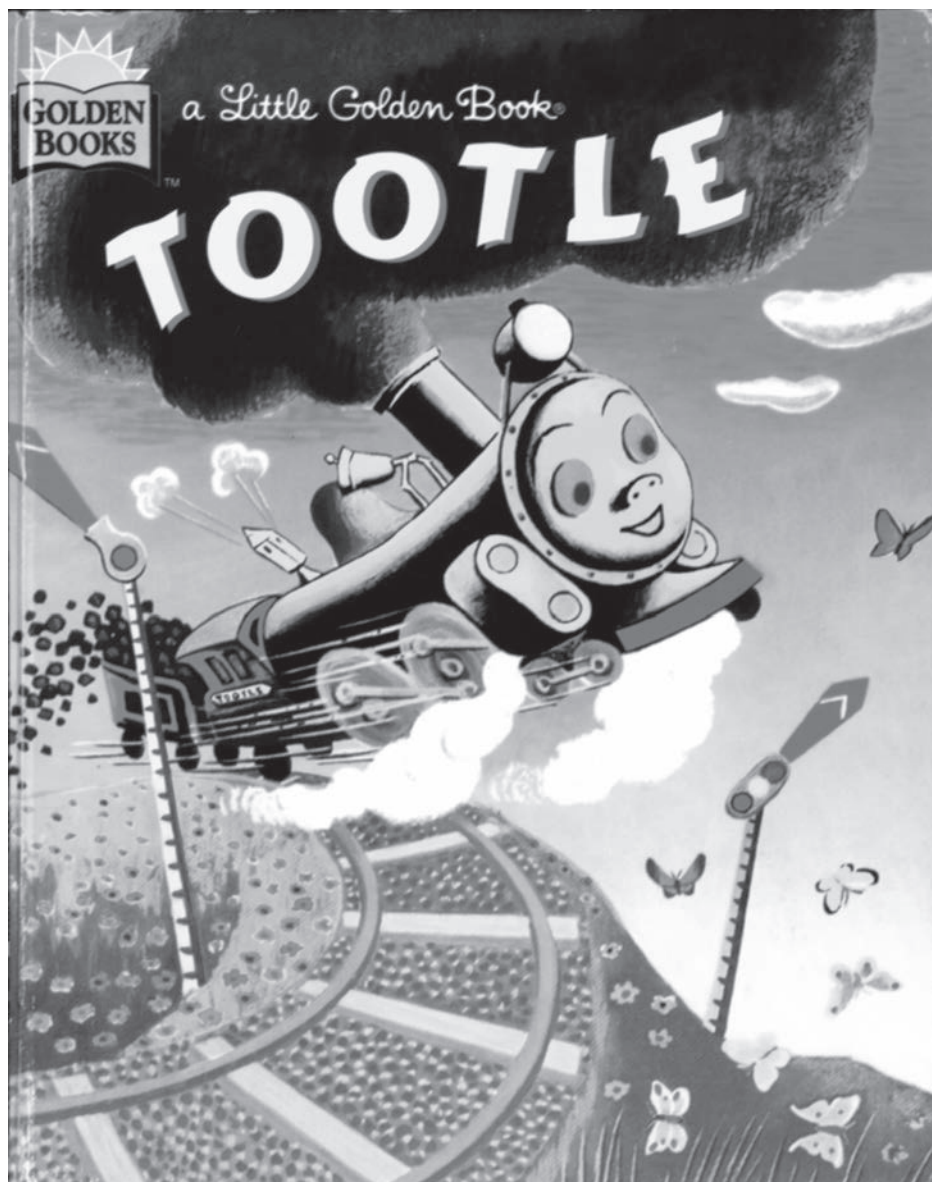
ing story performing together into the safe harbor of the children's department. This combination will result in engaging story times that will become increasingly valuable to the community—something they will not be able to do without.

It will not be long before patrons will be asking the question that lets librarians know they are successful—"Where did you get those guys?" ☺

# *Tootle* at Sixty

Staying on the Rails  
No Matter What

Jane Breskin Zalben



Anyone who grew up with hula hoops, salmon croquettes, and punchball considers the Little Golden Book *Tootle* one of their own childhood treasures. I was in the middle of writing a novel, and it popped in my head during a chapter I was rewriting

for the tenth time that I had the urge to read *Tootle* again, but I couldn't find my copy, which was handed down to me from my older brother. I figured he had absconded with it when he cleaned out the basement playroom along with my old forty-five records and Bible tale storybooks. But that's another story. So I headed for the library and asked for the book. A broad smile sprung across the librarian's face. "Ah, *Tootle*," she sighed.

**Jane Breskin Zalben** is the author and artist of about fifty children's books, six of which are novels. Her recent chapter book, *Baby Babka*, the *Gorgeous Genius* (Clarion, 2004) was a Koret Foundation Finalist. Recently published books are *Saturday Night at the Beastro* (Harper Collins, 2004); *Hey, Mama Goose* (Dutton, 2005); and a nonfiction picture book, *Paths to Peace: People Who Changed the World* (Dutton, 2006). Her middle-grade/young adult novel *Leap* (Knopf) will be published January 2007, which she is adapting into a screenplay. Besides doing paintings for a picture book she has written on peace and exploring life, Zalben is going off the rails—like *Tootle*—and she intends on staying there.



