

Children & Libraries

the journal of the Association for
Library Service to Children

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ALSC

2009 Awards Issue

Award Speeches: Newbery, Caldecott, Wilder, Geisel, Sibert, Carnegie

One Library in Prime Time • Got Music?

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Editor's Note The Power of Conferences

Sharon Verbeten

By the time you read this, summer will be waning—and so will our memories of the ALA Annual Conference. But if you're like me, and are lucky enough to attend the conference each year, you're sure to keep those memories

with you for a while.

Some of my most memorable conference moments include

- the powerful and unforgettable award speeches by Brian Selznick and Laura Amy Schlitz at the 2008 Newbery-Caldecott Banquet;
- meeting favorite authors over the years and having them sign books for my daughter;
- the somber, yet somehow remarkably upbeat, feeling of the attendees and locals at the 2006 Annual Conference in New Orleans—still bouncing back from Hurricane Katrina.

In this economy, some travel budgets may have been tightened—and some of you may not have been able to attend this year's conferences. But I hope *Children and Libraries*, in part, can help you recap the importance of the year and keep you connected with others. ☺



Executive Director's Note A Tuneful Past

Aimee Strittmatter

"Music and rhythm find their way into the secret places of the soul."

Plato could not have been more accurate. Songs certainly make lasting impressions as well as stir emotions within. In this issue Amy Brown's article explores how to incorporate music into your school-age programs. Despite my own lack of musical talent, I have a deep appreciation for musical composition and songwriting. The music experience is universal. There are no boundaries; music appeals to young and old and spans cultures and genders.

My childhood memories involving music are vivid. A few include reciting the Korean folk song "San Toki" with my mother, finding a 45 rpm of Neil Sedaka's "Calendar Girl" in a junk closet at the family's log cabin, and continually playing the raspy voice of Rod Stewart on my parents' enormous stereo/record player/eight-track console, much to my brother's dismay. What childhood musical memories do you hold?

This issue of *Children and Libraries* also contains several award acceptance speeches. Discover how authors and illustrators create their own rhythm, building word upon word upon image to create a story that sings—notes dancing in the air until they happen upon the right reader at the right time, touching the soul and creating a memory. Enjoy . . . and catch you on the flip side! ☺

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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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Outgoing President's ALSC Message

Pat Scales
ALSC President, 2008–2009
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Francie Nolan Lives @ your library®

A *Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith is one of my favorite books from my youth. Though set in 1912 in an area of the country I knew little about, this book spoke to me on many different levels. I can remember entire scenes and recite paragraphs verbatim.

There are three scenes that specifically refer to Francie Nolan's love of books, and these scenes are ones that I think we as librarians might use as inspiration in serving our young patrons.

Scene One: Francie's mother, an uneducated janitress, is determined that her children will have a better life. Someone told her that her children would be educated and literate if they read a page from the Bible and a page from Shakespeare each night. Francie and her little brother, Neeley, did exactly as their mother requested, but every night, they rushed through this requirement so they would have time to read the books that interested them.

Scene Two: Francie goes to the library every week and asks the librarian the same question each time—"Do you have a book for a girl age eleven?" The librarian never looks up, and week after week, she gives Francie the same book.

Scene Three: Francie loves books so much that she vows to read every book in the library in alphabetical order.

The librarian that Francie Nolan encountered was simply someone who occupied a chair behind the circulation desk. But, despite this lack of service, Francie continued to use the library because she loved books. I'm not sure that would happen today, though recent statistics indicate that our nation's libraries are being used more in the wake of troubling economic times. But, there is also evidence that library budgets are shrinking, causing some libraries to close branches and reduce the number of professionals serving patrons.

This threat of diminished library services may have the greatest effect on our nation's youngest library users. This is why library professionals must lobby local, state, and national politicians to let them know how important our services are to all patrons, especially children who depend on our expertise in leading them to the right books and materials needed to satisfy their recreational and learning needs.

We must market what we do, and we must do what we market. Here is how ALSC can help:

- Lead young patrons and their families to the Notable lists prepared by ALSC committees.
- Make use of the Born to Read and Every Child Ready to Read materials on the ALSC website at www.ala.org/alsc (under Initiatives).
- Sponsor mock Newbery/Caldecott committees for young readers and their parents.
- Sponsor a family night to introduce children and their families to the valuable sites selected by ALSC's Great Websites Committee.

- Participate in professional development opportunities.
- Use ALSC's electronic discussion list to get programming ideas from other libraries and librarians.
- Read the ALSC publications to stay connected.
- Plan to attend the 2010 ALSC Institute in Atlanta, Georgia. It's a long, yet affordable, weekend.
- Enroll in Continuing Education online courses offered by ALSC—the best bang for your buck.

Most librarians dream of having patrons like Francie Nolan—those motivated readers who return week after week. But patrons like Francie Nolan have dreams too. They want librarians who have a vast knowledge of materials and who are engaged and informed about every patron's individual interests and learning needs.

This type of service is what stellar librarians do. This is why ALSC exists—to serve those who serve young patrons. Let us work together. ☺

Coming for Summer Reading 2010

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will feature artwork by
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Born to Read

It's Never Too Early to Start!



ALSC's completely redesigned initiative was formed to help expectant and new parents become aware that reading to their baby from birth is critical to his growth and well being.

Organize a Born to Read program at your library by sharing tips with parents and babies on how to read, share, talk and play. ALSC's Born to Read brochure and Web site also feature recommended book lists for parents and little ones.

The Born to Read brochure and merchandise are available on the ALA Store Web site at: www.alastore.ala.org



Incoming President's ALSC Message

Thom Barthelmess
ALSC President, 2009-2010
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Being an ALSC Member: What Does It Mean?

What does it mean to be a member of ALSC? I imagine it means something a little different to each of us, as we each bring what we have to the table and take what we need from it. But like the other “-ships” out there (friendship, stewardship, and the like), membership thrives in community; we are our best and do our best in mutual support.

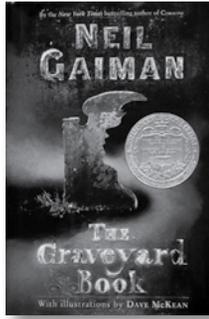
Much has been made of the economic troubles that have assailed the country recently, and rightly so. There isn't a children's librarian out there beyond the reach of budget cuts, and in some places those cuts are so deep as to be insupportable.

And by extension, the very ties that bind us together as children's librarians ought to be straining as well. Yet that doesn't appear to be happening. Membership numbers have not decreased in the way general ALA numbers have, with the ALSC roster showing more members than we had this time last year. Wow!

If you're reading this, it's because you have organized your own sacrifices to enable you to renew your membership. And so, I'm writing to thank you. Thank you for recognizing that as a group we are more powerful and persuasive and effective and happy than we are as individuals. Thank you for committing your energy and resources to our common causes. Thank you for sharing what you have.

The ALSC board is busy working on something called Strategic Plan Alignment. In short, we're looking to reorganize ALSC committee work, prioritizing our efforts on the basis of the goals and objectives laid out in our strategic plan, and maximizing opportunities for people to collaborate virtually. If we're going to be and remain relevant, we need to know what issues you are facing today and what issues you expect to be facing down the road. We need to know what you'd like your professional association to offer. We need to know what you'd like to offer to your professional association. And we need to know how you'd like the exchange to take place. So tell us.

Your board is at your disposal. Our contact information is available at the ALSC website at www.ala.org/alsc. Click on About ALSC/Governance/ALSC Board Roster. You can reach me directly at alscthom@gmail.com. We want to know: What does it mean to be a member of ALSC? ☺



Newbery Medal Acceptance Speech

Telling Lies for a Living . . . and Why We Do It

Neil Gaiman



*Neil Gaiman is the winner of the 2009 Newbery Medal for *The Graveyard Book*, published by HarperCollins Children's Books. His acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago on July 12, 2009.*

In case you were wondering what I'm doing up here—and I think it's a safe bet that right now *I* am, so that makes at least two of us—I'm here because I wrote a book, called *The Graveyard Book*, that was awarded the 2009 Newbery Medal.

This means that I have impressed my daughters by having been awarded the Newbery Medal, and I impressed my son even more by defending the fact that I had won the Newbery Medal from the hilarious attacks of Stephen Colbert on *The Colbert Report*, so the Newbery Medal made me cool to my children. This is as good as it gets.

You are almost never cool to your children.

When I was a boy, from the ages of about eight to fourteen, during my school holidays, I used to haunt my local library. It was a mile and a half from my house, so I would get my parents to drop me off there on their way to work, and when the library closed I would walk home. I was an awkward child, ill-fitting, uncertain, and I loved my local library with a passion. I loved the card catalog, particularly the children's library card catalog: it had subjects, not just titles and authors, which allowed me to pick subjects I thought were likely to give me books I liked—subjects like magic or ghosts or witches or space—and then I would find the books, and I would read.

But I read indiscriminately, delightedly, hungrily. Literally hungrily, although my father would sometimes remember to pack me sandwiches, which I would take reluctantly (you are never cool to your children, and I regarded his insistence that I should take sandwiches as an insidious plot to embarrass me), and when I got too hungry I would gulp my sandwiches as quickly as possible in the library car-park before diving back into the world of books and shelves.

I read fine books in there by brilliant and smart authors—many of them now forgotten or unfashionable, like J. P. Martin and Margaret Storey and Nicholas Stuart Gray. I read Victorian authors and

Edwardian authors. I discovered books that now I would reread with delight and devoured books that I would probably now find unreadable if I tried to return to them—*Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators* and the like.

I wanted books and made no distinction between good books or bad, only between the ones I loved, the ones that spoke to my soul, and the ones I merely liked. I did not care how a story was written. There were no bad stories: every story was new and glorious. And I sat there, in my school holidays, and I read the children's library, and when I was done, and had read the children's library, I walked out into the dangerous vastness of the adult section.

The librarians responded to my enthusiasm. They found me books. They taught me about interlibrary loans and ordered books for me from all across southern England. They sighed and were implacable about collecting their fines once school started and my borrowed books were inevitably overdue.

I should mention here that librarians tell me never to tell this story, and especially never to paint myself as a feral child who was raised in libraries by patient librarians; they tell me they are worried that people will misinterpret my story and use it as an excuse to use their libraries as free daycare for their children.

So. I wrote *The Graveyard Book*, starting in December 2005 and all through 2006 and 2007, and I finished it in February 2008.

And then it's January 2009, and I am in a hotel in Santa Monica. I am out there to promote the film of my book *Coraline*. I had spent two long days talking to journalists, and I was glad when that was done. At midnight I climbed into a bubble bath and started to read the *New Yorker*. I talked to a friend in a different time zone. I finished the *New Yorker*. It was three a.m. I set the alarm for eleven, hung up a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door. *For the next two days*, I told myself as I drifted off to sleep, *I would do nothing but catch up on my sleep and write.*

Two hours later I realized the phone was ringing. Actually, I realized, it had been ringing for some time. In fact, I thought as I surfaced, it had already rung and then stopped ringing several times, which meant someone was calling to tell me something. Either the hotel was burning down or someone had died. I picked up the phone. It was my assistant, Lorraine, sleeping over at my place with a convalescent dog.

“Your agent Merrilee called, and she thinks someone is trying to get hold of you,” she told me. I told her what time it was (*viz and to wit*, five-thirty in the bloody morning is she out of her mind some of us are trying to sleep here you know). She said she knew what time it was in LA, and that Merrilee, who is my literary agent and the wisest woman I know, sounded really definite that this was important.

I got out of bed. Checked voice mail. No, no one was trying to get hold of me. I called home, to tell Lorraine that it was all bosh. “It’s okay,” she said. “They called here. They’re on the other line right now. I’m giving them your cell phone number.”

I was not yet sure what was going on or who was trying to do what. It was 5:45 in the morning. No one had died, though, I was fairly certain of that. My cell phone rang.

“Hello. This is Rose Treviño. I’m chair of the ALA Newbery committee . . .” Oh, I thought, blearily. Newbery. Right. Cool. I may be an honor book or something. That would be nice. “And I have the voting members of the Newbery committee here, and we want to tell you that your book . . .”

“THE GRAVEYARD BOOK,” said fourteen loud voices, and I thought, I may be still asleep right now, but they probably don’t do this, probably don’t call people and sound so amazingly excited, for honor books. . . .

“ . . . just won . . .”

“THE NEWBERY MEDAL,” they chorused. They sounded really happy. I checked the

hotel room because it seemed very likely that I was still fast asleep. It all looked reassuringly solid.

You are on a speakerphone with at least fifteen teachers and librarians and suchlike great, wise, and good people, I thought. Do not start swearing like you did when you got the Hugo Award. This was a wise thing to think because otherwise huge, mighty, and four-letter swears were gathering. I mean, that’s what they’re for. I think I said, *You mean it’s Monday?* And I fumbled and mumbled and said something of a *thankyouthankyouthankyouokaythiswasworthbeingwokenupfor* nature.

“I wanted books and made no distinction between good books or bad, only between the ones I loved, the ones that spoke to my soul, and the ones I merely liked. I did not care how a story was written. There were no bad stories: every story was new and glorious.”

And then the world went mad. Long before my bedside alarm went off I was in a car on my way to the airport, being interviewed by a succession of journalists. “How does it feel to win the Newbery?” they asked me.

Good, I told them. It felt good.

I had loved *A Wrinkle in Time* when I was a boy, even if they had messed up the first sentence in the Puffin edition, and it was a Newbery Medal winner, and even though I was English, the medal had been important to me.

And then they asked if I was familiar with the controversy about popular books and Newbery winners, and how did I think I fitted into it? I admitted I was familiar with the discussion.

If you aren’t, there had been some online brouhaha about what kinds of books had been winning the Newbery Award recently, and about what kind of book should win the Newbery in the future, and whether awards like the Newbery

were for children or for adults. I admitted to one interviewer that *The Graveyard Book* winning had been a surprise to me, that I had assumed that awards like the Newbery tend to be used to shine a light onto books that needed help, and that *The Graveyard Book* had not needed help.

I had unwittingly placed myself on the side of populism, and realized afterward that that was not what I had meant at all.

It was as if some people believed there was a divide between the books that you were permitted to enjoy and the

books that were good for you, and I was expected to choose sides. We were all expected to choose sides. And I didn’t believe it, and I still don’t.

I was, and still am, on the side of books you love.

* * *

I am writing this speech two months before I will deliver it. My father died about a month ago. It was a surprise. He was in good health, happy, fitter than I am, and his heart ruptured without warning. So, numb and heartsick, I crossed the Atlantic, gave my eulogies, was told by relations I had not seen in a decade just how much I resembled my father, and did what had to be done. And I never cried.

It was not that I did not want to cry. It was more that it seemed there was never any time in the maelstrom of events to just stop and touch the grief, to let whatever was inside me escape. That never happened.

Yesterday morning a friend sent me a script to read. It was the story of somebody's lifetime. A fictional person. Three quarters of the way through the script, the fictional character's fictional wife died, and I sat on the sofa and cried like an adult, huge wrenching sobs, my face running with tears. All the unwept tears for my father came out, leaving me exhausted and, like the world after

I did not write the stories to get people through the hard places and the difficult times. I didn't write them to make readers of nonreaders. I wrote them because I was interested in the stories, because there was a maggot in my head, a small squirming idea I needed to pin to the paper and inspect, in order to find out what I thought and felt about it. I wrote them because I wanted to find out what

It's not irrelevant, those moments of connection, those places where fiction saves your life. It's the most important thing there is.

* * *

So I wrote a book about the inhabitants of a graveyard. I was the kind of boy who loved graveyards as much as he feared them. The best thing—the very best, most wonderful possible thing—about the graveyard in the Sussex town in which I grew up is that there was a witch buried in it, who had been burned in the High Street.

My disappointment on reaching teenagehood and realizing, on rereading the inscription, that the witch was nothing of the sort (it was the grave of three stake-burned Protestant Martyrs, burned by order of a Catholic Queen) stayed with me. It would become the starting place, along with a Kipling story about a jeweled elephant goad, for my story "The Witch's Headstone." Although it's chapter 4, it was the first chapter I wrote of *The Graveyard Book*, a book I had wanted to write for over twenty years.

"I did not write the stories to get people through the hard places and the difficult times. I didn't write them to make readers of nonreaders. I wrote them because I was interested in the stories, because there was a maggot in my head, a small squirming idea I needed to pin to the paper and inspect, in order to find out what I thought and felt about it. I wrote them because I wanted to find out what happened next to people I had made up. I wrote them to feed my family."

a storm, cleansed and ready to begin anew.

I'm telling you this because it's something that I forget and need to be reminded of And this was a sharp and salutary reminder.

I've been writing now for a quarter of a century.

When people tell me that my stories helped them through the death of a loved one—a child, perhaps, or a parent—or helped them cope with a disease, or a personal tragedy; or when they tell me that my tales made them become readers, or gave them a career; when they show me images or words from my books tattooed on their skin as monuments or memorials to moments that were so important to them they needed to take them with them everywhere. . . . When these things have happened, as they have, over and over, my tendency is to be polite and grateful, but ultimately to dismiss them as irrelevant.

happened next to people I had made up. I wrote them to feed my family.

So I felt almost dishonorable accepting people's thanks. I had forgotten what fiction was to me as a boy, forgotten what it was like in the library: fiction was an escape from the intolerable, a doorway into impossibly hospitable worlds where things had rules and could be understood; stories had been a way of learning about life without experiencing it, or perhaps of experiencing it as an eighteenth-century poisoner dealt with poisons, taken them in tiny doses, such that the poisoner could cope with ingesting things that would kill someone who was not inured to them. Sometimes fiction is a way of coping with the poison of the world in a way that lets us survive it.

And I remembered. I would not be the person I am without the authors who made me what I am—the special ones, the wise ones, sometimes just the ones who got there first.

The idea had been so simple, to tell the story of a boy raised in a graveyard, inspired by one image, my infant son, Michael—who was two, and is now twenty-five, the age I was then, and is now taller than I am—on his tricycle, pedaling through the graveyard across the road in the sunshine, past the grave I once thought had belonged to a witch.

I was, as I said, twenty-five years old, and I had an idea for a book and I knew it was a real one.

I tried writing it, and realized that it was a better idea than I was a writer. So I kept writing, but I wrote other things, learning my craft. I wrote for twenty years until I thought that I could write *The Graveyard Book*—or at least, that I was getting no better.

I wanted the book to be composed of short stories, because *The Jungle Book* was short stories. And I wanted it to be a novel, because it was a novel in my head.

The tension between those two things was both a delight and a heart-ache as a writer.

I wrote it as best I could. That's the only way I know how to write something. It doesn't mean it's going to be any good.

“It's not irrelevant, those moments of connection, those places where fiction saves your life. It's the most important thing there is.”

It just means you try. And, most of all, I wrote the story that I wanted to read.

It took me too long to begin, and it took me too long to finish. And then, one night in February, I was writing the last two pages.

In the first chapter, I had written a doggerel poem and left the last two lines unfinished. Now it was time to finish it, to write the last two lines. So I did. The poem, I learned, ended:

Face your life

Its pain, its pleasure,

Leave no path untaken.

And my eyes stung, momentarily. It was then, and only then, that I saw clearly for the first time what I was writing. I had set out to write a book about a childhood—it was Bod's childhood, and it was in a graveyard, but still, it was a childhood like any other; I was now writing about being a parent, and the fundamental most comical tragedy of parenthood: that if you do your job properly, if you, as a parent, raise your children well, they won't need you anymore. If you do it properly, they go away. And they have lives and they have families and they have futures.

I sat at the bottom of the garden, and I wrote the last page of my book, and I knew that I had written a book that was better than the one I had set out to write. Possibly a book better than I am.