After rereading the book, I was absolutely furious at my father. I wanted to resurrect him from the dead and let him have it. How dare he cite me the words by heart, often quoting that famous line at the dinner table, "Staying on the rails, no matter what." No wonder many of us rebelled in the late '60s and early '70s, and have been fighting ever since. That whole *Poky*



*Little Puppy* era—when being different and exploring the world meant no rice pudding (or any other dessert for that matter)—came rushing back to me. To this day, I still fight being “the good girl” ideal fostered during that time, so all my angst went into poor little *Tootle*.

Tootle is a baby locomotive with a clean slate in life. He goes to a village of Lower Trainswitch, which has a fine school for engines. (Think Yale or Harvard.) He does the whole nine yards—lessons in everything from whistle-blowing to red-flag waving. There are numerous things to study for those who wish to become freight trains, but the old engineer tells the class they will never be good trains unless they get an A+ in Staying on the Rails No Matter What.

Open-hearted, big-eyed Tootle is a real cutie. He wants to be a Flyer someday. There’s real buzz about him around the station. He’s going to make it, big time. But Tootle has a secret. He does *not* like those lessons at all! He jumps in a meadow. (Think Ferdinand the bull stopping to smell the roses.) That night, Tootle mutters, “I liked being off the tracks. I was free.”

Let me cut to the chase. He romps in a field of daisies, dances with buttercups, watches a frog, and dashes butterflies. He’s found out and can no longer be a Flyer. Tootle has an epiphany. (Or therapy offstage?) Maybe he didn’t want to be one anyway. Dreams are lost. Hope is gone.

Wait. There’s a town meeting! The townspeople come up with a plan while Tootle lies about in the meadow, dipping and soaring like a bluebird. They are going to get this delinquent back on track.

Whenever Tootle hops off the rails to roll in the grass and experience the wider world, someone is hiding in a clump in the fields to wave a red flag, to stop him, and to get him back on. Red flags wave everywhere in the entire meadow. Tootle now questions how he ever could have considered it a fine place. Loopy tears form when he glances at the tracks and sees the old engineer waving a green flag. Tootle runs like one of those blondes in a hair commercial, slow motion, across the meadow. He hops *onto* the tracks and says, “This is the place for me.” Then he adds this line, which totally did me in, “There are nothing but red flags for locomotives that get off their tracks.”

And of course Tootle learns, as I did, by the last line, to work hard and stay on the rails no matter what. I was ready to call my mother and say, “What kind of guy did you marry who loved this book?”

How did I not know when I was younger that this was one of the saddest books I had ever read? It’s a great one for conformists, for anyone who takes a straight path in life. But what about the creative, unknown, curved paths of artists, writers, musicians, actors, and dancers who can’t stay on those rails, no matter what? In rereading this book, I was disheart-

ened that an entire generation grew up with *Tootle*’s given message.

I live an unstructured life *with* discipline. I don’t commute to work. I can watch a movie in the middle of the day with popcorn or sometimes stop to read a book or dig in the garden. And yet, the *Tootle* work ethic is engrained in my bones. I get up early, have breakfast, clean up the house, and begin working. For hours on end. At writing. At art.

If there is a day I don’t write or paint, it’s a day that I’m not as happy and fulfilled; I am “off.” I need to connect with my rail, my track. Each of us has our own rhythms that we connect with. We have to find and allow and embrace the Tootle who went off the tracks in all of us.

*Tootle* is part of my childhood. But I have learned that it is better to take risks, to not self-inflict red flags, and to change and grow. I try to do that with every book project, and I’m going to do more of it as I get older. It’s what makes this business of publishing exciting. I do not want all of my books to look alike, to keep redoing what I have done before. As an artist and author, it is a challenge to push yourself. Experiment.

You were wrong, Dad, about staying on the rails no matter what—if you do, then how will you ever know what’s on the other side?

Maybe a meadow. 

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## Journals for Professional Development

### A Look at Four of the Best

ALSC Research and Development Committee

For this issue, ALSC's Research and Development Committee turns its attention to sources of published scholarly research for professional and personal development.

#### The Lion and the Unicorn

*The Lion and the Unicorn*, published three times a year by Johns Hopkins University Press, covers a wide range of topics, including the children's literature publishing industry, comparative studies of significant books and genres, author and editor interviews, the art of illustration, mass media, and popular culture. Previous issues included articles on the representation of historical events in children's literature, Esther Forbes's *Johnny Tremain*, the visual aspects of texts designed for children and young adults, and the international marketing and translation of J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. The articles, while scholarly, are of general interest to people concerned with children's culture as it relates to children's literature.

Recent special themes have included violence and children's literature, and children and science fiction. A recent issue focused on Asian American children's literature and included an article by Lawrence Yep. *The Lion and the Unicorn* is available in a printed version or online through both Project Muse (<http://muse.jhu.edu>), which features abstracts and keyword searching of the published articles, and Literature Online (LION) (<http://lion.chadwyck.com>).

#### Children's Literature Association Quarterly

The goal of the Children's Literature Association (CLA) is to foster serious scholarship and research into all aspects of

children's literature, and the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* is its vehicle for the dissemination of such research. The journal, issued three times a year, contains both critical theory and cultural, literary, and gender studies. Each issue features an introduction by the editor providing a context for the articles.

The Winter 2005 issue focused on children's literature and the political left, including articles on the progressive politics of Sidney Taylor's *All-of-a-Kind Family*, and on the absent father and political reform in E. Nesbit's *The Railway Children*.

Besides scholarly articles, the *Quarterly* includes reviews of recently published scholarly books in the area of children's literature and announcements of conferences and paper calls. Membership in CLA includes a subscription to the *Quarterly*. It is published by Johns Hopkins University Press and available in print or online through Project Muse.

#### The Journal of Children's Literature

The *Journal of Children's Literature*, the official publication of the Children's Literature Assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), is published twice a year. It serves a readership with personal and professional interest in children's literature.

*The 2005–2006 Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Research and Development Committee included Chair Eliza Dresang, Ruth Cox Clark, Gaye Hinchliff, Bowie Kotrla, Barbara Silverman, Rita Smith, and Daylan Stephens, assisted by Danita Eastman.*

Less academic than the journals discussed previously, it employs a wider variety of formats within each issue. As with the other journals, this journal also has both themed and general issues.

A recent issue focused on the Arthurian legend and contained articles by three authors who retell the Arthurian legend for children and young adults: Rich Yancy, Gerald Morris, and Kevin Crossley-Holland. The authors discussed why they chose to work with the Arthurian stories, how they chose the tales to tell, and how they researched and chose details, perspectives, and characters. These articles were followed by a discussion of recently published books that deal with the Arthurian legend as well as recent retellings of other popular legends.

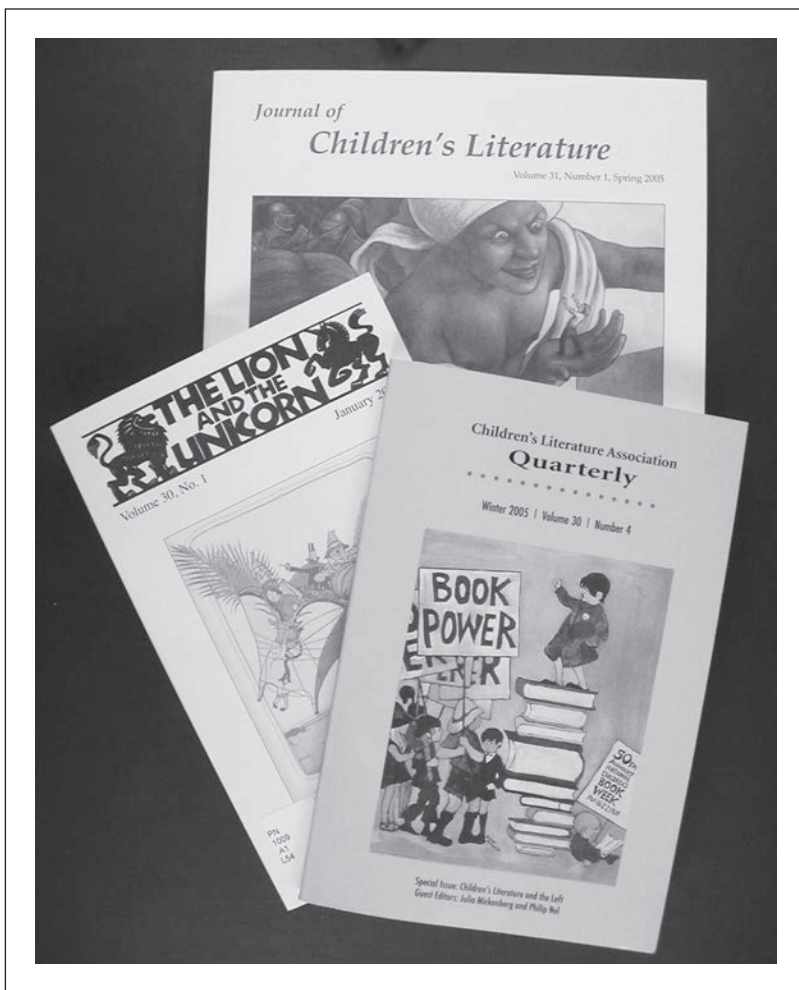
The same issue branched out to include a discussion and review of the collaborative efforts of author Doreen Rappaport and illustrator Bryan Collier; an interview with folklorist Margaret Hodges; a listing, with comments, of the notable books recently chosen by the Children's Literature Assembly; and announcements of conferences of interest to readers.

The Spring 2005 issue concentrated on special collections of children's literature, book illustrations, and picture book art. Other recent issues have focused on controversy in and censorship of children's literature, stereotypes in children's literature, and the Accelerated Reader computerized reading incentive and testing program. The articles are timely, and the announcements and book reviews help professionals stay up-to-date on conferences and publications of importance and interest. The journal is available in printed copy and online through the Wilson OmniFile: Full Text Mega Edition, which requires a subscription to a WilsonWeb database.

## The Looking Glass

*The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Books*, published by a group of volunteers, is a free electronic journal about children's literature that serves both a general and an academic audience. Contributors and readers include writers, editors, teachers, librarians, and publishers, all knowledgeable in various aspects of the children's book trade.

The journal has several departments that appear regularly, although not necessarily in every issue. These include columns, editorials, refereed scholarly articles, announcements, book reviews, puzzles, discussion forums, and personal reflections. Some departments are academic and scholarly; some are more quirky and fun—not that academic and scholarly can't also be quirky and fun!



Each issue contains both a Frame of Reference by an editor, which provides an overview of the issue, and Alice's Academy, the scholarly, refereed section of the journal. Other sections that have recently appeared in the journal include: The Caucus Race, a collection of announcements and appropriate Internet sites; Illuminating Texts, which features authors and illustrators discussing their work; and Picture Window, which examines all facets of children's book illustration and design.

*The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Books* is available online at [www.the-looking-glass.net](http://www.the-looking-glass.net). Publication dates for new issues are on the second day of January, April, and September each year.