You cannot plan for that. Sometimes you work as hard as you can on some-

thing, and still the cake does not rise. Sometimes the cake is better than you had ever dreamed.

And then, whether the work was good or bad, whether it did what you hoped or it failed, as a writer you shrug, and

you go on to the next thing, whatever the next thing is.

That's what we do.

* * *

In a speech, you are meant to say what you are going to say, and then say it, and then sum up what you have said.

I don't know what I actually said tonight. I know what I meant to say, though:

Reading is important.

Books are important.

Librarians are important. (Also, libraries are not childcare facilities, but sometimes feral children raise themselves among the stacks.)

It is a glorious and unlikely thing to be cool to your children.

Children's fiction is the most important fiction of all.

There.

We who make stories know that we tell lies for a living. But they are good lies that say true things, and we owe it to our readers to build them as best we can. Because somewhere out there is someone who needs that story. Someone who will grow up with a different landscape, who without that story will be a different person. And who *with* that story may have hope, or wisdom, or kindness, or comfort.

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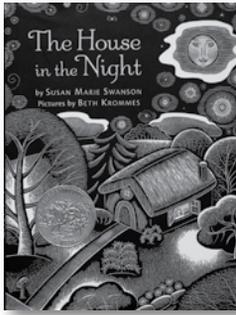
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Caldecott Medal Acceptance Speech

On “Pow” Moments and Getting “The Call”

Beth Krommes



Photo by Dave Rowell.

Illustrator **Beth Krommes** is the winner of the 2009 Caldecott Medal for *The House in the Night*, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Her acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago on July 12, 2009.

Good evening. I'd like to begin by offering my heartfelt thanks to Nell Colburn and the members of the Caldecott committee. I am so grateful and amazed to receive this award. Thank you to the Association for Library Service to Children, the American Library Association, and librarians, teachers, and reviewers everywhere for bringing *The House in the Night* to the attention of so many people. I am most honored.

I would also like to congratulate the other honorees. You are my heroes, my role models, and my inspiration.

When asked what I was doing when I received The Call, I can honestly reply I was sitting at my drawing table preparing to work. Monday, January 26, 2009, was a teacher workshop day, and my girls were home from school. I was terribly aware it was Caldecott Day. I had heard that *The House in the Night* was being discussed as Caldecott-worthy, but I had convinced myself not to hope for it. I went to the gym early, came home, took a bath, ate breakfast, and sat down to work. And then, at 9:20 a.m., the phone rang.

It was a woman named Nell Colburn, who I assumed was a potential illustration client. I wrote down her name, and I started writing down “Association for Library Service to . . .,” and then thought, “Oh goodness.” I could hear excited voices in the room with Nell, and though I was sitting down, my knees started shaking. As Nell told me the news, I kept repeating, “I can't believe it.” My office is a little balcony overlooking the living room, so both my daughters, Olivia and Marguerite, heard my delighted reaction to the call.

Soon I was off the phone and we were all jumping around screaming. I immediately called my husband, Dave, at work, my dad, and the author, Susan Marie Swanson, who burst into tears when she heard the news.

The next few hours were chaotic. The phone started ringing, and every time I put it down, it rang again. *The New York Times* sent over a photographer. I learned, with an hour and a half's notice,

that we needed to fly to New York so I could be on the *Today* show the next morning. I didn't have anything to wear. The girls and I drove downtown, found an outfit, stopped at the bank, and dashed back home. Dave walked home, and we all packed our suitcases and left for the airport. For days afterward, I kept asking my family, “Is this really happening?” I kept pinching myself.

One thing I know for sure is that I wouldn't be here tonight if it weren't for my children. So thank you to my wonderful husband, Dave, and to our beautiful daughters, Olivia and Marguerite. Having kids made me aware of the spectacular art in children's books and made me want to try my hand at it. But more importantly, the hours spent reading picture books to my girls were not only cozy but instructional. I saw the kinds of books my daughters enjoyed and which details in a picture captured their attention. Every day that I worked on *The House in the Night*, I thought about how it would feel to be lying next to a child and reading the book at bedtime. I tried to imagine what a parent and child would notice and talk about in my illustrations.

What all our favorite picture books had in common was that they were poetically written and artistically inventive. A parent would not get sick of reading them over and over. They included *Madeline*; *Millions of Cats*; *Bedtime for Frances*; *Little Fur Family*; *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*; *Miss Rumphius*; *Owl Moon*; *The Cat in the Hat*; and everything by James Marshall, especially *George and Martha* and *The Stupids*. My favorites of all were the books about Frog by the Dutch author and illustrator Max Velthuijs, especially *Frog and the Stranger*, *Frog in Winter*, and *Frog in Love*. The goodnight books I loved most were *And If the Moon Could Talk* by Kate Banks, with pictures by Georg Hallensleben, and, of course, *Goodnight Moon*. All these books have an enormous amount of heart.

When the manuscript for *The House in the Night* was offered to me, I saw that this was also a story with heart. Ann

Rider, my longtime editor at Houghton, knew I had always wanted to do a book in black and white, and Susan Marie Swanson's beautiful manuscript was right for me on so many levels. Not only was the text perfect for black-and-white art, as it was all about light and dark, but it was also lyrical, inspiring, and so open-ended that the story would be told primarily through the pictures. This is every illustrator's dream.

It took awhile to figure out what the story within the pictures would be. I knew the

together the pieces of a large puzzle. Because the text moves forward and then backward, I chose to echo the scenes from the first half of the book in the second half. I aimed for what I call "paw moments"—when one turns the page and is dazzled. I taped the pencil roughs in order on my studio wall so I could study the visual flow from page to page.

My scratchboard pictures begin totally black, and I draw by scratching white lines through the black ink surface. The more one scratches, the brighter a

“Every day that I worked on The House in the Night, I thought about how it would feel to be lying next to a child and reading the book at bedtime. I tried to imagine what a parent and child would notice and talk about in my illustrations. What all our favorite picture books had in common was that they were poetically written and artistically inventive. A parent would not get sick of reading them over and over.”

main character would be a little girl. Authors are told to write what you know, and the rule remains the same for illustrators. Draw what you know. And I know girls. I have four sisters and no brothers, two daughters and no sons. I decided the girl would have to be me, as I couldn't choose one daughter over the other.

But what exactly would this child do that would take her from the key to the house, to the light, to the bed, to the book, to the bird, to the song, to the dark, to the moon, to the sun, and back again in reverse order? Somehow, she had to get out of the house, into the sky, return, and end up asleep in bed. The only way she could reach the sky would be on the back of the bird. I felt that this wasn't original, but hoped I could make it fresh.

I spent a year on the book. That year included six months on the design phase before starting the final art. Designing a book is my favorite part. It is like fitting

picture becomes. It was Ann's idea from the beginning to add the golden highlights. She had admired this effect in a book called *Goodnight, Goodnight* by Eve Rice, published in 1980, and she shared her copy with me. I thought maybe we should add another color or two in addition to the gold highlights, but Ann's brilliant instincts were right. She is always right, to tell the truth.

I knew immediately that the house in our story should look simple and timeless. This is the kind of house I would like to live in eventually, when the kids grow up and we can downsize. I knew that the household objects should be simple and humble, too: an umbrella, a coat rack, a rocking chair, a wooden dresser, a toy car, a basket, a cloth doll. I included many of my favorite things: the shell mobile we made after a vacation to the Jersey shore, Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night*, my sister's teddy bear, and Marguerite's violin. The dog is my child-

hood dog, Scamp. I knew that the landscape would be the rolling farmland of my native Pennsylvania. I have also paid homage to Wanda Gág by including her house, Tumble Timbers, within the landscape on the second-to-last spread; and to Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat*, as we see just a glimpse of Mother's foot coming through the door.

I feel lucky to be an illustrator of children's books, and I have certainly been blessed in my life. I grew up in a wonderful family and had parents who supported my interest in art. They sent me to weekly art classes and encouraged me to attend art school. At Syracuse University, I majored in painting with a good dose of printmaking and spent my junior year abroad in London. I graduated with \$60 in my bank account, worked as a secretary, and went on to graduate school for a master's degree in art education.

It was a long road for me to the world of children's books. I worked as a teacher, the managing director of a small arts center, the manager of a fine handcraft shop, and as an art director for a computer magazine, all before becoming an illustrator. For ten years, I illustrated mostly for magazines and cookbooks. Initially, my medium was wood engraving, but I soon switched to scratchboard, which has the same look but takes less time.

My college friend, the artist Salley Mavor, encouraged me to try illustrating for children. I joined the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and started attending conferences. A cover I did for the January 1998 issue of *Cricket* magazine caught Ann Rider's attention. Five of the six children's books I've illustrated to date have been in collaboration with Ann. Connecting with her was the greatest good fortune of my professional life.

When people ask me what *The House in the Night* is about, I say art, music, books, imagination, family, home, and love. It is a comforting goodnight story that I hope will especially help children who fear the dark.

Our community was tested this past December when a severe ice storm hit much of New Hampshire and we were without power in our home for nine days. Some people on the outskirts of

the neighborhood. The houses were all dark except for solitary rooms with flickering candles. I remember being stopped in my tracks as I glanced at the glorious night sky. It was the sky from *The House*

“When people ask me what The House in the Night is about, I say art, music, books, imagination, family, home, and love. It is a comforting goodnight story that I hope will especially help children who fear the dark.”

town had no electricity for as long as three weeks. I thought about light and dark often during those cold days as we hurried to get everything done during the daylight hours. I agreed with a few of the local elementary school children who quoted Dickens in their essays a month later, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” It was the best of times when we were all together in the same room every night: watching the fire, reading books, playing cards, or reading aloud. People were helping people at every turn. It was the worst of times when we never felt really warm, we were sleep-deprived from having to refuel the stove every two hours day and night, and we were running out of wood. I could feel my spirits slipping each night as the sun went down.

One night, I took the walk out to the garage to get a few more buckets of wood. The air was freezing and the icy ground treacherous underfoot. I looked around

in the Night! That light in the dark lifted my spirits more than I can say, and I suddenly felt a deep connection with the stars, the ice, and the night.

* * *

I have so many people to thank this evening. Thank you to Susan Marie Swanson for your lovely manuscript; to Ann Rider for your encouragement and guidance every step of the way, on this book and all the books we’ve done together; to Carol Rosenberg for your design expertise; to Donna McCarthy for your production genius; and to Sheila Smallwood, Lisa DiSarro, Karen Walsh, and the rest of the staff at Houghton Mifflin Harcourt for your help. I am so grateful to you all.

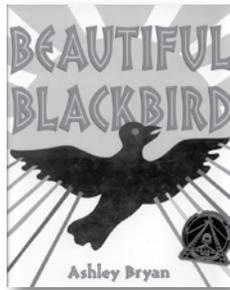
Thank you to my family and friends for your support: my husband, my daughters, my father and stepmother, my sisters and their families, my aunts, uncles, cousins. Thanks also to those departed:

my mother, grandparents, and other family members and friends who cheer me on from above.

Lastly, I thank my little town of Peterborough, New Hampshire. Here the residents know that community matters, that the arts matter, and that books matter. In particular, thank you to my librarian friends at the Peterborough Town Library; the staff of the Toadstool Bookshop; and the Sharon Arts Center, where, years ago, I was first introduced to wood engraving. I have been overwhelmed by the excitement and good wishes of all. Friends tell me that all they heard for a week afterward was, “Did you hear about Beth Krommes?” The most amusing line relayed to me was when our friend Ray said, “Isn’t it great! Beth Krommes has scratched her way to the top!”

* * *

As I sat on the flight home from New York City after the *Today* show interview, I had a chance to reflect on all that had happened during the last day and a half. I felt like that little girl on the back of the bird in our story as we flew over the woodland and farmland of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. The winter landscape was stunning. The sky turned rosy, then dark, and lights started to sparkle in the houses and buildings below. Soon I would be home and back to daily life, but for the moment I was filled only with wonder, gratitude, and great hope for the future. Thank you. ☺



Wilder Award Acceptance Speech

Paradise as a Library

Ashley Bryan

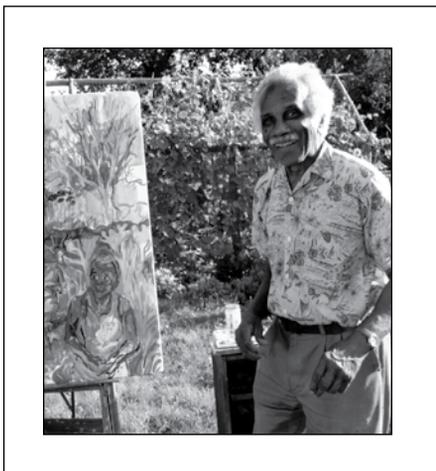


Photo by Bill McGuinness, courtesy of HarperCollins.

Ashley Bryan is the winner of the 2009 Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal, awarded for the body of a person's work. His acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago on July 12, 2009.

You are my people! I grew up in New York City, in the Bronx. My home was in four- and five-story tenement apartment buildings. We knew everyone in these apartments, and everyone looked after everyone as family. That is what I mean when I say you are my people. It was the early recognition that family need not be based solely on blood.

Now the American Library Association has chosen me to join the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award family. I am deeply moved. The ALA committees make the hard choices of selecting the best from the large body of fine work published each year. I am indeed humbled when chosen to represent all who have given the best of their time and talent in this outreach to children.

When awards are announced, I rejoice. I feel this is an affirmation of the importance of books in our lives. Excellent books are not in competition with one another. I feel they all enter that Heaven where east, west, north, and south offer books that are equally challenging, magical. I love the Jorge Luis Borges quote, "I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library."

A library was certainly like a paradise to me during my childhood. Books were free, and we could take them home. My sister, brother, and I, the first three of six children, used orange crates as bookshelves for the borrowed library books. We called them our own home library.

It is no wonder that I was excited when, in kindergarten, I made my first book. It was an alphabet book created with my own pictures. I was writer, illustrator, binder; I sewed the pages together to the color paper cover, and as distributor I took the book home.

The rave reviews I received for these limited-edition one-of-a-kind books kept me going. Later, the teacher explained that all of the books on library shelves began as what we were doing: limited-edition, one-of-a-kind books. Because of the praise I received for those books, I gave gifts of my handmade books to family and friends.

I tried for many years to enter the children's book world. Then Jean Karl, founding editor of children's books at Atheneum, heard of my work and came to my studio in the Bronx. She spent the day looking at my art. She was excited by my varied approaches to texts and soon afterward sent me a contract to begin work with Atheneum. That was in the early 1960s; I was in my forties. Now my books would reach beyond my small circle of family and friends because they would be printed in the thousands . . . *Hurrah!*

Although now my books are printed in the thousands, it is the feeling of the handmade book that is at the heart of my bookmaking. I'd like you, holding one of my books, to feel that I am offering you a one-of-a-kind gift that you will treasure and share.

My work with Jean Karl continued through the years. She knew my work, family, and community commitments, but she kept after me to keep developing the book themes that she had noted in my studio. Jean remembered my illustrations of African tales and asked to use them. When I told her that most of my illustrations were done for texts that documented the story but did not approach the oral tradition, she said, "Ashley, tell them in your own words!"

That was my challenge, to find a way to keep the voice of the oral tradition alive as it is carried over into the book. My lead was poetry. Poetry has always been at the heart of all I do. In elementary school in the Bronx, we students prepared expressive readings of poetry. We were taught that the soul of poetry, like song, is experienced in hearing it. Each day began with students reciting their interpretation of the poem they had been given at least two weeks to prepare.

The prose of my African stories uses the devices of poetry, rhythm, rhyme, onomatopoeia, and alliteration to open the sound of the voice to the printed word. It is my hope that readers, even reading silently, will feel that they are hearing the storyteller.

I graduated from high school in 1940 and knew that I would have to have a schol-

arship to further my studies. My high school art teachers advised me to apply to the Cooper Union School of Art and Engineering, which to this day grants free tuition to all of its undergraduates. I was fortunate in being among those admitted to the art school.

When I begin planning the illustrations for a book, I choose the visual approach that will best partner the text. At Cooper Union, we studied the art and culture of

I enjoy exploring different art cultures for my books. I acknowledge my sources: medieval illuminated manuscripts for Langston Hughes's *Carol of the Brown King*; early block-printed books for my first two block-printed books of spirituals. Whatever the source, it has allowed me to discover untapped reserves of myself.

So, I have explored a variety of art materials to illustrate the texts I choose: tempera

cheered my collage spreads all the way through.

Authors and illustrators work closely with our editors. They have this gift of insight that enables them to critique and guide our work to the published book. I think of it as the editors' awesome ability to follow us, one step ahead!

There are so many wonderful people with whom I have worked in our world of young people's books. I remember librarians, teachers, and readers. Many of you have become dear friends. From the heart I thank each one of you, individually. To paraphrase St. Teresa, "I have a heart so grateful it could be bought with a sardine."

In the integrity and dignity by which we validate time, our being, whatever the nature of our work, I feel we are feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, because we are pursuing the ways of peace.

In conversations with Caitlyn Dlouhy on my collage book of three favorite spirituals, *Let It Shine*, we talked of how singers have often added a verse or verses of their own to the spirituals. She invited me to do so as well. To "Oh, When the Saints Go Marching In" I added the verse, "Oh, when the children play in peace, Oh, when the children play in peace, Oh, Lord I want to be in that number, when the children play in peace." Let's sing it! AMEN! ☺

"In the integrity and dignity by which we validate time, our being, whatever the nature of our work, I feel we are feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, because we are pursuing the ways of peace."

the world. I draw upon these sources for the illustration of my books. For my first book of African tales, I used red, yellow, black, and white tempera paint. I painted clearly shaped forms inspired by African sculpture, masks, and the Bushmen rock paintings.

For the African tale *The Dancing Granny*, I did swift line brush paintings to capture the spirit of dance. It was the scenes of everyday-life brush paintings by the Japanese artist Hokusai that inspired my illustrations for *Granny* and the trickster Spider Ananse.

paint, watercolor, pencil, crayon pencil, and block prints. But when I began to work with my current editor, Caitlyn Dlouhy, I had not yet worked in collage. We chose a story from Zambia that I had begun retelling, "How the Ringdove Came by Its Ring." I retitled it *Beautiful Blackbird*. The opening lines of the text describe the birds as all colors of the rainbow. I felt this would allow me to cut colored papers of the birds rather than painting them. Caitlyn encouraged this approach. She was excited by my first double-page spreads, and as she worked closely with my retelling of the tale, she

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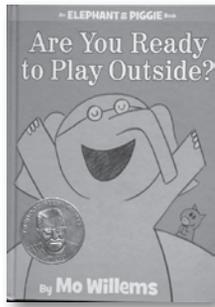
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Geisel Award Acceptance Speech

Willems Tips His Hat to the Sublime

Mo Willems



*Author/illustrator Mo Willems is the recipient of the Theodor Seuss Geisel Award for *Are You Ready to Play Outside?* published by Hyperion Books for Children, an imprint of Disney Book Group. He delivered his speech at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago on July 13, 2009.*

For me the gold standard for Early Readers is not a book that Theodor Geisel wrote or drew, but rather one he edited—P. D. Eastman's sublime *Go, Dog, Go!*

Who wouldn't want to be up that tree in the middle of a Dog Party?

Seriously. Sublime.

But not perfect.

One hole in the story has always bugged me: the recurring series of encounters between two dogs, one in a hat, the other bare headed. Every time after the haberdashered poodle asks, "Do you like my hat?" the other dog replies, "No."

Then, the poodle just walks off.

Even as a kid I thought that if I were that poodle, I wouldn't just walk off.

I'd say something like, "Hey, screw you. Do you know how much time I spent on this hat? I'm outta here!"

The emotional life of those dogs is missing. Now, I don't blame Geisel or Eastman. After all they were single-handedly inventing an entirely new form of literature, a twentieth-century artistic achievement rivaled only by Alexander Calder's invention of mobile sculpture.