## Conclusion

Reading others' investigations can be inspiration for one's own research, but even if the reader doesn't engage in research, these four excellent journals offer insights that enlarge and illuminate the experience of children's literature and children's culture. ☺



# New Books

**Byrd, Susannah Mississippi.** *¡Bienvenidos! ¡Welcome! A Handy Resource Guide for Marketing Your Library to Latinos*

**Kunzel, George.** *A Taste of Latino Cultures: A Bilingual, Educational Cookbook/Un Toque de Sabor Latino: Un Libro de Cocina Bilingüe y Educativo*

**Pellowski, Anne.** *Drawing Stories from Around the World and a Sampling of European Handkerchief Stories*

**Robertson, Deborah A., with the Public Programs Office of the American Library Association.** *Cultural Programming for Libraries: Linking Libraries, Communities & Culture*

**Seale, Doris, and Beverly Slapin, eds.** *A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children*

## Cultural Relevance in the Library

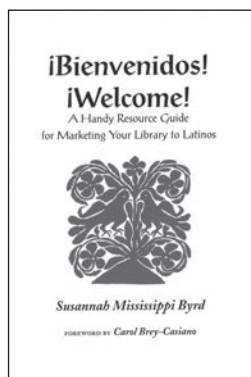
Junko Yokota

**L**ibraries exist to serve their communities, and librarians make critical decisions about how they can offer materials, programs, and services to meet local needs. While staying focused on the specific local audiences, there is also a need to determine how to prepare the local population to be engaged within the global community.

These days, population mobility and technological expediency have combined with numerous other changes to expose our communities to other cultures; as such, we must all consider offering materials that support a global perspective for our local communities. Library materials are evaluated and selected for their cultural authenticity and weeded when found to be irrelevant. Programs are planned to welcome all people, but also to expand the awareness of ourselves as library patrons within the context of the world. Services are offered to bring our local community into the library as well as to extend the library into

the community. All together, the need for libraries to be focused on cultural relevancy remains central. These books offer inspiration, specific examples, and practical guidelines.

**Byrd, Susannah Mississippi.** *¡Bienvenidos! ¡Welcome! A Handy Resource Guide for Marketing Your Library to Latinos.* Foreword by Carol Brey-Casiano. Chicago: ALA; and El Paso, Texas: Cinco Puntos Pr., 2005. 110 pp. \$20 (ISBN 0-8389-0902-7).



The rapidly growing Latino population in the United States, even in areas where there was previously little to no Latino population, has raised the level of awareness for considering how to best serve these patrons. The title perfectly captures the tone of the book—that of

welcoming patrons through both general and specific ideas. In the foreword, Brey-Casiano implores librarians to:

- know your community (by getting involved and interacting in the neighborhood);

- take advantage of the many resources available to you (such as joining Reforma);
- learn the language; and
- recruit library staff from the community.

Author Byrd goes on to offer guidance to help build a knowledge base about your Latino community, develop a collection that meets the needs of the local community, develop programs of local interest, generate excitement about library services and programs, and provide access to the library. Although these may sound like general guidelines for all library communities, the specific examples within the book are focused for the Latino community's needs and interests. The second half of the book is a directory of Spanish language marketplace compiled by *Criticas*, a comprehensive review of such materials.

**Kunzel, George.** *A Taste of Latino Cultures: A Bilingual, Educational Cookbook/Un Toque de Sabor Latino: Un Libro de Cocina Bilingüe y Educativo.* Illus. by Erin K. Turner. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2005. 208 pp. \$35. (ISBN 1-59158-178-8).

This book was created to help address the fact that the growing Latino population in the United States has created a need for all to better understand Latino cultures, and for those from a specific Latino culture to understand the others.



**Junko Yokota** is Professor of Education at National-Louis University. Her scholarly work focuses on multicultural literature, and she was awarded the Virginia Hamilton Essay Award. She edited *Kaleidoscope*, a publication of the National Council of Teachers of English, and also reviewed multicultural literature for that publication.

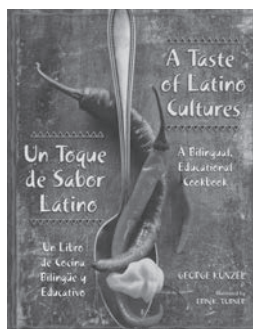
The bilingual text is organized by the areas from which the largest number of Latinos in the United States originate—Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Colombia. For each country, the author presents an overview of geography, climate, population, government, history, economy, and culture. This is followed by a few recipes, based on the assumption that many people begin to learn about other cultures through shared food. The recipes seem relatively straightforward, but vary from a few ingredients that have to be simply mixed to complicated, multistep directions for some of the most traditional foods.

The Learning Launch section features student activities and a listing of research topics. The reading list for each country features books for grades K–12, and each book gets a one-line synopsis. A listing of Internet resources is also included.

**Pellowski, Anne.** *Drawing Stories from Around the World and a Sampling of European Handkerchief Stories.* Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2005. 259 pp. \$28. (ISBN 1-59158-222-9).

Renowned as a storyteller, Pellowski has traveled throughout the world collecting stories; her numerous books pass along world stories to a wider audience by making them available in print.

This time, she focuses on stories that are told while drawing or folding a handkerchief to add visual support. She introduces each story with a variety of information; sometimes, she tells how she first came across the story, and often she passes along tips for the telling that she learned from the people who shared the stories with her. When she has made adaptations or combinations from multiple sources, she also includes that information as well as references to the individual versions.