They were busy, thank you very much.

Plus, I love the hole they left. It's just big enough to squeeze through an Elephant and a Pig.

Are You Ready to Play Outside? and all the other Elephant and Piggie adventures begin with a "Do you like my hat?" moment and feed on the aftermath of the emotions created by it. That's what makes Elephant and Piggie books so fun to make; they are uniquely mine, yet simultaneously they walk in hallowed paw-prints.

So, today I'd like to thank Mr. Geisel and Mr. Eastman for what they didn't do, as well as thank this committee for what they did do, which is to say surprise and delight me with this award.

Thank you also for including me in a group of excellent books. It is an honor to be honored with these honor books.

My agent, my editor, my publicist, my wife, and my daughter comprise an army that shields me, challenges me, and keeps me honest.

And if I am to be honest, I have to admit that my work doesn't have a hole like Geisel and Eastman's. It has many, many more.

I can't wait to discover who's out there ready to fill them up and how they'll do it.

It will be as magical as a bunch of dogs partying in a tree.

And I'll tip my hat off to them, whether they like my hat or not.

Thank you. 🐾

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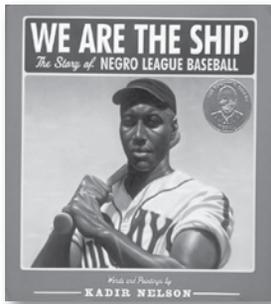
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Sibert Medal Acceptance Speech

Trampling the Grass at Hank Aaron's House

Kadir Nelson

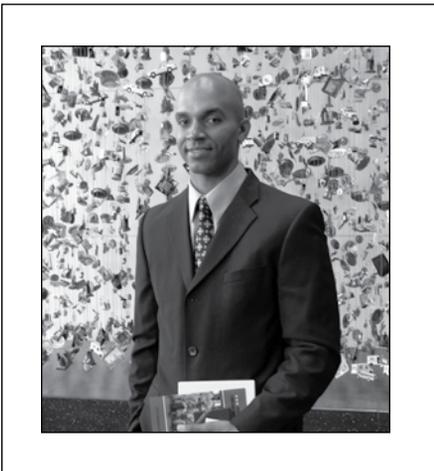


Photo by Sharon Verbeten.

Kadir Nelson is winner of the 2009 Sibert Medal for *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball*, which he wrote and illustrated. It was published by Disney–Jump at the Sun, an imprint of Disney Book Group. His acceptance speech was delivered at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago on July 13, 2009.

Thank you so much for bestowing this wonderful award upon my book. I feel privileged to be here and tickled nonetheless. I was so pleased to receive a call from the jury the evening before the awards were announced that I felt a bit like repeating actress Sally Field who, upon winning an Academy Award, said, “You like me. You really like me.”

But I was a bit too reserved to say something like that. Instead I thanked the jury, grinned to myself, and took the night off.

Working on *We Are the Ship* was a privilege in itself. The subject matter was endlessly interesting, and my journey to complete the book was filled with wonderful surprises like field ceremonies at Petco Park in San Diego and meetings with Jackie Robinson's widow and daughter and Hall of Famers Willie Mays and Monte Irvin.

However, one particular privilege stands out above all others. I was so privileged to have Mr. Hank Aaron, the homerun slugger, write the foreword for *We Are the Ship*. Before asking him to write the foreword, however, I couldn't help but think about a pretty big snag that could have spoiled the whole thing.

Now, I've never told this story publicly, and for good reason, so for all intents and purposes, it must not leave this room. I believe I can trust you all because my mother always told me that librarians are the most trustworthy people in the world, and I believed her.

Shortly before the book was even a seed of an idea, I got to visit with Mr. Aaron at his home in Atlanta. In the year 2000, I was invited to display my artwork at a fundraiser for Johnnie Cochran's foundation, which was to be held at Hank Aaron's home in Atlanta.

I knew that Mr. Aaron had played in the Negro Leagues and that his wife collected art. I had just finished three paintings of Satchel Paige, Rube Foster, and the Negro League All-Star East-West Classic, and I thought it was a prime opportunity to share my work with the Aarons.

I immediately shipped the paintings to Atlanta and, upon my arrival, set them

“Now, I've never told this story publicly, and for good reason, so for all intents and purposes, it must not leave this room. I believe I can trust you all because my mother always told me that librarians are the most trustworthy people in the world, and I believed her.”

up underneath a tent on his private tennis court along with the other handful of artists who had also been invited to display their work. I noticed that the tent was anchored to the court surface with cables tied to large steel pegs, which caused rather large holes and bulges on the surface around each peg. I remember thinking, “Ooh—that's going to leave a mark.”

After setting up, all of the artists waited for guests and the Aarons to visit the tent. To our dismay, very few people came over to see our work and the Aarons were a no-show. The tennis courts were set apart from the main party area, and apparently no one had made an announcement to alert the guests that we were there with our artwork on display.

A couple of hours into the evening, I decided to leave the tent and try to enjoy the party. The Aarons have a lovely home on a rather large lot, and there were hundreds of people in attendance. I made it over to his backyard just in time to see a live performance by the one-and-only Stevie Wonder.

On my way to watch the performance, I noticed that the property was covered with beautiful green grass; however, it looked as if it had been trampled by a herd of wild horses! Apparently, the Aarons had just put down fresh sod all over the property, and it was turned up

by the shoes of hundreds of guests who were enjoying the party.

After the performance ended, I returned to the tent and remained there for the rest of the evening. I didn't manage to sell anything that night, but I was glad for the experience. As I was packing up my artwork and taking it out to the truck, I bumped into Mr. Aaron, who was watching everyone leave. My friend, who invited me to display my work, introduced me to Mr. Aaron.

"Mr. Aaron, this is Kadir Nelson, one of

the artists who displayed work in the tent on the tennis courts." Mr. Aaron was a lot taller than I expected, and I was deeply honored to meet him.

"It's an honor to meet you, Mr. Aaron," I said as I shook his hand, but he seemed rather distracted. Instead of saying "Hello, young man," or something like that, he said, "Hmm. My grass, my grass. They really did a number on my grass."

Apparently, he noticed the hoof prints as well. I heard later that he didn't visit the tent because he was informed about the

large pegs that destroyed his tennis court and was chagrined by his trampled grass. I certainly understood his grief.

I learned a very valuable lesson that night in Atlanta. When asking someone like Hank Aaron to write the foreword for your book, do not remind him that you were one of the people at his party that night that trampled his grass. He probably doesn't remember meeting you.

I was right.

Thank you so much. It's a privilege. 🐾

What I Wasn't Taught in Library School

The "What I Wasn't Taught in Library School" series ran on the ALSC blog this winter featuring contributions such as the entries below from ALSC members. Check out the ALSC blog at www.alsc.ala.org/blog for more great stories and information!

Finding "That" Book

My library schooling really prepared me to speak more in depth about an author's corpus of works, helping me connect with popular titles and series. But I wasn't prepared for the number of kids who would come into the library at our elementary campus and ask for "the orange book" or "that red book by the guy."

After two years, I got a new assistant and had to provide training. One of the first things I gave her was a little tour of "When the kids ask for. . . they mean this book." That afternoon, while I was in the computer lab doing a lesson, a first grader came in asking for "that scary book."

Imagine how delighted he was when my new assistant directed him right to *The Ghost of Sifty, Sifty Sam*—the exact book he described.

Mariya Rodriguez, Librarian, Theodore Roosevelt High School, San Antonio, Texas

From Books to Birthday Parties?

It's been eleven years since I earned my MLS. Never did I suspect that the programs that would draw the best crowds would involve video games and food. I feel like I am running a birthday parties retail outlet. I hope that some of these kids will pick up a book sometime.

Bina Williams, Bridgeport (Conn.) Public Library

A Case of Book Burning

A determined-looking parent came into my library demanding to know which of her foster sons had checked out *Drawing the Human Form*. We were still using card and pocket circulation, and I had no record of the book being checked out to anyone.

Imagine my surprise when she announced that it didn't really matter because she didn't think the book was appropriate (these boys were high schoolers), and so she'd had the one she believed checked it out take it out back to their burn barrel and set fire to it.

She went on to say that if any other books she disagreed with came home, she would do the same with them. I was speechless. My principal told her that since she'd destroyed district property, the book would need to be paid for and a replacement purchased.

On the bright side, neither boy had lied to her since no one had checked the book out!

Kimberly Brosan, Teacher/Librarian, Williamsport (Pa.) Area High School

I Learned to Milk a Cow!

One thing I learned how to do after becoming a librarian was milk a cow. It was for a program we did called Civil War Days. We worked with reenactors who provided the bulk of the program. Our goal was to showcase life from all sides and all ages in the 1860s. We set up a representation of a one-room school and wanted to show children what life was like. We contacted a local farmer who brought a cow and taught me how to milk it.

Martha J. C. Cole, Children's Coordinator, Chesapeake (Va.) Public Library System



Carnegie Medal Acceptance Speech

Breaking the Rules . . . on One Great Book

Paul Gagne

Weston Woods was the winner of the 2009 Carnegie Medal for *March On*; co-producer **Paul Gagne** presented his speech at the ALA Annual Convention in Chicago in July 2009.

On behalf of myself and my co-producer, Melissa Reilly Ellard, I'd like to thank [committee chair] Margaret Tice, the members of the 2009 Carnegie Medal committee, ALSC, and the American Library Association for this honor.

March On was first brought to our attention by Andrea Davis Pinkney, vice president and executive editor in the trade division of our parent company, Scholastic. Having produced videos of several of Andrea's books as an author, we've known her since 1997, and shortly after joining Scholastic, she came to visit our studio in Norwalk, Conn., to talk about some projects she was working on that might have been of interest to Weston Woods.

One of these was a book about the August 28, 1963 civil rights march in Washington, DC, as remembered by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s sister, Christine King Farris. It was to be published to coincide with the forty-fifth anniversary of the march. It didn't take long for this to become the first project we've ever said "yes" to before it was actually a book—we knew we were breaking several of our own rules by doing so, but it was one of those projects we all wanted to do just because we felt we should. Thank you, Andrea, for bringing this project to us, and for your valuable input throughout the production of the video.

One of the first things we decided on was a choice of narrator. We needed someone who could essentially "play" the role of Christine King Farris, bringing her words to life with power and passion. After consulting with Andrea, we decided on Lynn Whitfield, an amazingly gifted actress we'd worked with on several previous projects. Lynn worked very hard in the studio to deliver an expressive, deeply moving performance that became the heart of this video.

For its musical soul, we used a combination of existing recordings and an original score. Christine King Farris's text made several references to songs by legendary gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, which we were able to license thanks to Jeanne Fox Music. For the original score,

we turned to Michael Bacon, who had done a number of documentaries for PBS that had the reverential quality we were looking for.

Having said yes to this project on the basis of a manuscript, when we first saw London Ladd's illustrations for *March On*, we realized what a challenge we had taken on. They were absolutely beautiful, but the book didn't have one of the key adaptability factors we always look for—a good ratio of illustrations to text, with everything described in the text having some visual representation in the illustrations. As director of the project, Melissa Reilly Ellard came up with the perfect solution—she *made* the book adaptable by doing an exhaustive amount of research to find the archival photos that were used to supplement London Ladd's illustrations. I thank her for her tireless effort on this project.

Other people to thank include Steve Syarto, who assembled and mixed the soundtrack, and, as always, our vice president, Linda Lee, who does so much to make it possible for us to do what we do, and, of course, our respective spouses and families for their love and support.

There are two things that we'll always associate with *March On* being chosen for this award. The first is that the award's announcement came two weeks after we sat in our conference room at Weston Woods watching Barack Obama sworn in as our nation's forty-fourth president. During the inauguration, one commentator made the point that it had taken forty years for the words of Dr. King's "I have a dream" speech to travel the distance from the Lincoln Memorial to the front steps of the Capitol. That really resonated with us, and it's such an honor to have been involved with a project that shared the story of a great, defining moment in our history at the time of another great, defining moment.

The second is that this award will always be associated with our memory of Kathy Krasniewicz. We hadn't known Kathy for very long, but as the many entries on

continued on page 28

Drawing Back the Curtain

Momma's Inspiration . . . and the Making of a Writer

Christopher Paul Curtis

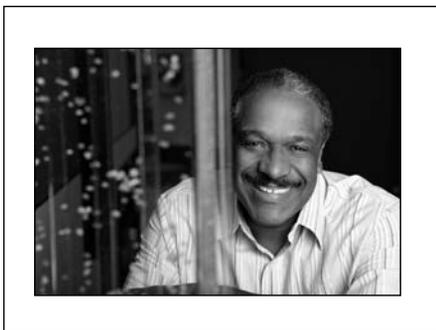


Photo courtesy of UM Photo Services/Lin Jones.

Newbery Medal and Coretta Scott King Award winner **Christopher Paul Curtis** delivered this keynote speech at the ALSC Institute held in Salt Lake City, Utah, in September 2008.

One of my biggest worries after the publication of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* and the fact that it looked like there would be more books, was that since writing is an act of revelation of the author (a drawing back of the curtain), it meant the more books I published, the more revealed I would be. I imagined really perceptive readers, mental health professionals, and arm-chair analysts reading my books, putting one and one together, and going, “Ewww!”

Now, the best defense is a good offense, so before these unwanted analysts can pick me apart, I’m going to do the analyzing for them.

If you carefully look at the books I’ve written so far, there is one shadow over all of them: my mother. I, in fact, was born Sunday, May 10, 1953, Mother’s Day.

Yes, my mother has been the major influence on my writing since I can remember—and not only because she and my father led by example and were avid readers. Any lasting image I have of my mother is with a book in one hand and a cigarette in the other. She finished off one book and two packs every single day. She’s always given me encouragement, she’s always said the right things at the right time, and she also gave me the best review of my writing I’ll ever get.

I was in fifth grade at the time, and every Tuesday, I’d leave Clark Elementary School and walk over to an all-white school on the other side of town for classes for the academically talented or “special” classes. One assignment we were given was to write a newspaper article as if we were reporting for a newspaper from the Roman Empire. I brought my article home and worked on it then showed it to my mother. She read it and said, “I wish you hadn’t brought this home; they’ll think an adult did it.” I believe that moment was the birth of my career as a writer.

Quite a few of the incidents in my books are drawn directly from interactions with my mother, or as I like to call them, “Adventures with Leslie.” The absolute very first memory I have, which made

it into *Elijah of Buxton*, was walking in our front yard on Flint’s North Street holding my mother’s hand. I was really tiny because I had my hand extended all the way over my head to hold hers. I clearly remember looking at the ground and seeing an ant hill. I was amazed at these bugs and pulled my legs up so Momma would stop and we could get a better look.

She told me, “Those are ants. We’ll go to the library and get a book about them.”

Not all of the reminiscences are quite so gentle and loving though.

When at the age of forty-one I took a year off work to write my first book, the very first thing I wrote dealt with my mother and me. It’s in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, and it’s the most purely autobiographical piece I’ve written. It’s the chapter called “Nazi Parachutes Attack America and Get Shot Down Over the Flint River By Captain Byron Watson and His Flamethrower of Death.”

In the story, thirteen-year-old Byron is in the bathroom lighting toilet paper parachutes and floating them over the toilet before flushing them away. That was me! I wasn’t quite as creative as Byron though. I just would light the matches and flush them away one at a time. For some reason, I found the quick hiss they made as they were extinguished fascinating.

My mother was downstairs and must’ve wondered why the toilet was being flushed over and over, so in that motherly fashion she came to investigate.

She opened the bathroom door, I dropped the matches and backed toward the tub, she said, “What are you doing?”

I told her, “Nothing, Momma!”

She jabbed her finger into my nose and said, “Light one more match in this house, and I will burn you.”

Her voice was calm, and I knew she meant it.

So I smartened up. The next time I wandered down Pyromaniac Lane, I locked

the bathroom door. I got on my knees to better hear the hiss and started lighting and flushing.

I must've been on match number seven when all of a sudden the door exploded off its hinges and, like Elliot Ness and the Untouchables, Momma stormed into the bathroom.

I said, "Momma, I . . ."

She said nothing. She reached down with one hand, grabbed me around the collar, and lifted me straight up into the air.

I clearly remember dangling from her upraised arm and thinking, "I never would've done it if I'd've known she was this strong!"

She carried me downstairs, threw me on the couch, and said in a strangely deep voice, "Don't you move," then disappeared into the kitchen.

Now some people may think I was a fool not to make a break for it at that point, but you have to remember this was the 1960s, and the death penalty was still being actively enforced, so I knew to stay put.

When Momma came back from the kitchen, I knew she was serious because she was carrying a book of matches, a Band-Aid, and a jar of Vaseline!

She told me, "Stick your finger out."

My finger, completely out of my control, obeyed, it shook like a leaf, but it obeyed.

My eyes closed and I clenched my teeth. I could hear the match being struck.

That sulfury match smell flooded into my flared nostrils.

My finger started getting warm as Momma said, "If you ever . . ."

She moved the match closer, my finger started getting warmer.

Momma said, ". . . ever, light another match in this house . . ."

She moved the match even closer, my finger started getting hot.

Momma said, ". . . I will burn not only your finger, I will turn you into an inferno!"

I won't tell you what happened next, if you'd like to know you may purchase a copy of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* at your nearest bookstore.

"Yes, my mother has been the major influence on my writing since I can remember—and not only because she and my father led by example and were avid readers. She's always given me encouragement, she's always said the right things at the right time, and she also gave me the best review of my writing I'll ever get."

I was surprised that my editor, Wendy Lamb, let that stay in the book because it sounds, at worst, like child abuse and sounds, at best, like extraordinary interrogation techniques.

Sure I probably should've had some type of counseling, but we couldn't afford that, and you have to keep in mind that this was before Oprah was on TV telling us that maybe the whole burning thing might not be too good an idea. But it did work. To this day, I'm terrified at the sound of a match being struck.

With Momma, the winds could blow warm and gently or they could rage like a hurricane. And I was never quite able to predict which was coming. Another of my adventures with her happened when I was around eleven.

It was in the sixth grade. I remember clearly since that was the year of Mr. Alums, a teacher I had dreaded since third grade because the word on the street was that Mr. Alums was so "bad" that he had made Buphead cry. Let me repeat that, he was so bad, that he had made Buphead cry. And if you have the capability of making someone with a name like Buphead, who was probably

in his early thirties back then and in the sixth grade for the fourth time, cry, what chance did a *fragile* boy like me have?

But what bothered me most was that Mr. Alums' pet peeve was penmanship, and if I have ever inscribed a book to you, you know what a weak point my penmanship is . . . or as one of your English-teaching peers told me at a signing, "You *do* have penmanship issues, don't you?"

Oh yeah, I've seen the grimaces and whispered comments as I sign my name. Some of you have even been bold enough to say things like, "You know, if you held your pen just a little different you'd end up with much better results." Or, "Dear me, started out wanting to be a doctor did we?"

I had a kind of hyper-awareness around everything in the sixth grade because I was so terrified of dealing with Mr. Alums. That's how I know this happened when I was eleven years old.

At eleven years old, I was an explorer—an explorer on a tether firmly in my mother's grip, but an explorer nonetheless. Those were different times, and I was allowed to explore as long as I remained within calling range. The term "calling range" had nothing to do with anything electronic; it meant being within the range of my mother standing on the front porch and yelling out, "CHREE-USS!!!" three times. Not four, or five, three. One was to the right, one was to the left, and one was straight ahead.

After the third time, she'd go back in the house and resume whatever it was she'd been doing. From the second the screen

door closed behind her, the countdown started, and I had a three-minute window in which I had to cease and desist all explorations and appear on the porch. Otherwise I'd risk having a very unpleasant and highly embarrassing one-woman posse organized and sent out to discover my whereabouts.