The directions for drawings and handkerchief manipulations are easy to follow and give support to the idea that engaging storytelling can be successfully done with minimal props. These thirty stories include a wide range of traditions: Japanese *ekaki-uta* (which literally means drawing-song); Australian Aboriginal sand stories; European handkerchief stories; and drawing stories from Romania, Switzerland, Sweden, Paraguay, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Korea, South Africa, and more. She carefully documents sources, mostly people she has met while traveling and through her work with the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), as well as including a print bibliography of books she has consulted and recommends.

**Robertson, Deborah A. with the Public Programs Office of the American Library Association.** *Cultural Programming for Libraries: Linking Libraries, Communities & Culture.* Chicago: ALA, 2005. 120 pp. \$35 (ISBN 0-8389-3551-6).

Drawing from the work of the ALA Public Programs Office, this practical book offers useful guidance on how to foster programming that has a cultural basis. Beginning with a definition, the text continues with a listing of the Top Ten Reasons to

Do Cultural Programming, as well as other listings explaining why cultural programming matters.

The planning chapter on goals and objectives offers numerous templates for information gathering and organizing that lead to measurable outcomes. Program ideas include detailed specifics, with examples of librar-

ies across the United States that share their successful plans, from book titles to Web sites to activities. Targeted results include: gaining community support, playing a vital role in the community through programming, and highlighting the library as a cultural center for the community. Marketing and public relations ideas include samples of actual letters, posters, and other materials that libraries have used. There are suggestions for advocacy to increase cultural programming, as well as guidelines for budgeting and seeking grant funds. The appendix lists five-star program series, featuring exemplary models that can be replicated and adapted.

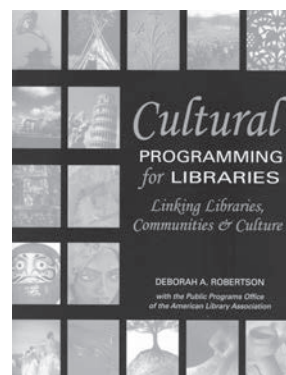


**Seale, Doris, and Beverly Slapin, eds.** *A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children.* Berkeley, Calif.: Oyate/AltaMira Pr., 2005. 463 pp. \$49.95. (ISBN 0-7591-0778-5).

As in their earlier book, *Through Indian Eyes*, and through their other work,

available from the Web site [www.oyate.org](http://www.oyate.org), the editors have collaborated with a team to provide Native perspectives on literature for children and young adults that portrays the Native experience.

Contributors are authors, critics, reviewers, teachers, activists, and others who have carefully read and critiqued the many books. Reprints and original essays include open letters to non-Native teachers, perspectives on Thanksgiving and Christopher Columbus, discussions about the California missions, tales of Indian residential school experiences, and stories about ravens and coyote. There are also utterly frank commentaries on popular books about Native Americans that have been widely read—but written and illustrated by non-Native people—questioning the authenticity of perspective.



continued on page 62

# Read Smarter

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## ALSC Seeks Award Applicants

ALSC is seeking nominations and applications for its professional grants and awards:

- **Bechtel Fellowship.** Mid-career librarians, with a minimum of eight years experience working with children, are encouraged to apply for a Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellowship to finance a month of study at the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The \$4,000 fellowship is for travel and living expenses during the period of study.
- **ALSC/BWI Summer Reading Program Grant.** The \$3,000 grant is designed to encourage outstanding summer reading program development by providing funding to implement such a program. The applicant must plan and present an outline for a theme-based summer reading program in a public library. The committee encourages proposals with innovative ways to encourage involvement of children with physical or mental disabilities.
- **Distinguished Service Award.** ALSC members are invited to nominate one of their fellow members to be the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, which recognizes a member who has made significant contributions to and had an impact on library services to children. Nominees may be practicing librarians in a public or school library, a library or information science educator, a member of

the library press, or an editor or other employee of a publishing house. The individual may be active or retired. The recipient receives \$1,000 and an engraved pin.

- **Maureen Hayes Author/Illustrator Visit Award.** Established with funding from Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, this award pays the honorarium and travel for a visiting author or illustrator to a maximum amount of \$4,000. Hayes Award applicants seek to provide a visit from an author or illustrator who will speak to children who have not had the opportunity to hear a nationally known author or

illustrator. Reasons for applying could include: particular interest in the work of the author or illustrator, the inability to host such an event without the award's monetary contribution, a special celebration, and so forth.

- **Penguin Young Readers Group Award.** This award consists of four \$600 awards presented to children's librarians to enable them to attend the ALA Annual Conference for the first time. The 2007 Annual Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. The recipients must be ALSC members, work directly with children, and have one to ten years of library experience.



Author Jaqueline Weiss (fourth from right), formerly at Temple University in Philadelphia, spoke to a group in Tokyo, Japan, in March about children's literature. Weiss is shown with a group of Japanese authors and publishers. Weiss is the author of several professional titles for children's librarians, in addition to the children's book *Young Brer Rabbit and Other Trickster Tales from the Americas* (Stemmer House Publishers, 1985).

- **ALSC/Sagebrush Education Resources Literature Program Grant.** This award, made possible through an annual grant from Sagebrush Education Resources, provides a grant of \$1,000 to support an ALSC member's attendance at the 2007 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. The award is given to a children's librarian who has developed

and implemented a unique reading or literature program that brings children and books together to develop lifelong reading habits.