Fortunately, being within calling range included a place around the corner and down the block from our home where an abandoned house sat. Although all of the first floor windows and doors of the house were boarded, many a young Flintstone and a couple of the winos in the neighborhood knew that the wood

Flintstone knew about this place, but it had been placed out of bounds by more than just Leslie Curtis. Buphead had appropriated it as his headquarters, and a square like me had best not be caught in there.

Cigarette butts, crumpled packs of Kool cigarettes, empty bottles of Thunderbird wine, and empty packets of cherry Kool-Aid (which were mixed together and drunk, believe it or not) were liberally spread over the floors of the three upstairs bedrooms. I ignored all of these and headed for the tiny kitchen. It was there that I'd made a discovery that brought me great and lasting joy.

“At eleven years old, I was an explorer—an explorer on a tether firmly in my mother’s grip, but an explorer nonetheless. Those were different times, and I was allowed to explore as long as I remained within calling range.”

on the basement window on the side could be pulled back just enough to let a curious young explorer or an emaciated alcoholic squeeze through.

I've read somewhere that smells are the best triggers of memories, and I agree. Back in the days when I paid for my own hotels (thank God for Random House and Scholastic), the smell of many a motel room brought to mind the odor I'd meet whenever I'd climb through that imperfectly sealed window. You know the smell—mildew, stagnant water, and something that vaguely suggested unwashed feet.

What could be better? I was eleven years old, out exploring forbidden territory, and violating at least five of my mother's mandates. That basement smell was the greatest odor in the world. To paraphrase an old Ohio Players song, “Heaven must smell like this, it must smell like this.”

Once I'd dropped into the basement and climbed the stairs to the darkened first floor, I'd head for the creaky steps to the second floor. It was there that the treasure awaited me. As I said, many a young

This was the era of James Bond, Secret Squirrel, and The Man from U.N.C.L.E., so I was completely convinced that there were clandestine pathways and cleverly disguised doors to some really great locales that were hidden throughout the neighborhood. And the more hidden the entrance was, the cooler and more important what was behind it had to be.

Therefore I felt an obligation to check every square inch of any place that might be the pathway to a new, much cooler world. This belief led me to climb onto the sink and into the cupboards that lined the abandoned kitchen.

Once I'd hefted myself into the largest cupboard, I immediately sensed something was wrong. To the left, the bottom of the cupboard was covered with dust, disturbed only by odd, football-shaped, black pill-like things and the footprints of what must be a disturbingly large rodent—think beaver or capybara. To the right, the bottom of the cupboard was as clean as if it had been wiped with one of Momma's Lemon Pledge-soaked dust rags. Hmmm . . . I put it all together and realized James Bond must have scooted

through these cupboards on his way to his next mission! What could a young explorer do but follow?

After squeezing myself into the cupboard and tapping the back for hidden compartments, I finally heard the hollow “Tap–Tap–Tap” I'd been waiting my entire life for. And sure enough, the wooden panel that drummed so promisingly was loose. I slid it to the side, and at that moment, I knew what Ponce de Leon (Mr. Alums was teaching us about explorers at the time) would have felt if he'd have discovered the fountain of youth! I knew what O.J. would've felt like if he would've ever found the real killers. I knew what George Bush would've felt if he'd really found weapons of mass destruction . . . or a conscience.

I was stunned. When I regained my composure, I wiped the tears of joy from my eyes to make sure I was really seeing this, to make certain this was real and not some cruel trick my mind was playing on me, or not some weird hallucination caused by close contact with the rat feces I was undoubtedly inhaling inside the large kitchen cupboard. I'd always thought that what my eyes fell on were an urban legend. But, no, it was real! It was real!

My trembling hand reached into the secret chamber, and I pulled out the first of five boxes that were filled with a treasure trove, with the absolute mother lode of . . . Buphead's dirty magazine collection! I'd been provided manna from pornography heaven!

Before we go on and I tie this adventure back in with my mother, I think it's only fair that we do a little defining here. We need to do some clarifying so we all know what we're talking about when I use the word pornography. We all have to be on the same page, if you will.

Pornography here is a relative term. And while it may be dangerous to introduce a second “iffy” topic in a speech where pornography has already been brought up, the only thing I can think to illustrate this is the reports we're constantly bombarded with from the drug czar about the relative strength of today's marijuana. I'm sure you've all heard that today's pot

is ten to twenty times more powerful than what was being smoked decades ago, right?

Today's pornography is analogous to this. What I found in those boxes would, by today's standards, be somewhat akin to 1960s weed; weak, unstimulating, and more likely to provide a headache than a buzz.

This was a collection of mild nudies—nothing explicit, nothing actually sexual. The only balls in these pictures were beach balls the wooden-looking naked ladies were tossing back and forth. The only stiff things in these magazines were the women's beehive hair-dos and their plastic smiles. But to my eleven-year-old eyes, this was the nastiest, most decadent, most prurient thing I'd ever seen. I nearly swooned.

My first instinct was to cram as many of the magazines as I could into one box and head for home. But the thought of being captured by either Buphead and his minions or by Momma made me realize this was folly. What to do? What to do?

For some odd reason, my thoughts ran to the library. That's it! The library! I'd always been a huge fan of libraries. I mean how cool was it that someone would let you walk into their place, borrow some books, and let you leave without paying a cent?

And though it was hard at first to reconcile Buphead as a librarian, my rationalization skills quickly went into high gear. There were several things about him that actually were very librarian-like. Buphead *was* constantly demanding quiet in his presence, and although librarians would never say anything like, "Shut the hell up you little idiot," or "I'll slap the taste out of your mouth," don't kid yourself—that's exactly what they're thinking.

And Buphead did wear only Converse Chuck Taylor All-Star tennis shoes, which no one can deny are both sensible and not the most attractive footwear you can buy—in other words, they were the Birkenstocks of their time. Oh yeah,

whether he knew it or not, on that warm summer day in 1964 Buphead was definitely well on his way to being a latent media specialist!

The next thing to figure out was what would Buphead's borrowing limit per day be? The Flint Public Library allowed you to take ten books at a time, which

"The library! I'd always been a huge fan of libraries. I mean how cool was it that someone would let you walk into their place, borrow some books, and let you leave without paying a cent?"

seemed reasonable to me. I took two magazines from each box and carefully put the boxes and the board back in their original places. I pulled an empty bottle of Mad Dog (Mogen David 20/20) out of a paper bag, stuck my magazines in, and shot through the house and back out of the basement window.

When I reached our front porch, I realized I wasn't quite home free. There was an iron-clad guarantee that Momma would want to know what I was carrying to my room in a crumpled, brown paper bag. I had to scout the living room first. I slid the bag under a porch chair and went in.

As soon as I opened the screen door, I knew I was pretty much safe, the smell of onions and ground beef cooking filled the living room. Just to make sure I yelled out to the kitchen, "Mom, how long before dinner?"

She said, "I just started, but don't go anywhere."

"Yes, Mom."

As she chopped more onions, I calmly retrieved my magazines and walked slowly up the stairs. (I'd learned long ago that one of the best ways to trigger suspicion in an adult was to fly up the stairs.) I sat on my bed and tried to figure out where I was going to hide my new stash.

I quickly mentally discarded the obvious spots:

Inside the broken television on the dresser? Nah, that was where my brother David hid his junk.

How about inside one of the panels of the hanging ceiling? That was good, I'd used it before, but I had my suspicions it had been compromised by either David or my mother.

That spot was okay for classified items, but not so hot for top-secret, for-your-eyes-only items like these new magazines.

There was always that mysterious space between the mattress and the box spring. Are you kidding me? My friend, Sparky, had first told me about that spot, and if Sparky knew about it so did everyone else in the world.

Then it hit me. For some reason, I still had the box that my long-broken Lionel train had come in. If I completely cleaned out the three-foot-high pile of junk on the floor of my closet, turned the bottom half of the empty train box upside down, put it on the floor of my closet, then piled all the junk back on top of the box, I had the perfect hiding place. I slid the magazines under the box and was all set. As I said, it was perfect.

Unfortunately, perfection is a fleeting commodity in this world. In this case it lasted maybe four or five months.

By that time, my collection had grown to thirty or forty magazines. Whether this was due to a late-fees-be-damned attitude on my part or whether it was because Buphead had adopted a more liberal limit on the amount of magazines you could borrow, I'm not sure. But as in most shady enterprises, the perpetrator brought destruction upon himself.

I don't know why I didn't listen to Momma

when she told me over and over to clean my room. She must've been harping on it for weeks. My standard, "Yes, Mom, I will," reply was used one time too many.

The tragedy went down like this.

"Did you clean your room?"

"Not yet, Mom, but I will."

Then she said them, the three words that struck terror in my heart, she said, "That's it, Buster," and started up the stairs. I was right behind her.

"Okay, Momma, I'll do it now."

"You're doggone right you'll do it now," she called over her shoulder as she stormed into my room. She attacked my bed first.

She began pulling clothes and toys and papers and books from under the bed

"In my eleven-year-old eyes, my mother was Superman, Lex Luthor, Batman, the Penguin, Wonder Woman, and The Hulk rolled into one. I respected her, and I feared her."

and threw them into a heap in the middle of the room. As she disemboweled the area under the bed, she'd say things like, "What on Earth is this?"

And, "I thought you said this sweater was stolen at school."

And, "No wonder you haven't been hungry at dinner time."

And, "Are you kidding me?"

As she pulled a baseball-sized chocolate Easter egg that had one bite out of it from under the bed, she said, "And you let me punish David for taking this!"

She dropped the egg down into the pocket of her apron. Not a good omen.

I'd borrowed the egg months earlier. Apparently I'd discovered it just before

the Easter bunny was going to drop it off. I'd taken one bite and nearly gagged. I'd wiped my tongue on the blanket and rolled the egg under the bed. If she carried her raid on and kept digging, she'd find the part that had been bitten off under there as well.

I figured she'd made her point and would quit tossing my possessions, but no, she was on a mission.

I stood back and waited, knowing that with the vigor and anger she was going at my bed she'd soon tire herself out.

Man, my Momma had great cardiovascular fitness.

She finally pulled a last empty bag of potato chips from under the bed and stood there panting.

I knew the next thing out of her mouth would be some variation of "You wait

until your father gets home," but no, her eyes scanned the room and in slow motion they finally locked on the closed closet door.

My heart stopped beating, my blood ran cold, and all I could hear was myself yelling, "Nooooo!"

I threw myself in front of her and screamed, "All right, Momma, I'll get cleaning right now! Really, look."

I picked up a pair of pants and made a show of folding them. She brushed me aside and pulled the closet door open. Her gasp sucked all of the oxygen out of the place.

She got her second wind and started attacking the closet.

I crumpled into a whimpering ball and

waited. My only prayer was that she'd finally get so tired and worn out that she'd quit. Man, my Momma could've been an aerobics instructor.

Twenty-five minutes later, the only thing left in the closet was my still upside down Lionel train box. How fitting because the slowly unfolding train wreck that was occurring at 509 Wilbur Place, Flint, Michigan, Zone 4 was coming to its tragic denouement.

She stood there huffing and puffing, looked at me and said, "Just you wait till your father gets home."

She took a step toward the door out of my room. What? That's it? She didn't move the box?

I could barely suppress the joy in my voice when I said, "Yes, Momma, I'll have it all cleaned by then."

She bent over to pick up a butter knife I'd used as a screwdriver. When she did, that damned Easter egg rolled out of her apron's pocket.

It bounced twice, rolled a bit more, and finally ended up resting against my train box.

Nooooo!

Momma reached over, picked up the egg, put it back in her apron pocket, and, of course, in one last act of irrational rage, heartily flung my train box toward the mountain of junk in the middle of the room. Thirty or forty nudie magazines sailed through the room like a blizzard.

Before I explain what happened next, I have to let you know what I thought of my mother up to that point. I was a big comic book fan, DC Comics mostly, but I did enjoy the occasional Marvel comic as well. In my eleven-year-old eyes, my mother was Superman, Lex Luthor, Batman, The Penguin, Wonder Woman, and the Hulk rolled into one. I respected her and I feared her. She had me and my siblings convinced that she was absolutely insane and would take any one of us out at the drop of a hat. I figured the fluttering to Earth nudie magazines rep-

resented one giant hat being dropped. I knew I was a goner.

Momma looked at the magazines, looked at me, looked back at the magazines, back at me, and then did something completely shocking.

Her face went blank. She did one of those women-in-the-movies-about-to-faint things. She even put her hand on her forehead, stumbled back a bit, then stepping over the mess she'd made staggered out of my room like someone who'd been struck blind.

What?

All of her anger, all of her fury, all of her power had drained away.

I looked at the magazines and my first thought was, "Oh my God! Kryptonite!"

I quickly, gleefully gathered my magazine collection and re-hid them, thinking how things were going to be different now that I was going to be in charge. But my elation was short-lived.

David came into the room and said, "I don't know what you did to Momma, but she just got off the phone with Dad, and he's on his way home. I'm gonna have this room all to myself once you're gone."

Memory is a wonderful thing. It can serve as a shield, gracefully allowing us to forget events that are too painful to recall.

I don't remember what happened when Dad got home. I do remember having to surrender my Kryptonite, but beyond that everything else is a convenient blur.

Memory has blessedly shielded me from all but two of the consequences of being the star patron of Buphead's library. I do recall I soon thereafter began walking around with the Bible while at home. I also can remember the way my mother's eyes rolled the first time she saw this, completely unimpressed by my newly discovered sanctity.

I also know that several days later at dinner time I came to the table, and

while Lindsey's and Cydney's and David's plates were waiting for them at their usual spots, there was no plate at all waiting for me. Where my plate should've been resting sat that damned Easter egg. I knew it was the same one because the bite mark was there, still covered with lint, dust and hair.

The tears rolled down my cheeks as I sat down to what I knew was going to be the only thing I'd get to eat until it was completely gone.

A couple of hours and a couple of gallons of tears later, I was still at the table. I'd forced down maybe three quarters of the egg but was at my limit.

First Lindsey, then Cydney, then David strolled by the dining room table, reached over, picked up my Easter egg and bit at it until all that was left was the furry area around my first bite-mark. I plugged my nose, tossed the egg and lint down, and finally left the table.

And I'm sad to report that to this day not a one of my ungrateful little brat siblings has ever thanked me for letting them share my egg.

Remembering Johnny Wilson

Other adventures with my mother haven't yet made it into any of my stories, but I know someday they will. A good example of this is my friend Johnny Wilson. Johnny just appeared on our porch one day. I was playing with my green plastic soldiers, looked up, and there this strange boy was standing smiling at me.

"What's your name," he asked. Before I could answer he said, "Can I play with your army men too?"

"Sure."

Johnny and I hit it off right away. He didn't even mind being the Nazis when we went to war.

We'd been playing for only a few minutes when some alarm was triggered in Momma's head, and she came to investigate.

She immediately fell into Perry Mason mode.

"Hello," she said through the screen door, "What's your name?"

"I'm Johnny Wilson."

"Are you new here, Johnny?"

"No, ma'am, I've lived here all my life."

Momma came out on the porch.

"Do you go to Clark?"

"No, ma'am, I go to Stewart."

Momma said, "Stewart? Where do you live, Johnny?"

"387 East Howard Street."

"Howard? My goodness, that's quite a ways from here."

"It's not so far."

"Does your mom know you're here, Johnny?"

"I guess so. She doesn't care, long as I'm back before the street lights come on."

Momma went back inside.

Johnny said, "Man, your momma sure does ask a lot of questions."

I hated to tell Johnny this, but I had a feeling the questions were just beginning.

Right on cue, Momma pushed open the screen door carrying her purse. She said, "Come on, Johnny. Let's take a walk over to your house." She reached her hand out to him.

He took her hand and said, "Does this mean I'm not allowed to play with your boy?"

Momma smiled and said, "No. I just need to talk to your mom for a minute."

She turned to me and said, "Lindsey's in charge, and you'd better not move off of this porch."

I watched my mother and Johnny walking toward Liberty Street. Another potential friend sent into exile by Leslie Curtis.

Oh well. I went back to war by myself.

About an hour later, I was surprised to see Momma and Johnny coming back!

Johnny ran up to me and said, "Your Momma said I can play army men with

several times over the next few weeks he'd catch himself getting ready to say something about his sister and would stop in mid-sentence.

The summer ended and with the start of school Johnny didn't come around as much, mostly on weekends.

One fall day, Dad was sitting in the living room reading the *Flint Journal* when he

"[My mother said] 'You have to learn that when you meet someone, you need to keep in mind that you have no idea what that person has been through. . . . You have to listen with more than your ears. Don't rush to judgment. But most of all, you have to learn that it doesn't cost a penny to be kind. Don't say anything to someone that you wouldn't want said to you.' "

you and stay for dinner, and even if the street lights come on, you guys'll walk me home!"

Johnny was my best friend for that summer. He really was a cool kid except for one thing. He had this annoying habit of saying clear out of the blue things like, "You better keep your eye on your little sister, kids can disappear around here."

Or, "You know my little sister left one day and didn't come back."

Or, "I think my sister's in Hollywood now."

Or, "I bet my sister's real tall by now."

After the 541st mentioning of his long-lost sister I'd had it. I can't remember my exact words, but I blasted Johnny with both barrels. I told him to quit talking about his sister—if she shows up in a movie let me know, but otherwise can't we just play hide-and-go-seek without hearing about your stupid imaginary sister all the time?

Johnny said, "Oops, sorry."

And like I said, he was pretty cool because

said to my mother, "What's this old world coming to? They arrested some clown on the south side—had the body of a young girl who disappeared back in 1960 buried in his backyard."

I caught the withering look my mother shot at my father but his head was back in the paper.

He said, "Her name was Marilyn Wilson . . ."

I was devastated. I ran up to my room and fell on the floor. Momma was right behind me. She pulled my head into her lap, wiped at my tears and said, "I know it's scary, but they caught that monster."

I told Momma what I'd said to Johnny, how I called him and his sister stupid.

She said, "I'm very disappointed in you. But, the next time you see him you know what you've got to do."

"Yes, Momma."

She said, "And the best thing that can come from this is that you learn some things. You have to learn that when you meet someone, you need to keep in

mind that you have no idea what that person has been through. You have to learn when someone is talking to you, you have to listen with more than your ears; don't rush to judgment. But most of all you have to learn that it doesn't cost a penny to be kind, don't say anything to someone that you wouldn't want said to you."

And those lessons have stuck, at times imperfectly, but every time I'm about to say something nasty I do think about Johnny Wilson.

One of my adventures with Leslie Curtis hasn't found the proper place in my writing yet, but that isn't because I haven't tried. I tried to put it in *The Watsons* and it wouldn't go, I tried to squeeze it in *Bucking the Sarge*, but it squirmed its way out of that too. Finally I tried to get it into *Elijah of Buxton*, but it refused to cooperate. It's an adventure I call the language of hands.

I was probably seven or eight, and much as I am today, I was an early riser. I was usually up by five everyday. I had strict orders not to leave my room until I heard one of my parents moving about the house. This meant I had a good two hours to kill. What better way to relieve boredom than torture your four-year-younger brother. I mean what could be funnier than shoving a pencil up some sleeping person's nose? (Remember, this was before the do-unto-others lesson had been learned).

That morning I walked over to David's crib, waiting for the inspiration to try out some new torture technique. When I looked through the bars at David though, I nearly died. His head was rolled to the side and the right side of his face was half-submerged in a pool of vomit and blood.

I ran to get Mom and Dad.

Memory. What a great protective device. I have no idea what happened when my parents came into the room and discovered their unconscious son. I can't remember a bit of it. My next memory is of Dad running out of the screen door to see if he could borrow someone's car to take David to the hospital. Then

I remember waiting in the living room with Momma sitting on the coffee table cradling David in her arms.

And we did. David turned fifty-two this June. And some day Momma's hands will make it into a story.

“What you see here before you, what you read in all of my books, is partially the result of the love and caring of two African-American parents from Flint, Michigan. What you see here in front of you, what you read in my books, is mostly though the result of the hard work, the care, and the loving hands of my mother.”

She gently rocked him back and forth, occasionally looking at the still opened screen door watching for Dad's return. Back and forth.

As horrible and frightening as the whole situation was, I found myself focusing on my mother's hands. I was fascinated as they went from David's forehead to Cydney's cheeks to wipe her tears. How they gently glided from rubbing my head back to David to close his fluttering eyes. How, although she hadn't said a word, it was as if her hands were doing the talking. As if her hands were speaking a language of their own. A language of hands.

It was as if they were telling all of us, “Don't cry, I know this is terrifying but we'll get through this.”

Many times, enlightenment comes from unexpected sources. I was at a signing and one of the teachers in line said to me, “Your mother must have been an extraordinary, beautiful person.”

I know I should've answered by saying, “She was. What makes you say that?”

But I didn't. I'm a man, so I said, “Why on Earth would you say that?”

She said, “Because all of the female characters in your books are positive and strong, and while I think you're a good writer, I don't think you could've come up with that on your own.”

I thought for a second and said, “Thank you. I've never thought about it before,

but I think you're right. I did have an extraordinary, beautiful mother.”

And I still do. She's eighty-four-years old, and she still finishes off two packs of cigarettes and a different book every day!

So to all of the really perceptive readers, the mental health professionals, and the arm-chair analysts that I used to fear I say—relax. I've already done the psycho-analytical deconstruction of Christopher Curtis's writing for you.

What you see here before you, what you read in all of my books, is partially the result of the love and caring of two African-American parents from Flint, Michigan, who successfully took on one of the most difficult, most important jobs in the world, lovingly raising a group of five children to adulthood. What you see here in front of you, what you read in my books is mostly, though, the result of the hard work, the care, and the loving hands of my mother Leslie Curtis.

In closing, I'd like to thank you for your sweetly feigned attention and give even more thanks to the teachers, the librarians, the educators, and the parents who have made it possible for six voices from Flint, Michigan—Kenny Watson, Bud Caldwell, Luther T. Farrell, Steven Darrell Carter, Elijah Freeman, and finally Christopher Paul Curtis—who all thank you for allowing our voices to be heard because without you, we would be silent. ☺

CARNEGIE MEDAL ACCEPTANCE SPEECH, continued from page 20

the ALSC blog in the weeks following the tragic accident that took her life and the life of Kate McClelland can attest, she made a pretty strong first impression. At the ALA midwinter conference in Denver, I had the good fortune of being able to sit in on one of the meetings of the notable video committee that Kathy chaired, and for the rest of the weekend, every time I encountered Kathy, she would just keep telling me how moved she had been by

March On, and how she was rooting for it to win the Carnegie Medal.

When the announcement came at the press conference on Monday morning, Kathy was overjoyed—I think she was more excited than I was. She gave me one of her characteristic big hugs, and promised to come to our studio for a visit after we were back from ALA and things had settled down. Had I known

that this would be the last time I'd see her, I couldn't have asked for a better moment, and that memory is a good reminder that the best thing about coming to these conferences is meeting the wonderful people who are a part of this community.

Thank you. ☺

Ready for Prime Time?

One Library's Experience with the Humanities Program

SHARON DEEDS

Photos courtesy of DeKalb County Public Library

In 1991, the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH) developed Prime Time Family Reading Time® to encourage a love of reading and discussion of carefully selected picture books among economically disadvantaged families with low literacy skills.

The six- or eight-week humanities series, based in public libraries, is led by a scholar, a storyteller, and a librarian. Prime Time involves the entire family and encourages them to bond around the acts of reading and discussing books. Families are encouraged to get library cards and to check out books. Incentives such as free meals and transportation, literacy activities for younger siblings, and prizes are offered to help ease barriers to participation.



The Cisneros family gets a lot out of Prime Time at the library.

Prime Time Comes to DeKalb County

DeKalb County (Ga.) Public Library (DCPL), a suburban library system in metropolitan Atlanta, first participated in the Prime Time program in 2007. The growing Latino population was the impetus for presenting two separate six-week bilingual programs at our Chamblee and Doraville libraries. In spring 2009, Prime Time was again held at the Chamblee Library. The response from

Sharon Deeds is the Youth Services Coordinator at DeKalb County (Ga.) Public Library. She is chair of the ALSC Children and Libraries Advisory Committee.

Ready for Prime Time?

the Latino community was, once again, overwhelming.

During Prime Time, participants arrive at the library and are offered a healthy meal. Transportation tokens are provided to those who need them. The Prime Time coordinator then talks about the library's many services, materials, and activities. Preschool children are then shepherded to an area where a preschool coordinator provides them with early learning activities. After the preschoolers' departure, school-age children and their parents engage in humanities-based discussions with a storyteller and a scholar based on pre-selected books. Finally, the group comes back together for announcements and door prizes.

Librarian Ev Shepherd, 2007 Prime Time coordinator at the Chamblee Library, said the program had a positive effect on all participants. "At first it was mostly the mothers who brought the kids," she said. "By the end of the program, the fathers would come in with the families. It is somewhat unusual to see the fathers involved in family programs, especially in a traditional Latino household. So it was wonderful to see them invested in the program, for themselves as well as for their families."

Prime Time Is Good Stuff

Prime Time provides a springboard for discussion among the parents. For example, during one session, the parents shared their experiences of growing up in different areas of Mexico. And the program really does help families bond around books and reading.

Chamblee Youth Services Librarian and 2009 Prime Time coordinator Aryanez (Nez) Albuquerque said "Prime Time is about bringing families together. Many of these families do not get a lot of quality time together because parents work. Too often, they work two or three jobs and are very rarely home. This program allows parents to spend two uninterrupted hours with their children."

Funding for LEH training of the librarian, scholar, and storyteller as well as scholar and storyteller stipends came from the Georgia Humanities Council and from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to the Georgia Public Library Service under the



Storyteller Barry Stewart Mann reads to a group of children.



Huddled for storytime.



Leonardo Reyes enjoys refreshments with his niece, Abigail.



Josefa, 7, enjoys a good story.



A family relaxes with a couple of good books.

provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act.

Prime Time takes dedication and hard work. To make participation as accessible and appealing as possible, Chamblee librarians not only sought donations of food, but also door prizes and books. Finding such donations was challenging at times, but the rewards definitely outweighed any obstacles. Connections were made and partnerships forged with businesses and organizations that have lasted well beyond the six weeks of the program.

In addition, library card registration and Spanish language material circulation increased noticeably during the program. After Prime Time, participants became regular library users.

PrimeTime has benefited both the library and community in DeKalb County. In partnership with the American Library Association Public Programs Office and with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Prime Time has expanded to thirty-eight states and the Virgin Islands, reaching more than thirty-three thousand participants since 1991.

The program has been recognized by the Public Library Association with awards as a national standard for its contribution to the advancement of adult literacy and for its excellence in programming for youth at risk by the President's Commission on the Arts and the Humanities. ☺

For more information on becoming a Prime Time affiliate, contact Miranda Restovic, Project Co-Director, at (504) 620-2486, or restovic@leh.org, or visit the LEH website at www.leh.org.

ALA in its Hometown

ALA Annual Conference, Chicago, Illinois, July 2009

All photos by Sharon Verbeten



Shilo Pearson of the Chicago Public Library, right, greets a guest at the ALSC Awards Program; she headed the Local Arrangements Committee in Chicago.



ALSC member and author Julie Cummins with her new book *Sam Patch, Daredevil Jumper*.



The Cat in the Hat was spotted prowling around the exhibit hall.



Yellow roses were seen frequently at the conference in memory of ALSC members and Connecticut librarians Kate McClelland and Kathy Krasniewicz, who died earlier this year. A guest book allowed librarians to record their memories.



Susan Roman, left, and Ann Weeks shared memories of their tenures as ALSC executive director.



Former ALSC Executive Directors, left to right, Diane Foote, Malore Brown, and Stephanie Anton converse at an ALSC presentation.



Young Hispanic dancers from Chicago lived up the Pura Belpré Celebración!



There was a big line waiting for Newbery Award-winning author Kate DiCamillo during a signing on the exhibit floor.

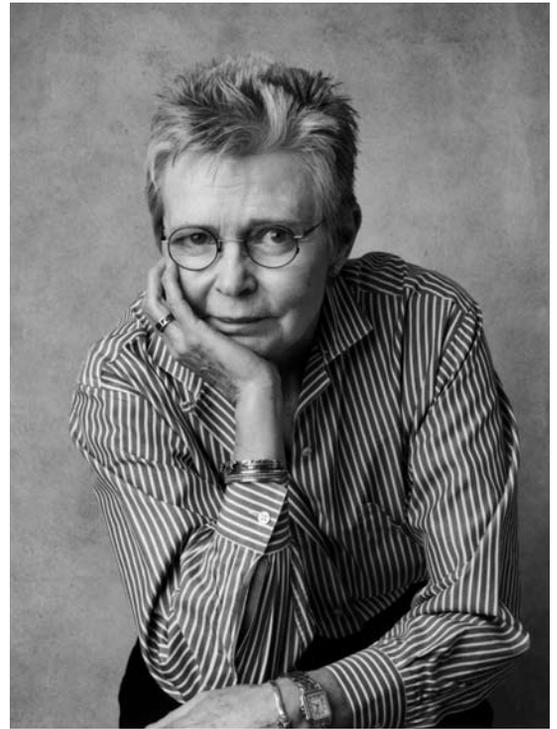


The American Gothic icons keep watch over the city of Chicago.

Show and Tell

Dilys Evans and the Fine Art of Children's Books

ERNIE J. COX



Children's literature communicates in words and pictures. While the well-crafted symbiotic relationship between these elements is what makes for great picture books, the illustrations often command the page and the attention of readers.

What is it about these images that captivate children? How do teachers, parents, and librarians talk about these visually dynamic compositions? Dilys Evans has answers to these questions in her book *Show and Tell: Exploring the Fine Art of Children's Book Illustration* (Chronicle Books, 2008). The clear and engaging writing explains that the language and history of fine art is the key to understanding and appreciating children's book illustrations.

Evans has used her keen eye as a professionally trained artist to recruit some of today's best children's book illustrators. As the former assistant art director at *Cricket* magazine, she discovered such artists as Caldecott Medal winner David Wiesner.

Evans is also the founder and curator of the Original Art Exhibition. Her inspiration to create this exhibition is a result of her conviction that children's picture book art is fine art, and worthy of critical and popular appreciation.



Ernie J. Cox, Teacher-Librarian at St. Timothy's School in Raleigh, N.C., is a member of the ALSC 2011 Sibert Committee. He is currently serving on the ALA Children's Book Council Joint Committee.

Her book is a culmination of this thinking and advocacy. *Show and Tell* represents several years of detailed personal interviews with a diverse range of artistic talents including Wiesner, Trina Schart Hyman, Lane Smith, Brian Selznick, Bryan Collier, David Shannon, Petra Mathers, Paul O. Zelinsky, Hilary Knight, Denise Fleming, Harry Bliss, and Betsy Lewin.

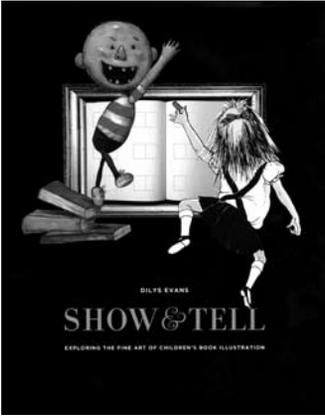
Ernie J. Cox: What was your motivation for writing *Show and Tell*?

Dilys Evans: I had wanted to write *Show and Tell* for such a long time, but until now, I just couldn't find the time. However, it has been so thrilling for me to actually hold the book in my hands that I might just want to continue.

The motivation remains the same . . . to present and explore this fine art form of picture making and send the message that the very best of illustration is indeed a fine art form. I wanted to create a language on the page that described this art form so that reviewers, teachers, librarians, storytellers—everyone interested in this extraordinary field—could better describe this visual world of children's books.

Cox: Share some recollections of your role as the former assistant art director at *Cricket* magazine and the "discovery" of David Wiesner.

DE: I became the assistant art director at *Cricket* magazine for children in the early 70s and worked with Trina Schart Hyman, who was then the art director. The office was located in Trina's old farmhouse in Lyme, New Hampshire, with a studio downstairs and the office upstairs.



I had come from a background of fine art and gallery exhibitions in New York, and this was my first glimpse into the world of children's book illustration. So actually I have to thank Trina for introducing me into a whole new world where I would find my place. Not only did I meet hundreds of talented illustrators through the magazine, but every year we gave an over-night *Cricket* picnic which

became a magical event with people like Hilary Knight, Erik Blegvad, Emily McCully, Wally Tripp, Blair Lent, Michael Patrick Hearn. At one party held at Jan Adkins' studio, a young illustrator by the name of David Wiesner was in attendance. And here I want to apologize for all the names I didn't mention as this page would be full . . .

As for outstanding moments during that time, I would have to say that it would be the time Garth Williams walked through the front door, stayed for dinner, peered over Trina's shoulder while she struggled with a particularly challenging castle scene at night, and then whispered in her ear, "one light source."

It immediately solved the problem, and while Trina worked away, Garth and I talked about art. He was visiting his daughter in Vermont and smiled as he said, "Her name is Dilys."

Now of course there are so many more that I could indeed write a book.

In 1978, Trina went to the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) to look at portfolios and talk about illustration and met David Wiesner. She brought back samples of his work. Naturally, I loved it too, and David did his first cover for *Cricket* in March 1979.

At that time I had left the magazine and was launching Dilys Evans Fine Illustration in New York, and David and his wife, Kim, were just moving to New York so that Kim could begin her residency at a Manhattan hospital. I met with David in my office in May 1979, and by June, we were working together, and twenty-nine years later we're still talking!

Cox: Tell me a bit about The Original Art Exhibit. What do you expect the 2009 exhibit to look like? Any innovative illustrators on the horizon that you can discuss?

DE: My years at the magazine and independent study of children's books brought me to a whole new career of discovery and excitement, and the natural next step was to create an annual exhibition of some kind to celebrate the fine art of children's book illustration, which happened in 1980 at the Master Eagle Gallery New York and continues in its 28th year at the Society of Illustrators in New York City.

Talking Points

A Glossary of Art Jargon

Here, courtesy of Dilys Evans, is a selected list of terms to help establish a common vocabulary of fine art.

Color. Color sets the mood with dark tones suggesting danger, caution, or reflective moments. Bright hues can be exciting, joyful, and playful. Color and shade also accentuate important areas.

Form and white space. This is the delicate balance an artist creates between the forms in an illustration and the positive white space that supports and emphasizes them.

Line. Lines are used to define boundaries. Cross-hatching gives objects shading, volume, and contrast; curves and angle, also create mood, emotion, and movement.

Movement and action. This is the overall flow within and between scenes.

Vertical or horizontal orientation. This sets the scale (for example, in Kay Thompson's *Eloise* books, the vertical format supports the grand elegance of the Plaza Hotel) and draws attention to key elements.

Collage. Evans explains that Bryan Collier's use of collage in the book *Rosa* "provides texture and tactile quality needed to convey the emotion of the story."

Over the years, the exhibition has become a showcase for us all, and each year we enjoy new trends in illustration. We now see so much more mixed media and huge breakthroughs in digital exploration and special effects we could only have imagined just ten years ago.

As to my expectations regarding the 2009 exhibition, I am constantly surprised by one thing or another and especially in the last ten years. New technology has exploded into our world of children's books. Lane Smith is a superb example of an illustrator whose marriage of art and text has explored every imaginable possibility, or at least it seems that way.

And then the question is "where is the original art" to hang on the wall?

We live in exciting times in children's books, and they remain one of the last places to curl up and quietly be alone in this troubled world. ☺

Don't Stop the Music!

Creating Tuneful Times at Your Library

AMY BROWN

Can you say the ABCs without singing the familiar tune? It's hard not to. That's a classic example of how music has the power to help students learn and remember important information and experiences all while having fun.

It's a tool we frequently use in storytimes, but how can library staff incorporate music into school-age programs? This article will talk about stories, songs, instruments, and activities that you can easily add to elementary-age programs. The best part is you don't need to be an exceptional musician or an experienced singer. All that's required is a willingness to play and have fun with music.

Why Is Music So Important?

I grew up in a musical family and have always loved listening to music, playing the piano, and singing (although I can't promise that I sing in tune). It would seem natural for me to include music in all my library programs, not just storytimes, but for some reason, that wasn't my first inclination.

It wasn't until I began planning school-age programming using Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences that I really started to see the benefit of music. Gardner believes intelligence is more than a person's IQ.¹ In fact, he says there are eight intel-



Amy Brown is a Youth Services Lead Librarian for Worthington Libraries in Worthington, Ohio.



A visiting musician talks to students about her lap dulcimer.

ligences or ways people can learn, and music is one of those eight. The rest are logical-mathematical, linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and naturalist.² When I started using music more deliberately in my school-age programming, I could see how kids responded to it. Not only is it fun, but music does three important things:

- It helps kids remember what they learned in a program.
- It gathers their attention and captures some of their energy.
- It becomes a venue for kids to share their creativity.

Plus there are literacy connections. Kantaylieni Hill-Clarke and Nicole Robinson write, "Singing and listening to nursery songs, folk songs, and jingles can extend and develop vocabulary and comprehension skills. Learning through music can build listening skills, enhance abstract thinking, improve memory, and encourage the use of compound words, rhymes, and images."³

In the book *Exploring the Connection Between Children's Literature and Music*, Regina Carlow writes, "John Flohr suggests there are many well-documented extrinsic benefits of the



Janelle colors her own tambourine.

value of music in a child's life and education. These benefits include fostering motor development, promoting cultural heritage, providing release of tension, teaching language development, music as carrier of information, and using music to help teach other subjects such as reading or mathematics."⁴

Sometimes I'll hear people say they aren't musical or they aren't a great singer, but talent doesn't really matter. If you enjoy music, kids will respond to your excitement and your willingness to try something new. The one thing I've learned is that it's okay if I don't always sing in tune or if I mess up a line dance because I'm laughing and having fun. Kids don't care about that kind of thing. Plus I think it frees them to join in and not worry about doing it well the first time.

Step 1: Musical Books

Libraries have many picture books that are based on songs or that have refrains. An easy way to incorporate music into a program is to use one of those books. Mary Ann Hoberman and Iza Trapani are well-known for their books based on traditional songs refreshed with new, often silly, verses.

Marianne Berkes and Lucille Colandro have books based on traditional songs like "Over in the Meadow" and "There Was an Old Lady," but instead of the traditional lyrics they have new themes like *Over in the Arctic: Where the Cold Wind Blows* and *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed Some Snow*.

While singing the picture book *She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain* by Jonathan Emmett, kids can participate with movements and a special refrain for each verse. For *The Aunts Go Marching* by Maurie Manning, kids can join in with the "Rat a

tat-tat! Rat a tat-tat! Ba-rump, ba-rump, ba-rump!" refrain or use rhythm sticks or shakers to keep the rhythm.⁵

Several books have collections of traditional songs with new lyrics. Alan Katz has several including *Going, Going, Gone and Other Silly Dilly Sports Songs* and *Smelly Locker: Silly Dilly School Songs*. In each of his books, songs like "On Top of Old Smokey" and "Frère Jacques" become "On Top of the Bleachers" and "Smelly Locker." The first verse for "Smelly Locker" demonstrates the humor found in each of these books.