For more information about each award and to download award applications, visit [www.ala.org/alsc](http://www.ala.org/alsc) and click on "Awards & Scholarships—Professional Awards." To request a form by mail, send a postcard

to ALSC, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; or e-mail: [alsc@ala.org](mailto:alsc@ala.org). Deadline for all professional award applications is **December 1, 2006.**

## Suggestions Welcome

ALSC members are welcome to suggest titles for the 2007 media awards and for the 2008 Belpré Award. Send recommen-

## Board Major Actions

At the 2006 ALA Annual Conference, the ALSC Board of Directors voted to take the following actions:

**VOTED**, to approve the 2006 Midwinter Meeting ALSC Board meeting minutes.

**VOTED**, to extend the term of the (Mildred L.) Batchelder, (Randolph) Caldecott, (Andrew) Carnegie, (Theodor Seuss) Geisel, (John) Newbery, and (Robert F) Sibert Award Selection Committees to two years. The revised term will read: "Fall, 2 years (see Notes)." The following statement will be added to the Notes: "The term is for a single year's award. Attendance at the first Midwinter Meeting and last Annual Conference is optional but strongly encouraged."

**VOTED**, to propose to the ALSC membership on the 2007 ballot the following amendment to Article XI of the ALSC Bylaws (new text in bold, italics):

Sec. 2 to read: "These Bylaws may be amended by a mail **or electronic** vote of the membership when a two-thirds majority of the votes returned are affirmative."

Sec. 3 to read: "The proposed amendment must be sent to the membership not less than one month before the vote on it shall be taken. It may be sent to the membership by inclusion in an official publication of ALSC, *American Libraries*, or by direct mail **or electronically** when so authorized by the Board of Directors."

**VOTED**, to propose to the ALSC membership on the 2007 ballot the following amendment to Article X of the ALSC Bylaws:

Change the last line of the article, which currently reads, "The Nominating Committee shall report its slate of candidates at the Midwinter Meeting of the Board of Directors the year following its appointment" to:

"The Nominating Committee will report the slate of candidates to the *ALSC Executive Committee in writing by October 1, for the Fall Division Leadership Meeting in the year of the Nominating Committee's appointment.*"

**VOTED**, to sign onto the Mary Jane Anderson Memorial Resolution with the hope that the Newbery term referenced would be updated to state, "The 1992 Newbery Committee . . ."

**VOTED**, to propose to the ALSC membership on the 2007 ballot the following amendment to Article VIII of the ALSC Bylaws:

Change the first item (a) under Sec. 5, which currently reads, "Each ALSC committee shall be assigned to a Priority Group" to read:

"Each ALSC committee **and task force** shall be assigned to a Priority Group."

**VOTED**, to expand membership of the Liaison with National Organizations Serving Children and Youth Committee from fifteen to sixteen members. The new membership statement will read: "Two co-chairs and fourteen members (each member responsible as liaison to two organizations)."

**VOTED**, to require that one member of the Legislative Committee be a current or past ALSC Board member. The new membership statement reads, "Six members plus the chairperson. The chairperson to be ALSC's representative to ALA's Legislative Assembly. One member to be a current or past (within three years) ALSC Board member. A staff member from the ALA Washington Office to be invited to serve ex-officio."

**VOTED**, to establish a joint task force with REFORMA called the Belpré Communication Improvement Task Force. The purpose of the task force is to create procedures to improve communication between ALSC and REFORMA staff and members related to the administration of the Belpré Award and the award celebration. One expected product is a written manual of expectations, procedures, and responsibilities. The task force will be comprised of two members and/or staff from both REFORMA and ALSC, appointed by each organization's president. The task force will commence its work following 2006 Annual Conference and complete its work in time to present recommendations to both boards at the 2007 Midwinter Meeting.

dations with full bibliographic information to the award committee chair.

- The **Newbery Medal** is given to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children. **Jeri Kladder**, Jerikladder@aol.com.
- The **Caldecott Medal** is given to the illustrator of the most distinguished American picture book for children. **Janice Del Negro**, jdelnegro@dom.edu.
- The **Sibert Medal**, sponsored by Bound to Stay Bound Books, Inc., is given to the author and illustrator of the most distinguished informational book for children. **Kate Houston Mitchoff**, kateho@multicolib.org.
- The **Geisel Medal** is given to the author and illustrator of the most distinguished contribution to the body of American children's literature known as beginning reader books. **Ginny Moore Kruse**, gmkruse@education.wisc.edu.
- The **Belpré Award** (2008), cosponsored by ALSC and REFORMA, is presented to a Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of

literature for children and youth. **Rita Pino Vargas**, ritapino@netscape.com.

- The **Carnegie Medal**, supported by an endowment from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, honors an outstanding video production for children. **Kathie Meizner**, Kathie.Meizner@montgomerycountymd.gov.
- The **Batchelder Award** is a citation given to an American publisher for a children's book considered to be the most outstanding of those books originally published in a foreign language in a foreign country, and subsequently translated into English and published in the United States. **Carol Ann Wilson**, cawilson@comcast.net.
- The **Wilder Award** is given in alternate years to an author or illustrator whose books published in the United States, throughout a period of years, made a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children. **Roger Sutton**, rsutton@hbook.com.
- The **Arbuthnot Lecture** features a speaker who is an individual of distinction in the field of children's literature. Send recommendations for lecturers for the 2008 lecture to **Deborah Stevenson**, dstevens@uiuc.edu.

We also welcome suggestions for the Notable Children's Media lists. Send titles with full bibliographic information to the committee chair.

- Notable Children's Books, **Rita Auerbach**, rita.auerbach@alum.barnard.edu
- Notable Children's Recordings, **Mary Burkey**, mburkey@columbus.rr.com
- Notable Children's Videos, **Susan Wray**, swray@joplinpubliclibrary.org
- Notable Computer Software for Children, **Diana Berry**, oakviewlibrarian@yahoo.com

## Hot Off the Press

The following publications and products are available from ALSC and ALA.