Smelly locker!

Smelly locker!

Poor hygiene!

Foul and mean!

Meant to do it sooner.

Is this a glove or tuna?

Time to clean!

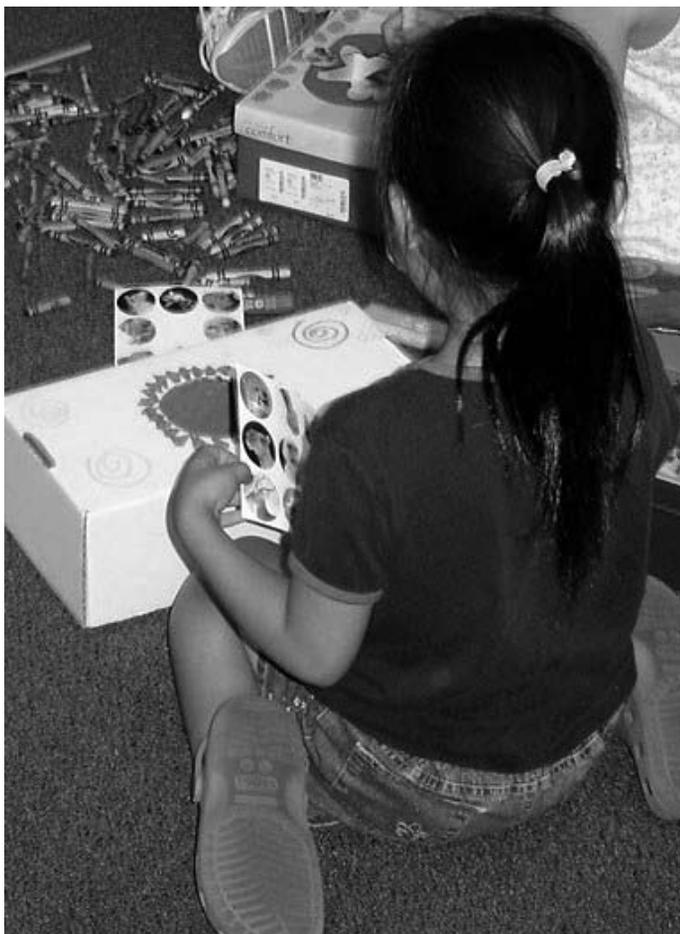
Time to clean!⁶

These songs are a big hit with kids and are great to use between stories, during school visits, and when giving library tours. A book for older kids, Kelly DiPucchio's *Sipping Spiders Through a Straw: Campfire Songs for Monsters*, is especially good for camping themes, grossology programs, Boy Scout/Girl Scout visits, and Halloween events. One example includes "Slither and Slink" sung—or, as the book suggests, "hissed"—to the tune of "Skinnamarink."⁷

One of my favorite books to use in a program is *Abiyoyo* by Pete Seeger. *Abiyoyo* has a giant, a trickster magician, and a boy who loves to play his ukulele and uses a very special song to save the town. Sharing a book like this with a short song or refrain that you can sing is great because it does three things:

- It holds kids' attention since they are waiting and listening intently to figure out when to join in.
- Kids will often remember the chorus that they've been taught and will sing it for weeks after the program has ended.
- It's easier to sing a chorus or refrain than to sing a whole story, so it's a good first step for people who are nervous about singing.

I have an example of the power of music and memory that's tied to this story. After I shared this picture book with a group of kids, a boy ran to his mother and started singing the song for her. She was excited because she remembered the story and the song and couldn't believe that he knew it as well. They checked out the book so that they could experience it again together.



A Musical Tales participant decorates her shoebox guitar.



A visual depiction of Aiken Drum.

If you're looking for a good musical picture book to use for library visits, *Mind Your Manners*, *B. B. Wolf* by Judy Sierra is perfect. It has a funny little tune that the wolf makes up to help him remember his manners when he goes to the library for the Annual Storybook Tea. There's no official tune, so you can create your own to go with it, but I guarantee kids will love singing "Sip your tea and never slurp, say 'Excuse Me' if you burp. Smile and have a lot of fun, but don't go biting anyone!"⁸

Two more books to share include *Sixteen Cows* by Lisa Wheeler and *Pickin' Peas* by Margaret Read MacDonald. In *Sixteen Cows*, Cowboy Gene and Cowgirl Sue each have a song to sing to bring their cows home. Read MacDonald has many stories with musical components. In *Pickin' Peas*, a rabbit and a little girl each have a special song about peas growing in a garden.

Two books that come with CDs are *Some Friends to Feed: The Story of Stone Soup* by Pete Seeger and *Marsupial Sue Presents the Runaway Pancake* by John Lithgow. You can share both stories by playing the CD, or you can use the CD to learn the songs so you can sing them yourself as you read the story. Both stories can be dramatized as well. In fact our library's Teen Reader's Theater did an adaptation of Lithgow's book.

Jim Gill's *A Soup Opera*, which comes with a CD, is a fabulous book for introducing kids to opera and the orchestra. The story

is about a fine restaurant, a man, and onion soup. Kids and parents can easily join in, sing, and act out the story. The CD features Gill reading the story with an orchestral accompaniment, but it also has the opera recorded in a series of tracks so anyone can be the narrator and read different parts while orchestral music and operatic singing fills in the rest.

Another way to incorporate music into books is to use stories with sounds or rhythms. For *Too Much Noise* by Ann McGovern, I printed clip art images for each of the sounds mentioned and passed one card out for each child. After practicing their sounds, they knew when to join in while I read the story.

The Bremen Town Musicians, illustrated by Lisbeth Zwerger, offers kids the opportunity to make animal noises. I got this idea from my mom, who's a music teacher. For this story, I divided the room into four groups; each group was one of the four characters and had to make that particular animal sound during the part of the story when the animals scare the robbers by making a racket.

At that point, I had the donkey group start "hee-hawing" and then gradually added the rest of the animals until it was a cacophony of sound. Then I motioned for the donkey group to stop and each group in succession until it was silent again.

How to Teach Kids a New Song

Advice from a Music Teacher

The following information is taken from a paper written by music teacher (and the author's mother) Cindy Brown. Her paper, "Methods to Incorporate Music into Literature," was presented at the Ohio Library Council Children's and Teen Services Conference in Columbus, Ohio, August 21, 2008.

If you are using books with familiar melodies set to a new text, try these tips when introducing the song to kids:

- Sing the regular song first and have kids join in. They can use words or "loo," "la," "zzz," or hum if they don't know the song.
- Read the story with the new words. Look for repeated words and phrases or a chorus and teach that to the children. Read it again and have them join in when that phrase or chorus appears.
- Read the new lyrics omitting obvious rhyming words. Let the kids fill in the blanks.
- Add instruments or movement to repeated or special phrases and choruses.
- Make up a short phrase for children to chant while the leader sings the song.

If you are using books with a specific melody written for the story, try these ideas:

- Learn the song and feel comfortable with it first. If you can't read music, find someone who can help you or make up a tune you can remember.
- If the tune is short and repeated often, you can teach it to the kids first.
- Break it down into short phrases. You sing a line and then have kids echo back.
- You can also try leaving out key/rhyming words and let the kids fill them in.
- Change it up a little by asking, "Can you sing it with a soft voice, strong voice, mad voice, cranky voice?" and so on.
- Decide how much participation you want from the kids. You may want to jump right into the story and let the kids join in when they feel comfortable and have grasped some or all of the tune.

The First Music by Dylan Pritchett is another book that can be used in this manner with different groups of kids presenting certain animals and their musical sounds.

Musical instruments like shakers and rhythm sticks can be used with books that have a repeated phrase. If you don't have access to instruments, kids can clap their hands or tap their knees to different rhythms as well. In *Bad Frogs* by Thacher Hurd, kids can tap to the phrase "Bad frogs. Very bad frogs."⁹ In *Bear Feels Sick* by Karma Wilson, kids can tap along to the phrase "And the bear feels sick."¹⁰

Step 2: Songs, Songs, Songs

No matter what theme your school-age program has, there's a chance that you can find a fun, interesting song to add to it.

I have a small repertoire of favorite songs available when I have a high-energy group. These songs involve movement and audience participation. A couple of my favorites are "Ram Sam Sam" and "The Princess Pat" from Naomi Baltuck's book *Crazy Gibberish: and Other Story Hour Stretches (from a Storyteller's Bag of Tricks)*.

I also use "Go Bananas" and the They Might Be Giants song "Clap Your Hands" from *Here Come the ABCs*. Another song kids have a lot of fun with is "Pata Pata" from the CD *Children of the World: Multicultural Rhythmic Activities* by Georgiana Stewart. It's an African line dance, and even when kids and the presenter aren't completely coordinated and don't do all of the moves exactly right, participants always end up in laughter! Some other dance CDs are

- *All-Time Favorite Dances* (Kimbo, 1995);
- *Children's Folk Dances* by Georgiana Stewart (Kimbo, 1998); and
- *Folk Dance Fun* by Georgiana Stewart (Kimbo, 1984).

Other musicians to use for school-age programs include Gill, Dan Zanes, Peter and Ellen Allard, Jean Feldman, and Seeger. Also, Wee Sing has a variety of CDs based on different themes like Halloween, dinosaurs, and world music.

Sometimes songs can be used with art. For a music program based on food, I did the song "Aiken Drum." As kids suggested what food would represent every part of the body, we would draw it on a flip chart. In the end, Aiken Drum had carrots for arms, a strawberry for a nose, and sushi for his belly button. In their book *Ready-to-Go Storytimes: Fingerplays, Scripts, Patterns, Music, and More*, Gail Benton and Trisha Waichulaitis have another version called "Flip-Flap Jack" that can be a draw-and-tell or flannel story.

Another way to use music in school-age programming is to pick a traditional song and create new lyrics based on the program's theme. Coworkers can be a great help with this if you find

yourself stumped on a particular theme or rhyme. Songs like "Old MacDonald" can be changed to "Old MacDonald Was a Vet" or "Old MacDonald Went on a Safari." "Aiken Drum" can be changed to "There Was a Monster Who Lived in a Swamp."

Step 3: Making Your Own Music

One summer, our reading club theme was music, and I did a program for first through third graders called Musical Tales. Each week, I focused on a different theme, like food, nature, cultures, and animals, and we listened to musical stories, learned new songs, played musical games, and made our own instruments.

Making instruments is an exciting activity. Kids love the creativity involved and can get very intricate in the design of their own instruments. Plus many instruments can be crafted from items you already have at home or that people recycle. In our program, we made tambourines (paper plates, beans, streamers), shakers (water bottles, beans, stickers), guitars (shoe boxes, pencils, and rubber bands), and rain sticks (paper towel tubes, rice, construction paper, tin foil).

One week, a guest musician shared some of her instruments, including a dulcimer, guitar, and spoons. Spoons aren't that hard to learn how to play, and the kids were very interested in figuring out how to make them work. Lots of people can play musical instruments and would love to share their music with others, so don't forget to survey staff members, friends of the library members, teens, and others who might like to participate.

Over the years, I've purchased many different musical instruments—usually nothing more than \$15. I often bring these instruments in for different programs and leave them on the table for kids to play with during the craft time.

Very rarely do I show kids how to use the instruments; instead, I let them explore and use their own creativity to make music. For a nature program, I might bring in a rain stick or a frog guiro. For a program on Kenya, I might bring in a gourd shaker.

Step 4: Adding a Bit of Music into Any Program

Games and activities are another way to add music to a program. Here are a couple of examples:

- Play music in the background before or after a program or during the craft time.
- Play a game of freeze using music that matches your theme or classical music.
- Have children create their own instruments in five minutes using found objects.
- Divide kids up into teams and have them complete a Kazoo

Need Inspiration?

Here are a few musical ideas to try at your library.

Going Green Program

- Teach the kids the song "Whole World" by Christopher Corr and work together to develop motions for each of the verses. Then share the story with them. *Whole World* comes with a CD.
- Make a musical instrument using recyclable material and found objects.
- Share the song "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree" by Margaret Read MacDonald, from *Three-Minute Tales: Stories from Around the World to Tell or Read When Time Is Short*.

Food Program

- Teach kids "Go Bananas," an action song. Several versions of this song can be found here at www.scoutsongs.com/lyrics/banana.html.
- Read *On Top of Spaghetti* by Paul Johnson.
- Make a water bottle maraca from *The Kids Can Press Jumbo Book of Music* by Deborah Dunleavy. Experiment with putting different types of beans or rice in the water bottles to make different sounds.

In addition, here are some great online venues to find musical instruments.

- www.musicmotion.com
- <http://store.musicforlittlepeople.com/index.html>
- www.lakeshorelearning.com
- www.discountschoolsupply.com

And the following websites can help you locate songs. Some of these websites even have audio files.

- www.songsforteaching.com
- www.kididdles.com
- <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/musicchild.htm>
- <http://kidsmusictown.com>
- www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activities/camp-songs.html

Challenge by humming a song that everyone should know. For a sports program, I challenged teams to play the local university's fight song.

- Play a mirror game where the leader and the kids do rhythmic motions to music simultaneously. The leader changes the action and kids start doing that new action.
- Do an echo exercise where the leader does a rhythm for four or eight beats and the kids repeat it.



Display of books and instruments for Musical Tales.

- Fill a bag full of everyday items that make sounds, like a rubber band snapping or a pencil writing on paper, and have the kids try to guess what makes each sound.
- Experiment with making sounds like musicians do in *Stomp*. Visit www.stomponline.com/pdf/study_guide.pdf for more ideas.
- Invite musicians to come and talk about their instrument or the music they play.
- If doing an art program, incorporate music into it. My co-worker Molly Meyers created a series of illustration programs, and she played music for each type of illustration. For example, in her pop-up program, she played the *Mary Poppins* soundtrack.
- If doing a writing program, use music as inspiration. For example, kids can write what the music makes them feel.
- If doing a science experiment program, include some experiments that have to do with music or sound.

Jazz great Charlie Parker said, "Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you do not live it, it won't come through your horn."¹¹

There are many ways to incorporate music into programs; what is successful for you might not work as well for someone else, but that's fine. The important thing is to experiment and find the musical stories, songs, instruments, and games that work for you and for your patrons. If you have fun with it, the kids attending your program will too. ☺

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Learning to Love English

Understanding and Motivating the Chinese Child

LISA GANDOLFI WERLING

Hispanic immigration into the United States has garnered most of the nation's attention, while the rising number of Chinese and other Asian groups has received much less. But it would be folly to overlook this population's sizeable growth, which has current and future implications for public and school library programming. While public libraries have traditionally been, and continue to be, the main source of outreach for the Chinese community, academic libraries, from elementary schools to universities, are increasingly becoming an extension of traditional service providers to meet the needs of this burgeoning population.

School library media specialists can help their libraries better adapt to this role reversal by learning and applying lessons from the other types of libraries that have faced a similar challenge in serving the Chinese student population.

A quick look at United States statistics yields some fascinating, and arguably surprising, findings. The United States Census Bureau uses the term "Asian" to refer to "those having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam."¹

The numbers of Asians immigrating to the United States has continued to increase exponentially in the last 30 years. By

the year 2000, America's foreign-born Asian population had exploded from approximately 800,000 people in 1970 to a staggering 7.2 million.²

As of the 2000 census, "Asian-born residents comprised 26 percent [or more than a quarter] of the country's foreign-born population."³ And overall, "Chinese was the largest detailed Asian group in the United States," with almost 3 million people identifying themselves as being at least partially Chinese in nationality.⁴ And astonishingly, "after English and Spanish, Chinese was the language most commonly spoken at home."⁵ In fact, the "Chinese language . . . jumped from the fifth to the second most widely spoken non-English language, as the number of Chinese speakers rose from 1.2 [in 1990] to 2.0 million people [in 2000]."⁶

This population influx is due in no small part to a rise in applications from Chinese graduate students; initially sluggish after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, these numbers have recently enjoyed a sharp resurgence. Mengxiong Liu, a prolific author on the topic of Chinese influence on the profession of librarianship, notes in the article "The History and Status of Chinese Americans in Librarianship" that there are currently over eighty East Asian libraries serving this steady influx of Chinese-speaking students, many owing their creation and survival to the Chinese themselves.⁷

Jeffrey Thomas, a reporter for *America.gov*, notes, "For a second consecutive year, applications from Chinese students for admission to master's and doctoral programs at U.S. colleges and universities have risen strongly—17 percent—according to the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS)."⁸

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Citing an “ideal educational environment,” as one of the reasons for this increase, Thomas reports, “China [has become] the second leading country of origin for international students in U.S. graduate schools with 62,582 students. India is first.”⁹

Author Yuan Zhou, in the article “An Unstated Mission: Chinese Collections in Academic Libraries in the U.S. and Their Services to Overseas Chinese,” notes that this influx of Chinese students and immigrants, as well as Chinese-oriented businesses and organizations, has led to a nontraditional user population’s discovery of the academic library’s wealth of resources.¹⁰

Rather than solely serving faculty and students of the Chinese studies programs, the academic Chinese collections “are often viewed by users in their local communities as resource centers for information about China and Chinese culture.” According to Zhou, this is because “the rich holdings of books, periodicals, newspapers and, more recently, electronic resources [contain] information about their families and ancestors that may be contained in local gazetteers, or books about *Yi Jing* to read for their own interest.”¹¹

However, the young children and families of adult Chinese-Americans may or may not be proficient in their native language and dialect, and they will almost certainly be lacking in English comprehension and reading skills. What resources, then, are available for those children who are limited in their English proficiency?

As Nancy Brown, an assistant professor in the Middle-Secondary Education Department at Georgia State University reveals, no region is immune to the demands of changing cultural landscapes. She notes, “Immigration is rapidly changing the demographics of elementary schools in the metro Atlanta, Georgia, area. Although students from Latin America represent the biggest shift in diversity, students from Asian countries are also enrolling in record numbers.”¹²

Asian and Chinese immigrants have settled mainly in the Western United States, a trend that began in the 1850s for the Chinese and still holds demographically true today. According to Reeves and Bennett of the U.S. Census Bureau, as of the 2000 census, “194.8 million (69 percent) of the United States population was non-Hispanic White and 19 percent lived in the West, 33 percent in the South, 27 percent in the Midwest, and 21 percent in the Northeast.”¹³

Breaking the statistics down further, slightly more than half of the Asian population resides in the West, in keeping with historical settlement. The rest of the population is disbursed relatively evenly throughout the country.¹⁴

Brown believes “school library media specialists are in positions within their schools that allow them to play pivotal roles in working to effectively meet the educational needs of the many linguistically and culturally diverse children in American classrooms.”¹⁵

Both she and Liu urge academic and school library professionals to educate themselves about the differences in learning and research styles of Chinese and Anglo-American students. In U.S. census statistics compiled by Shin and Bruno, approximately 72 percent of the people five years of age and over who reported speaking Chinese at home also spoke English “very well.” However, 28 percent reported speaking English “not well” or “not at all.”¹⁶

To address the needs of this marginalized 28 percent, lessons learned about cultural differences and approaches to information seeking in academic libraries can be applied to school library environments as well.

While serving seemingly disparate demographics (based not on ethnicity but age), both Brown’s reviews of current, topical literature and Liu’s first-hand observations can be combined into an insightful distillation of the common behavior and psyche of the Chinese child or youth.

Liu’s eye-opening article, “Ethnicity and Information Seeking” reveals that Chinese students lack “conceptual awareness of the self-service system” because “most Asian libraries are far different from the American standard.”¹⁷ Most public libraries do not emphasize reference or user services because “there is no need to do comprehensive library research since independent research projects are not emphasized in education.”¹⁸

However, as Liu and Redfern discovered in their survey at San Jose State University, the ability to ask for help in searching for information is essential for students to achieve their goals: “Those students who ask reference questions more frequently are likely to be more successful in locating needed information in the library . . . [but] the most interesting finding was that, despite their unsuccessful use of the library, some Asian students still avoided asking reference questions [for] reasons . . . related to their cultural background.”¹⁹

Very young students especially may not be aware that they need to be proactive in seeking out and finding help in the classroom or school library setting; as Brown points out, Chinese students frequently differ from American students in that they “may prefer more structure-oriented lessons, are less likely to voice their opinions or ask questions, tend to hide their abilities, and tend to seek conformity and group dependence.”²⁰

The instructor should not assume that the student always immediately understands the concept or idea that he or she is attempting to convey; Brown cautions against the stereotype of the “overachieving Asian student,” which she says “can be a destructive and misleading one.”²¹

Liu notes that Asian students’ cultural cues are often different, such as “giving cues that they understand when they do not” and smiling or nodding when they do not actually comprehend what is being said.²²

“Some [Asian] students look away from the speaker when they are listening intently, [and] feedback is [also] undesirable,

[because] respect for age and authority leads to shyness and reluctance to speak out."²³ Asian students should be given gentle, yet consistent, encouragement and attention to help them acclimate to their new surroundings.

Native language acquisition is especially important to facilitate understanding because "students with English as their primary language, whether native born or from an English-speaking country, are usually more successful in using the library than those whose English is not their primary language."²⁴ This is because a "lack of English vocabulary makes it difficult for them to understand library terminologies [and] a common complaint is that they could not fully understand what the librarian said during orientation tours."²⁵

If adult students are intimidated by their lack of understanding of the library system and are hesitant to interact because of their poor communication skills, you can imagine how frightening a scenario this can be for a child who has not inherited American social cues or norms from his or her parents.

For these "limited English-proficient (LEP) students," school library media specialists can "provide media center resources and programming" to integrate them into the classroom environment.²⁶ By blending successful techniques from several different sources, Chinese-speaking children and their families can participate in learning in an environment that is both inclusive and conducive to learning.

Take a cue from tried and true public library programs. Libraries such as the Los Angeles Public Library's Chinatown Branch and Chicago Public Library's Chinatown Branch offer a wide variety of services to their patrons. The Los Angeles location hosts computer classes teaching basic Internet and word processing skills, as well as citizenship, English as a Second Language (ESL), and English conversation classes.

Chicago's branch contains a Chinese Heritage Collection and Chinese language materials, including audio cassettes, CDs, and books that make up half of the adult collection and 10 percent of the children's collection.

The Queens Borough (N.Y.) Public Library, with its New Americans Program (NAP), serves an extremely racially and ethnically diverse region of the country.²⁷ The Chinese component of the NAP, the *Ni Hao* program (which means "greetings" in Chinese), is especially innovative in its approach, addressing immigrant needs with a specific philosophy based on three core categories—collection development, coping skills programs, and cultural arts programs.²⁸

University departments and colleges, such as sociology, early childhood education, and, of course, Chinese academic libraries, can be rich resources of assistance and information to bridge cultural divides and enhance understanding between teachers and parents, whose expectations may differ. For example, Brown advises American teachers to "be aware that many Chinese believe that the best way to help their children's education is to manage to send them to a good school."²⁹

Unlike American parents, who will closely monitor their child's progress and expect detailed feedback from teachers, the opposite can be said of Chinese parents. Consistent with one author's experience in a school in New York's Chinatown, it is seen as the parent's responsibility to place the child in an appropriate school, and the teacher's responsibility to educate the child; any requests for further assistance or attempts to include the parents in the educational process may be looked on with suspicion and met with resistance.³⁰

University and college faculty may be able to help school librarians develop orientation programming to introduce these concepts to parents so they will not be confused or offended. Likewise, experts also may assist in developing or directing parents to ESL and coping skills classes that mimic those used in the NAP program; it stands to reason that if the parents are better oriented to a new culture, they will be able to help their children adapt and cope better.

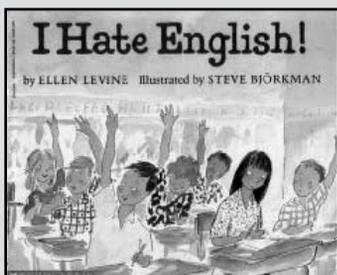
Cultural immersion programs, in which parents and children participate or instruct others, also are an excellent way to bridge the cultural and generational divides. Queens Borough Public Library's "cultural arts programs include ethnic music, dance, bilingual poetry, storytelling, and crafts to celebrate the [patrons'] cultural heritage," such as the Chinese Theater Festival.³¹ Parents will certainly have recipes to share in cooking demonstrations, favorite stories to tell (which their children can help translate), or crafts and dances they can demonstrate to the class.

Programs such as these further Zhou's premise that academic libraries can serve as "Chinese culture promoters" through exhibitions about "a specific aspect of Chinese culture, a particular event, a famous author of celebrity, or a special collection that the library possesses. The exhibition could also just be the library's newly acquired and cataloged Chinese books."³²

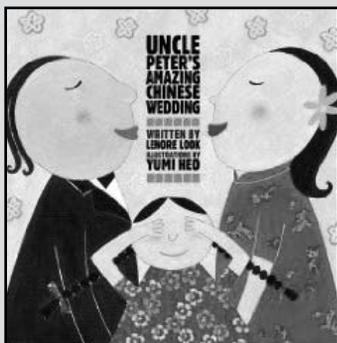
An exhibition or display such as this, like collection development activities, can be coordinated with university and public libraries. These activities promote the collection to the local community and may make Chinese Americans more aware of what the library has to offer. Much like multicultural literature, especially English-Chinese picture books, cultural immersion programs can "become a primary vehicle for generating discussion and for literary acquisition" because they allow students to not only share their own cultural experience, but to learn about others and expand their knowledge base. This in turn fosters "a continuing dialog . . . in multicultural controversies" between students of all backgrounds and promotes a "shared body of experience, allowing students to respond from the perspectives of their individual cultural backgrounds."³³

Brown also offers some specific and practical measures that all teachers, school media library specialists, and public librarians can take to "support the acquisition of English by LEP Chinese-speaking children."³⁴ Continuously introducing children to a wide variety of illustrated and colorful texts is important for promoting language acquisition and cultural education because these tools help put new vocabulary, language, and

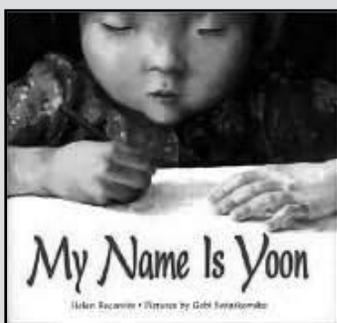
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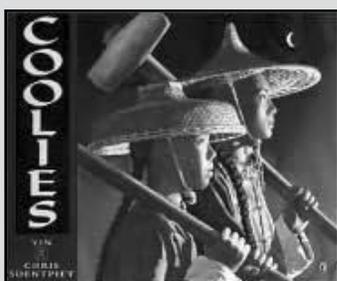
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unfamiliar societal norms and mores into a context that makes these concepts easier to grasp and inculcate for the young, beginning learner.³⁵

As noted earlier, children will need to be taught about expectations in an unfamiliar society, and children's storytelling is especially rich in universal themes that can teach children social norms and give them a "sense of solidarity" with a foreign culture.³⁶ To follow suit, consider partnering with local public libraries to have them carry Chinese-English children's books and periodicals that will supplement the school's collection.

Brown recommends educators supplementing these printed materials with read-along audio-tapes or CDs, if their budget allows, because multiple learning approaches such as "hearing, telling, writing, and drawing stories helps the language development of second-language learners."³⁷

An especially appropriate audio-visual accompaniment to the book of the same name is the DVD *I Hate English*. An ALSC Notable Children's Video of 2008, "this iconographic adaptation . . . relates Mei Mei's reluctant adjustment to life in English-speaking New York with moving authenticity."³⁸

Conclusion

Perhaps one of the most intriguing findings of Zhou's research is that the Chinese academic library is emerging as a "home-link harbor" in Chinese immigrants' lives, becoming a "place for reading hometown newspapers and favorite magazines as well as a source of more serious reading on Chinese history, philosophy, or literature—from classical to contemporary."³⁹

A school library can also serve the same purpose, this time intentionally, by providing children with the same types of materials at their level of comprehension, thus helping to bridge the divide between old and new experiences and cultures. The library, and the support role it plays in the Chinese child's life, cannot be underestimated. As Chinese users tell Ting Yin, a Chinese-American librarian in Boston, "They go to two places on the weekend: Chinatown for real food and, for 'soul' food, this library."⁴⁰

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The Two Ms. Moores

The Tale of One Poetry Gem and Two Lovers of Language

JULIE CUMMINS

Libraries are known for housing all kinds of literary treasures. This library story is about the discovery of a hidden treasure—one with intrigue, a happy ending, and perhaps, poetic justice.

In 1998, the branch librarian at the Hudson Park Branch of the New York Public Library (NYPL) was going through some papers in an archive box when she found what she thought was an original, handwritten poem by world-renowned poet Marianne Moore. Was it real? How and why was a literary gem such as this buried among other library papers?

The connection involves two Ms. Moores. First, the handwriting was identified as authentic by Marianne Moore's biographer Charles Molesworth. The provenance begins in Greenwich Village, where the first Ms. Moore—Marianne—lived and worked during the early 1920s, a period of intense literary activity.

Marianne Moore was a major player in this eminent literary movement while she was a staff member at the Hudson Park Library, from 1921 to 1925. Author Theodore Dreiser frequented the library while she worked there, and her circle of literary friends included Hart Crane, William Carlos Williams, and

Edna St. Vincent Millay. Next to enter the story is the second Ms. Moore.

Anne Carroll Moore, the first superintendent of work with children at NYPL, was a pioneer in the field of children's library services. She was esteemed for her standards of quality writing for children and regarded as a major influence in children's publishing during her reign from 1906 to 1941.

The poem, untitled, was written by Marianne Moore while she was on the staff at the library in honor of Anne Carroll Moore. The poem clearly expresses her feelings for this "potentate" of reading and writing. One can assume that this affection came from a mutual respect and love for language by kindred spirits.

Before the shelves at Hudson Park,
The brownies who appear at dark
For news of sport and picture screen,
And the good leprechaun in green—
One night assembled hand in hand,



Julie Cummins was the seventh Coordinator of Children's Services at the New York Public Library to follow in the historic (or large) footsteps of Anne Carroll Moore. She discovered Marianne Moore's poem while researching material for an article about Anne Carroll Moore.

The modest number of the band,
 Increasing 'til there was no space
 That could accommodate a face
 Or hand or pair of brownie feet.
 The consternation was complete
 Because a rumour gathered weight
 That their great friend—a potentate
 Among all brownies who could write
 And read—would soon be lost to sight.
 And all dejected as they stood,
 By their Pinocchio of wood
 They vowed that each in turn a sentry
 Hidden close beside the entry
 Should keep watch of the front door
 Until Miss Annie Carroll Moore
 Should be at Hudson Park once more.

And now, the rest of the story. The happy ending is that the lost, previously undiscovered poem has a new home in the Berg Collection in the Research Libraries of NYPL, where devotees, researchers, and poetry mavens can see first-hand the original tribute in Marianne Moore's own handwriting.

And the Hudson Park Branch? As the original "owner" of the poem, it will have a beautifully framed facsimile to hang on the walls. And the two Ms. Moores? No doubt, they would both be pleased. ☺

Aliki Donates Art to the Arne Nixon Center

Picture book author/artist Aliki has donated twenty-one pieces of original art—as many pictures as for one of her famous picture books—to the Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children's Literature at California State University, Fresno.



Aliki's colorful illustrations feature dozens of charming and playful cats, plus a few birds and mice, too, as only Aliki can portray them—writing, painting, working, and reading, reading, and reading some more.

After designing the illustrations, Aliki donated the actual art—charming multimedia pictures (done in pen and ink on paper), colored crayons, markers, and watercolor pens.

Aliki, who has written and/or illustrated more than two hundred books, worked on the cat pictures between other projects, including her forthcoming picture book, *Push Button*. This features a little boy, based on her toddler grandson, who loves to push buttons. When his finger gets tired, he finds another way to amuse himself (Hint: it involves books).

For more information, visit www.arnenixoncenter.org.



Thursdays with MacGyver

The Benefits of a Library Therapy Dog

ALISON FRANCIS

All photos courtesy of Alison Francis

The benefits of therapy dogs in various settings have been well established. But more recently, the use of dogs in libraries where children read out loud has been on the rise.

The benefits of this type of reading include greater comfort reading aloud, a sense of pride, an increase in self-esteem, and in one pilot study, decreased absenteeism.

LaGrange Library in Poughkeepsie, New York, began a reading dog program in late 2008, and it has been highly successful. Participants and their parents report many of the above benefits as well as the overall sense of fun in reading and interacting with the therapy dog.

This program is held on Thursdays from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.; each child preregisters for a fifteen-minute time slot to read to four-legged friend MacGyver, a German shorthaired pointer, owned by Peg Basso. Since Basso volunteers her time, the program costs nothing and requires only a small, quiet area in the library. Therapy dogs and their owners can be found through organizations that specialize in facilitating these and other kinds of programs. The program has been so popular that we



Alison Francis is a Youth Services Librarian at LaGrange Library in Poughkeepsie, New York.



Loyal MacGyver and his owner Peg Basso.

will continue it next school year and maybe even add an additional afternoon.

How the Program Began

I first became aware of kids reading to therapy dogs a few years ago when I did an independent study for my graduate work on the subject of bibliotherapy.

I was very interested in the therapeutic use of books with children and young adults. During my research of the various methods of using books with young people to explore personal issues, I stumbled upon a website that described the beneficial effects on children who read to trained therapy dogs—R.E.A.D., Reading Education Assistance Dogs, is a program of Intermountain Therapy Animals.

I was interested in doing something like this at our library when Basso called me one day to ask if I would be interested in having her and MacGyver come to the library to volunteer in some capacity. I pitched the idea to her about having kids read to her dog, and she enthusiastically agreed. MacGyver has been a registered therapy dog with the organization Therapy Dogs International (TDI) since 2000.

Basso and MacGyver have been volunteering in a variety of settings including hospitals, a library in New Jersey where they used to live, at a Montessori school, a mental health outpatient facility, and here at LaGrange Library.

Therapy Dogs International is another volunteer group organized to train and provide qualified handlers and their therapy dogs for visitation in a variety of settings. “Tail Waggin’ Tutors” is one of TDI’s many programs where handlers and their trained, registered dogs visit school libraries and public libraries where children read to the dogs.

TDI is another organization that librarians may contact to request a handler and dog in their geographic area. Dogs registered with TDI have been tested and certified to be safe in a therapeutic or, in this case, library setting.



MacGyver’s owner Peg Basso reads with young Jessica at the LaGrange Library in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Program Set-up and Structure

The beauty of this program is that it is virtually cost free. Basso volunteers her time, and there is no materials cost since each child brings a book of her choice when she attends. Sessions are held during the library’s normal operating hours, so no additional personnel costs are incurred.

Basso and MacGyver come one afternoon each week for a two-hour session. I made a schedule of eight fifteen-minute time slots for which each child must pre-register. Requiring preregistration, rather than using a drop-in format, makes the program run more smoothly. Kids can register for one fifteen-minute time slot for multiple weeks if they like. Kids can register in person or by phone to reserve a space.

I also established ground rules: one child at a time reads to the dog, the child needs to come prepared with a book, and the parent must stay in the room during the session.

Our sessions are held in a quiet little nook in the children’s room. We have a cozy corner behind a bookshelf in our children’s room. This affords some privacy in case the reader feels self-conscious, and it cuts down on distractions for both the dog and the child. Five to seven children come regularly each week, and the group comprises two boys and five girls, ages six through eleven.

One possible pitfall I’ve noticed is other children who come into the children’s area make noise or want to interrupt the session

to pet the dog. Overall, most parents who accompany their children have them stay away from the reading area.

My Observations

During the sessions, I sit at my desk across the room from the corner where the activity takes place, and I am available for assistance.

I have noticed that having a dog in the room seems to create an atmosphere of relaxation and openness. Everyone, even patrons not involved in the program, want to come pet the dog. It encourages conversation—everyone has a dog story to tell, and Basso is wonderful at putting the kids at ease.

She is actively involved with each child who reads. She comments on the story, asks questions, talks to MacGyver, encourages the readers, and helps out with difficult words. The kids who have registered come early and are enthusiastic about reading. Sometimes a few children will sit nearby awaiting their turn, and I have also noticed that the reader usually does not mind that other kids are watching. In addition, the kids who are waiting have been very patient and considerate of the reader. Reading to the dog seems to encourage consideration for others.

The kids seemed to become immediately attached to MacGyver; they routinely greet MacGyver with great enthusiasm and affection; one girl and her mother bring her homemade biscuits; one boy actually stopped during his reading to show MacGyver

the pictures in his book. These examples all demonstrate kindness, awareness, and empathy for others.

Children and Parent Feedback

The response from both the parents and kids has been overwhelmingly positive. I asked several of the readers why they wanted to read to the dog and if they think the sessions have helped their reading in any way.

One girl responded that she wanted to come because she likes dogs. She is not used to reading out loud, and she felt that reading to the dog is helpful because the dog doesn't "laugh at you and hurt your feelings if you mess up a word." She said she feels more relaxed when reading to the dog and overall, she feels more confident.

When I spoke with this girl's mother, she said that the practice in reading out loud has given her daughter more confidence, and she seems to remember the storyline better.

Another girl responded that she wanted to read to the dog because it sounded "fun and interesting to read to a dog." She said she felt the dog really understood what she read and would even respond by making certain noises or changing positions depending on what happened in the story.

One boy's mother said her son loves to read to animals. He reads to his guinea pig at home, and he has attended a few different libraries that have a reading dog program. She said her son always felt self-conscious reading out loud in front of kids in the classroom, but with a dog, he feels more comfortable. She added that the dog is a nonjudgmental, less intimidating, audience; this has given her son a feeling of pleasure and motivation to read.

Repeatedly, the common themes I heard the kids express were that they felt comfortable reading to the dog and that it was a lot of fun. In addition, they believed reading had become a bit easier for them.

The practice of reading out loud in a setting in which they feel comfortable and can take risks, where they feel they are not being judged or corrected, can surely increase self confidence and carry over to their inschool performance.

The hardest part of setting up a reading dog program may be finding a volunteer with a trained therapy dog, but the two organizations mentioned can be helpful in that process.



Alessandra, Jessica, and MacGyver look cozy in the reading corner at LaGrange Library in Poughkeepsie, New York.



Alessandra reads a Boxcar Children book as Peg Basso looks on and MacGyver snoozes!

I highly recommend that youth service librarians set up a similar program. It costs nothing, and the benefits are far-reaching.

For more information on R.E.A.D., Reading Education Assistance Dogs, visit www.therapyanimals.org/read/about.html or call (801) 272-3439. For more information on Therapy Dogs International, visit www.tdi-dog.org.

Summer Reading Incentives

Positive or Pernicious?

Suzanne M. Stauffer

School is out for most kids, and that can mean only one thing for librarians—summer reading program! Children's librarians across the nation have spent months planning activities, booking performers, and purchasing reading logs, bookmarks, and incentives to motivate children to read during the summer to maintain their ability and to help them develop a love of reading for its own sake.

Although few librarians seem to question the value of incentives in reaching these goals, the practice is not without its critics. In 1956, both Frank G. Jennings and Mary Gaboda summarized the results of a survey of children's librarians attitudes toward reading incentives that had been published in the October 15 issue of *Junior Libraries*.¹

Jennings, the executive director of the Library Club of America, spoke for those who supported the use of tangible rewards as being necessary to compete with the lure of television and to “persuade children into the habit of reading.”²

Arguing against reading incentives, Gaboda, Grosse Point (Michigan) Public Library children's librarian, wrote that “reward-type incentives” shifted children's goals from “enjoying a reading experience to the winning of a contest,” and that such “extrinsic motivation undermines integrity and encourages dependence on lures and irrelevant rewards.”³



Matisse Mosher relaxes with a copy of *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis.