***Outstanding Library Service to Children: Putting the Core Competencies to Work.*** Rosanne Cerny, Penny Markey, and Amanda Williams. \$25; ALA Member: \$22.50. ISBN: 0-8389-0922-1.

What does it take to provide excellent library service to children? Seven core competencies—skills and best practices that are the building blocks for professional development for children's



Bill Harley and a chorus of children from Metairie, Louisiana, sing about the wonders of the library at the Kids! @ your library® Campaign program, held during the 2006 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans. More than one hundred program attendees sang, clapped, and learned how to use the Kids! tool kit materials to promote their library to children and their parents. The campaign tool kit, including Harley's fun and catchy song "@ your library" is available at [www.ala.org/kids](http://www.ala.org/kids).



librarians—come to life in this practical guide, which offers explanations, examples, and a substantial bibliography for more in-depth learning.

***The Pura Belpré Awards: Celebrating Latino Authors and Illustrators.*** Edited by Rose Zertuche Treviño. \$35; ALA Member: \$31.50. ISBN: 0-8389-3562-1



Covers the first ten years of the Pura Belpré Awards and includes annotations for all current and past Medal and honor books; biographies of winning authors

and illustrators; a special color section of Belpré-winning illustrations; and program ideas, activities, and book talks to enhance the presentation of the award-winning works. The first print run also includes a free, bonus DVD, created by Scholastic and Weston Woods, highlighting the significance of the award through interviews with winning authors and illustrators and founders of the award.

***The Newbery and Caldecott Awards: A Guide to the Medal and Honor Books,*** 2006 Edition. \$19; ALA Member: \$17.10. ISBN: 0-8389-3565-6.

Features a comprehensive list of all current and past medal and honor books including annotations. An indispensable guide for quick-reference, collection and curriculum development, and readers' advisory.

***ALA's Guide to Best Reading in 2006.*** \$22; ALA Member: \$19.80. Item #: 5212-0601

Filled with recommended book lists such as "Notable Children's Books," "Notable Books," "Booklist's Editor's Choice," and "Best Books for Young Adults." Now available as a digital download, materials are camera-ready and can be used to create brochures and bookmarks for unlimited distribution. This year's guide features a fresh, updated design and has been improved to make brochures and bookmarks more appealing to library patrons. A comprehensive list of Pura Belpré Award winners also has been added.

**Kids! @ your library® Campaign** poster, bookmark, pencils, and stickers.



Spread the word—So Much to See. So Much to Do. @ your library.® A colorful poster and bookmark, featuring original art by children's book illustrator Michael P. White, playfully convey the wealth of ideas and activities available to explore at the library. Pencils and stickers feature the vibrant So Much to See. So Much to Do. logo. All products are available from ALA Graphics. See the fall catalog or visit [www.alastore.ala.org](http://www.alastore.ala.org).

## Anderson Remembered

Mary Jane Anderson passed away on Tuesday, May 23, 2006, after a battle with cancer. Anderson served ALA and ALSC with distinction as both a staff member and member leader. She was a longtime member of ALSC and the Public Library Association, and served as editor of *Top of the News*, the jour-

nal of the Children's Services Division (CSD) from November 1971 to April 1974. She was CSD's executive director from 1974 to 1982, during which time the division became ALSC. She also served on the ALA Council.

During her career, Anderson also worked in school and public libraries in Florida, Maryland, Illinois, and Michigan, most recently as director of the St. Joseph (Mich.) Public Library.

## NEW BOOKS, continued from page 57

The second half of the book reviews many books published by smaller, Native-owned presses and those available from mainstream publishers. This is not meant to be a comprehensive book-selection guide. Rather, it is a forum for bringing together many thoughts related to publishing books about the Native experience and how to critique the portrayals that are available. This is a book that calls for readers to examine

their own beliefs about the Native experience as portrayed in literature; this is

a book that demands deep thinking and discussion.

## New Editions and Upcoming Books

New edition: Marantz, Sylvia, and Ken Marantz. *Multicultural Picturebooks: Art for Illuminating Our World (2nd ed.)*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Pr., 2005. \$35. (ISBN 0-8108-4933-X).

# ALSC Officers

## President

**Kathleen T. Horning**, Cooperative Children's Book Center, 600 N. Park St., 4290 Helen C. White Hall, Madison, WI 53703-3569; Phone: (608) 263-3721; Fax: (608) 262-4933; E-mail: kthorning@education.wisc.edu

## Vice-President/ President-Elect

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## Past-President

**Ellen G. Fader**, Multnomah County Library, 205 NE Russell St., Portland, OR 97212-3796; Phone: (503) 988-5408; Fax: (503) 988-5441; E-mail: faderalsc@comcast.net

## Division Councilor

**Linda A. Perkins**, Berkeley Public Library, Send mail to: 1429 Cedar St., Berkeley, CA 94702; Phone: (510) 981-6231; Fax: (510) 981-6230; E-mail: lperkins@ix.netcom.com

## Fiscal Officer

**Sue Zeigler**, New York Public Library, Send mail to: 3249 Hull Ave., Bronx, NY 10467; Phone: (212) 576-0022; Fax: (212) 576-0055; E-mail: szeigler@nypl.org

## Executive Director

**Diane Foote**, ALA, 50 East Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; Phone: (312) 280-2162; Fax: (312) 280-5271; E-mail: dfoote@ala.org

# ALSC Board of Directors

## 2007

**Annisha Jeffries** (completing Jane Marino's Board term), Cleveland Public Library, 325 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114; Phone: (216) 623-2963; Fax: (216) 623-2978; E-mail: annisha@gmail.com

**Rose V. Treviño**, Houston Public Library; 500 McKinney St., Houston, TX 77002-2530; Phone: (832) 393-1398; Fax: (832) 393-1462; E-mail: rose.trevino@cityofhouston.net

## 2008

**Starr LaTronica**, Four County Library System, Send mail to: 8 Johnson Ave., Binghamton, NY 13905; Phone: (607) 723-8236, x350; Fax: (607) 723-1722; E-mail: slatronica@4cls.org

**Kate McClelland**, Perrot Memorial Library, 90 Sound Beach Ave., Old Greenwich, CT 06870-1460; Phone: (203) 637-8802; Fax: (203) 637-3876; E-mail: katem@perrotlibrary.org

**Pat Scales**, 200 Stewart St., Greenville, SC 29605; Phone: (864) 282-3694; Fax: (864) 241-1270; E-mail: pscales@bellsouth.net

## 2009

**Thomas J. Barthelmess**, Austin Public Library, 800 Guadalupe, Austin, TX 78701; Phone: (512) 974-7405; Fax: (512) 974-7587; E-mail: thom.barthelmess@ci.austin.tx.us

**Penny S. Markey**, County of Los Angeles Public Library, Send mail to: 1534 Ruhland Ave., Manhattan Beach, CA 90266; Phone: (562) 940-8522; Fax: (562) 803-3983; E-mail: pennym@gw.colaplib.org

**Judy Zuckerman**, Popular Library, Brooklyn Public Library, Send mail to: 182 State St., Brooklyn, NY 11201; Phone: (718) 622-4465, x178; Fax: (718) 398-4863; E-mail: j.zuckerman@brooklynpubliclibrary.org

# THE LAST WORD

## MANAGEMENT 101: Lessons from Hazel Rabbit

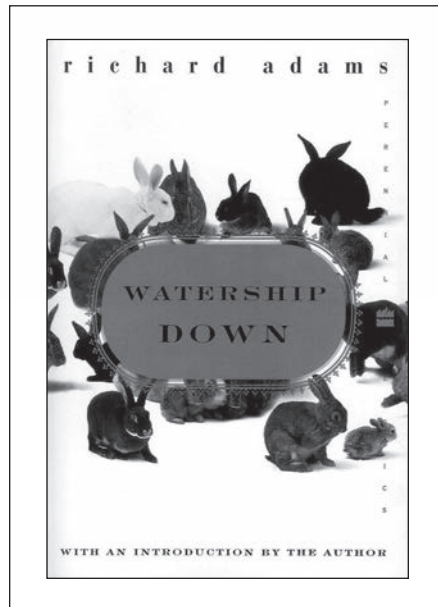
Kimberly K. Faurot

This article honors Cathy Norris, who retired in 2006 after thirty years at Hedberg Public Library in Janesville, Wisconsin. Norris steadily modeled brilliant management techniques in much the same way as Hazel, the Chief Rabbit of the motley band of rabbits immortalized in Richard Adams' classic 1972 novel *Watership Down*.

Hazel is one of the finest exemplars of natural, inspired leadership ever woven into a story. The tale is full of daring, bravery, and unexpected twists and turns. Part of the story's appeal lies in the community it depicts—a haven of friendship, mutual respect, support, and loyalty.

In my first professional job after library school, I had the great good fortune of having a Hazel for a manager—Cathy Norris exemplified these tenets as Chief Rabbit, mentor, visionary, and friend.

1. Surround yourself with talented rabbits. Recognize, encourage, and utilize their talents.
2. View and treat your rabbits as friends and comrades.
3. Ask others for advice and listen to it. Utilize others' expertise.
4. Discuss important issues as a group, but realize that as the leader you must make the final decision.
5. Praise your rabbits publicly.
6. Protect the small and the weak in your midst.
7. Notice and remember when your



rabbits are injured or wounded. Attend to their wounds yourself if possible.

8. Lead the way into battle. Be the one to run the risks out front despite your own fears and vulnerability.
9. Be willing to do menial tasks.
10. Be sensitive to your rabbits' fears and sacrifices.
11. Cultivate good gut instincts.
12. Accept that you will make mistakes.
13. Foster storytelling among your rabbits, sharing the cultural stories of your institution and of your particular group.
14. Be visionary and plan for the long haul.

15. Be collective. Choose what is best for the healthy continuation of the warren as opposed to personal gain, safety, or preference.

16. Adopt and adapt great ideas that you see around you, even if they were originally instituted by your enemies.

17. Forgive generously. Recognize worth in all of your rabbits regardless of their backgrounds or past behaviors, and provide them with opportunities to succeed.

18. Be optimistic yet realistic.

19. Know that you will have doubts.

20. When all hope is lost despite your best efforts, El-ahairah will show you what to do.

If you are a manager, emulate Hazel's wisdom, his courage, and his kindness. In time you may win the respect, loyalty, and devotion of your own rabbit band.

If you are one of the managed, may you be so lucky as to find a Hazel of your own. When you do, support him or her to the best of your abilities to form a bastion of goodness that flows inexhaustibly onward for generations. 🐰

**Kimberly K. Faurot**, a children's librarian since 1991, is a Library Associate for St. Paul (Minn.) Public Library. She is the author of *Books in Bloom: Creative Patterns & Props That Bring Stories to Life* (ALA, 2003).

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