Thirty years later, Carol-Ann Haycock and Jo-Anne Westerby each wondered whether what Haycock calls the “quantitative competitive approach” taken by most library Summer Reading



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Programs promote, as Westerby puts it, “competition and love of winning or love of reading,” suggesting that “we are losing sight of the real goal—that of reading as opposed to record breaking.”⁴

In 1999, Doug Johnson, Director of Media and Technology at I.S.D. 77 in Mankato (Minnesota) Public Schools, suggested that giving rewards for reading was “creating fat kids who don’t like to read.” He based his conclusion on the 1993 book, *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A’s, Praise, and Other Bribes*, in which author Alfie Kohn contends that “extrinsic motivation not only doesn’t achieve long-term desired behaviors but actually works against building those very habits and attitudes,” including an intrinsic love of reading.⁵

As far as I can determine, no one has ever studied the effect of such incentives on children’s performance in the Summer Reading Program or on their long-term reading behaviors and attitudes. However, psychologists have investigated the effect of extrinsic rewards on the development of intrinsic motivation since the early 1970s. Although they disagree on the theoretical explanation for the findings, they agree that extrinsic rewards inhibit the development of intrinsic motivation even for potentially pleasurable activities. In Kohn’s words, rewards “smother people’s enthusiasm for activities they might otherwise enjoy.”⁶

A meta-analysis of ninety-six experiments in 1994 by Cameron and Pierce concluded that “verbal praise and positive feedback enhance people’s intrinsic interest,” but that other types of rewards “can have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation when they are offered . . . for engaging in a task without consideration of any standard of performance.”⁷

They recommended that any reward other than verbal praise or social recognition “offered in educational and other settings be delivered contingent on performance.”⁸ Deci, Koestner and Ryan analyzed those experiments plus an additional thirty-two and found that “the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation is clear and consistent. . . tangible rewards had a significant nega-

tive effect on intrinsic motivation for interesting tasks. . . [but] verbal rewards. . . had a significant positive effect on intrinsic motivation.”⁹

Although Cameron, Banko and Pierce call the negative effects of rewards on intrinsic motivation a “myth,” even they admitted that “rewards have different effects under different moderating conditions.”¹⁰ Their analysis finds that “when people are offered a tangible reward for [either] doing a task or for doing well at a task, they often choose to do the activity less in a free-choice period.”¹¹ The amount of interest they report in the task is also negatively affected, but “verbal rewards are found to increase free choice and task interest” for tasks that are inherently interesting.¹²

A study by Joussemet et al. of the effect of rewards on children’s attitudes toward uninteresting tasks found that “the effects of rewards were . . . either null or negative,” and that overall, “rewards had a pernicious effect.”¹³ They conclude that “rewards bring about compliance as long as they are operative, but . . . this popular method may impede the longer-term goal of autonomous internalization and regulation that is well integrated into the sense of self.”¹⁴

Their findings suggest that rewards are not necessary for the development of intrinsic motivation for interesting activities, and that the best method for developing motivation for uninteresting tasks is to encourage self-initiation and responsibility through goal-setting and free choice.

In a review of the research on the effect of rewards on children’s motivation to read, Ken Haycock reported that rewards made no difference in the reading motivation of fourth-grade students. Their interest was affected by “choice, characteristics of books, personal interests, and knowledge gained from books.”¹⁵ Motivation was increased when an adult gave them books, read to them, and shared books with them.

What is the Library Club of America?

What was the precursor to libraries offering reading incentives?

The Library Club of America was a nonprofit corporation founded in 1955 by the Book Manufacturers Institute. Its purpose was to promote reading through schools and libraries by awarding membership pins, buttons, and certifications for reading.

What does all of this mean for summer reading programs? It doesn’t mean that you’ve wasted your time planning activities and programs. In fact, you could probably teach the researchers a thing or two about developing motivation for reading. Guthrie et al. found that “stimulating tasks, such as hands-on science observations and experiments” presented along with “books on the topics of the stimulating tasks,” something most children’s librarians do routinely, led to “longer term intrinsic motivation and reading comprehension.”¹⁶

It does mean that you might consider replacing tangible “incentives” with the verbal praise and social recognition that research suggests have a positive effect on intrinsic motivation. Johnson recommends letting kids set their own goals, allowing kids to read magazines and comics as well as books, providing opportunities for kids to share their reading with each other, recognizing them for meeting their individual goals with certificates and public acknowledgments (such as star charts or more creative means), and giving books as prizes if tangible rewards are necessary.

Lu Benke, a Lead Librarian for Children’s Services at Fort Collins (Colo.) Public Library, developed a program that uses altruism as an incentive. Now in its seventh year, Readers to the Rescue raised more than \$1,700 for Mountain State Horse Rescue and Rehab its first year, \$2,500 for the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International its second, and \$2,500 for the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program its third.¹⁷ A quick search of the Internet for “Readers to the Rescue” reveals that other libraries have adopted the idea with equal success.

If you find yourself thinking, “If I don’t give incentives, no one will come,” ask yourself what that says about the children’s real motivation and the program’s real effect. ☺

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Call for Referees

To make *Children and Libraries* a truly interactive publication, we’re looking for ALSC members to serve as volunteer referees for journal articles. Unsolicited articles and those of a scholarly nature must be submitted to at least two referees to judge the submissions on accuracy, style, impact, importance, and interest. Specialists in particular genres (such as technology, literature, intellectual freedom, programming, and so on) are especially needed.

Referees make recommendations to the editor on whether or not manuscripts should be accepted for publication. Interested librarians should contact *Children and Libraries* Editor Sharon Korbeck Verbeten at CALeditor@yahoo.com for more information on the referee process.

Banned Books, Blocked Bytes

Allison G. Kaplan and Bradley Debrick

This year we acknowledge the occasional challenges of publishing for children and young adults with ALA's Banned Books Week, Sept. 26–Oct. 3, 2009. On a frighteningly frequent basis, our library collections are challenged by parents and community members who object to a picture or a word.

As librarians, we deal with these challenges through our collection development policies. Most of us can point to the forms we ask patrons to complete to challenge materials, and many of us can breathe a sigh of relief when, faced by the actual form, the well-meaning protester decides against making the challenge.

There is another form of challenge, however, that raises its ugly head from a number of fronts—the challenging or banning of Internet sites. There is so much questionable material on the Internet that it is easy to see why a parent, community member, legislator, or even some librarians, would like to ban Internet sites. In recognition of this problem, school media and technology director and author Doug Johnson proposes a partner theme to Banned Books Week that he calls Blocked Bytes Week.¹ Johnson argues that we spend a lot of time thinking about books, but for those of us who have filters on our systems or

otherwise limit access to Internet sites, there is a more insidious form of censorship at play that is not being addressed.

One may ask why should we *not* select sites for our computers just as we select books for our shelves? While this is a valid question, applying selection criteria to a moving target such as the Internet is nearly impossible. Instead of relying on blocking sites and the information they provide, perhaps we should focus our energies on the education of our Internet users—youth and adults—through the acceptable use policies for Internet access most libraries already have in place.

This idea was lauded by the “First Lady of the First Amendment” Pat Scales. She states that “an Internet acceptable-use policy. . . places the responsibility on the user, and lets parents know the school’s expectations regarding online use.”²

An acceptable use policy does more than just specify what sites should and should not be accessed on library computers, although it certainly can do that. It reminds library users that the Internet is an uncontrolled medium and that the library cannot be responsible for information posted or sent online. In a public library setting, an acceptable use policy can put the burden of responsibility on the adult who is responsible for young users. It can also be the perfect venue to mention Web 2.0 applications including blogs, file-sharing sites like YouTube, instant messaging, and gaming. If your acceptable use policy does not mention the newest technologies on the Internet, perhaps Blocked Bytes Week is a good time to revisit its wording.

For example, do we allow young children and preteens access to social network sites? In a recent presentation at the annual conference of the Association for Library and Information Science Educators (ALISE), Eric Meyers reported that “web-based shared virtual environments (SVEs) for children as young

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Navigating the 'Net

The following are excerpts from ALSC's "Navigating the 'Net with Your Kids" brochure. This brochure, updated in 2008 by ALSC's Children & Technology Committee, was written for parents who may be unfamiliar or concerned about their child using the Internet. The full brochure can be downloaded in the Issues and Advocacy Section of the ALSC website or at www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/issuesadv/internettech/NavNetBrochure.pdf.

Keeping up with the Internet

How do parents and children keep up with new technologies and the opportunities they provide for fun and learning? A great starting point is the American Library Association's "Great Web Sites for Kids" (www.ala.org/greatsites). Many of these recommended sites are educational, and all of them are fun. They are easy to navigate, sponsored by trusted sources, and make effective use of the Internet to create unique, interactive experiences.

You and your children can also ask your local librarian or visit your library's website for recommended sites. Some libraries even offer Internet classes for children and adults. By taking these classes, both you and your child can become experts in what the Internet has to offer.

Keeping up with your kids

Spending time online with your children is the best way to learn about the Internet and teach your children responsibility, good conduct, and the values that are important to you. Ask your children to share their favorite websites and what they like about them. Help them discover sites that can assist with their homework, hobbies, and special interests. A set of suggested criteria to assess the quality and validity of websites is available at the Great Web Sites for Kids webpage.

Many Internet sites are safe. But, like the real world, the virtual world contains content that may not be appropriate for children. Parents should also examine websites for racial, gender, and other biases they feel are inappropriate and learn if filtering software has an appropriate role in their household.

Whether or not a filter is in place, guidance from parents and other adults is crucial in creating safe and positive Internet experiences for your children. We strongly recommend that you supervise older as well as younger children's Internet use at home and at the library. It is a good idea to place the computer

in the kitchen, family room, or living room so that you can see your children using it. Young children should never be allowed to surf the Net alone. Review your safety guidelines with them on a regular basis.

Suggested safety guidelines

The best way to ensure your child's safety on the Internet is to be there. Of course, that is not always possible. Just as you teach your children rules about dealing with strangers outside the home, you should also provide rules for communicating online at home or elsewhere. Discuss your library or community center's Internet use policy with children as well as your family rules. You may also decide to make an Internet Use Agreement with your child. GetNetWise.org offers sample contracts.

Online profiles and networks

Having an online presence for most kids is akin to breathing air; it's something they do to socially survive. Whether they have a blog or belong to one of the hundreds of online communities, participation is not only compulsory, it's a necessity. With adult guidance, these online activities need not be dangerous or risky. Talk to your child about what is and is not appropriate for them to post. If you create an atmosphere of trust and openness, it will be easier for your child to come to you if they do encounter any kind of problems online. The nonprofit Tech Parenting Group has additional social networking tips and strategies you can use with your child. This information can be found at www.ConnectSafely.org.

Gaming

Playing games on a computer is something most kids (and many adults) will do from time to time. Online gaming includes everything from single-player games like solitaire to complex, multi-player games set in fully developed virtual worlds. In addition to improving children's hand-eye coordination as they move their attention quickly between the screen, keyboard, and mouse, many experts believe games that require strategy and decision making can improve children's higher level thinking skills.

Many games played via the Internet have some aspects of social networking like chat, discussion boards, and/or personal profiles. As such, you and your child should practice the same strategies for online gaming as you do for social networking—be cautious what you post, never use your full name, and quit playing if you feel you are being harassed or bullied.

as seven years old received over 2.6 million unique visitors during November 2008.”³ With popular SVEs like Club Penguin, Habbo, and Webkinz increasing their membership every day, it is easy

and how to talk with their kids about it.⁵ While the brochure does mention the use of Internet filters, most reading this article are well aware of the shortcomings of even the most advanced, and

administrators about Internet access, create practical acceptable use policies, and celebrate what can be learned in a physical, and virtual, world. ☺

One may ask why should we not select sites for our computers just as we select books for our shelves? While this is a valid question, applying selection criteria to a moving target such as the Internet is nearly impossible.

to see that these sites are more than just places to play games. But too often these addresses are blocked because of potential negatives instead of being lauded for the positives.

Johnson says in his blog “...teachers I talk to don’t worry about kids getting access to Harry Potter, but [they do worry about access] to Wikipedia, YouTube, blogs and wikis.”⁴ Teachers worry because parents worry. And parents are a powerful constituency for school and public libraries.

Perhaps one reason adults may be quick to censor the Internet is that they are not completely comfortable with evaluating the sites and using them with the children. In September 2008, ALSC published a brochure called “Navigating the ‘Net with Your Kids” to help parents better understand the nature of the Internet

expensive, filtering software. Included in the brochure is the recommendation that parents spend time with their kids online, create Internet agreements for their own household, seek out Internet classes they can attend with their kids, and rely on school and public library webpages (including the ALSC Great Websites list) to provide a starting place for their exploration of the Internet. A free download of Navigating the ‘Net with Your Kids is available at the ALSC website (www.ala.org/alsc) in the Issues and Advocacy section.

As we prepare for the twenty-eighth anniversary of Banned Books Week, let’s also take a moment to consider the notion of Blocked Bytes Week. Free and equitable access should apply to every medium in your library. We should use this opportunity to talk with parents and

References

1. Doug Johnson, “Blocked Bytes Week,” online posting, Blue Skunk Blog, Sept. 23, 2008, <http://doug-johnson.squarespace.com/blue-skunk-blog/2008/9/23/blocked-bytes-week.html>, (accessed Mar. 17, 2009).
2. Pat Scales, “Better Safe Than Sorry (Scales on Censorship),” *School Library Journal* 55, no. 3 (2009): 22.
3. Eric M. Meyers, “Tip of the Iceberg: Meaning, Identity, and Literacy in the Preteen Virtual World,” (University of Washington, 2009), <http://students.washington.edu/meyerse/articles/iceberg.pdf> (accessed May 26, 2009).
4. Doug Johnson, “Have We Met the Enemy?” online posting, Blue Skunk Blog, Feb. 16, 2008. <http://doug-johnson.squarespace.com/blue-skunk-blog/2008/2/16/have-we-met-the-enemy.html> (accessed May 26, 2009).
5. Association for Library Service to Children, *Issues and Advocacy*, (Oct. 2008), www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/issuesadv/internettech/NavNetBrochure.pdf (accessed Mar. 17, 2009).

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Wanted! Award Applications

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

- *Bechtel Fellowship.* Librarians, currently working or retired with a minimum of eight years in direct service to children, are encouraged to apply for the 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.
- *Bookapalooza.* This program offers three select libraries a collection of materials, including books, videos, audiobooks, and recordings. The materials are primarily for children age birth through fourteen and have been submitted to ALSC award selection and media evaluation committees for award and notables consideration.
- *ALSC/BWI Summer Reading Program Grant.* This \$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.
- *Light the Way: Library Outreach to the Underserved Grant.* Sponsored

Phase 2 of Kids! Campaign Targets Tweens

Phase 2 of the Association for Library Service to Children's (ALSC) Kids! @ your library® public awareness campaign, which officially launched during the ALA Annual Conference in July, focuses on tools to help librarians promote library services to kids in grades 5–8.

No fan of children's illustration will want to miss the latest offering in the campaign's online tool kit: artwork designed by David Diaz, award-winning children's book illustrator and graphic artist. Camera-ready PDFs of a miniposter and ready-to-cut bookmarks feature Diaz's colorful, imaginative work and artistically embody the campaign's message: There's so much to see and do @ your library®. The PDF files are free to download and print for library displays and as giveaways.

Other new resources include two readers theater scripts, adapted from excerpts of "Bud, Not Buddy" by Christopher Paul Curtis and "The Library Card" by Jerry Spinelli. A readers theater how-to guide provides tips on planning, promoting, and creating scripts for readers theater at the library.

If you're looking for fresh games or activities to offer at the library, the tool kit now has a library treasure hunt for grades 5–8; a fun mad lib-style game, and challenging word search puzzle, each with a library theme, a compilation of successful programs just right for tweens, and information on how to get involved in letter boxing.

A new navy blue and lime green version of the So Much to See. So Much to Do. @ your library® artwork includes translations in Russian, Polish, and French. The artwork is ideal for promotional flyers and library handouts.

For more information about the Kids! @ your library® campaign and to check out all the free tool kit materials available, visit www.ala.org/kids and click on the tool kit link.

by Candlewick Press, this grant provides one library with \$3,000 to fund outreach programs for underserved populations. The award is in honor of author Kate DiCamillo and the themes explored in her books.

- *ALSC Distinguished Service Award.* ALSC members are invited to nominate one of their fellow members for the Distinguished Service Award, which recognizes a member who has made significant contributions to and

has had an impact on library services to children. The nominee may be a practicing librarian 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 and Schuster Children's Publishing, this award pays the honorarium and travel for a visiting author/illustrator up to \$4,000. Hayes Award applicants seek to provide a visit from an author/illustrator who will speak to children who have not had the opportunity to hear a nationally known author/illustrator.
- *Penguin Young Readers Group Award.* This \$600 award is presented to up to four children's librarians to enable them to attend the ALA Annual Conference for the first time. The 2010 Annual Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. The recipients must be ALSC members, work directly with children, and have less than ten but more than one year(s) of experience as a children's librarian by the opening of the Annual Conference.

For more information about each award and to download applications, visit the ALSC website at www.ala.org/alsc and click on Awards and Grants—Professional Awards. To request a form by e-mail, send a request to alsc@ala.org. Please check the website for the application deadline for each award.

Major Board Actions

Electronic Actions

The following actions were voted on electronically by the ALSC board of directors on the electronic discussion list ALSCBOARD. The month in which the vote took place is in parentheses after each item.

VOTED, to accept the Organization and Bylaws Committee's motion to

integrate the Bechtel Fellowship and National Planning of Special Collections Committees into one body called the Special Collections and Bechtel Fellowship Committee with new membership and function statements. (May 2009)

VOTED, to move the Oral History Committee to Priority Group IV: Organizational Support and the Special Collections and Bechtel Fellowship Committee to Priority Group VIII: Professional Development, and to dissolve Priority Group V: Projects and Research. (*Current Priority Groups 6–8 will be renumbered as 5–7.*) (May 2009)

VOTED, to accept the Organization and Bylaws Committee's motion to integrate the ALSC/BWI Summer Reading Program Grant Committee, Hayes Award Selection Committee, Penguin Young Readers Group Award Selection Committee, and Bookapalooza program into one body called the Grant Administration Committee with new membership and function statements. (May 2009)

2009 Annual Conference Actions

During the 2009 Annual Conference in Chicago, the board voted to take the following actions:

VOTED, to approve the board meeting agendas for Annual Conference 2009.

VOTED, to send the Belpré Task Force report back to the task force for review with the following recommendations: co-Latino writers or illustrators can be honored; change "native Spanish speaker" to "fluent Spanish reader" or something equivalent; ALSC president should have role in announcing the award—introducing the award and the REFORMA president, or his/her designee; no Canadian publishers; no extension of eligibility to age 16; add the role of a cultural consultant vetted by REFORMA.

VOTED, to approve the Education Committee's revision of the ALSC Core Competencies.

VOTED, to approve the recommendations, based on evaluation of the initiative, of the Every Child Ready to Read® Task Force.

VOTED, to instruct the Organization and Bylaws Committee to return Form K (request for an increase in committee membership and virtual members) to the Library Service to Special Population Children and Their Caregivers Committee for further development, for subsequent board consideration.

VOTED, to instruct the Strategic Planning Alignment Subcommittee to investigate virtual committee membership possibilities in each priority group and report back to the board.

VOTED, to approve the FY-2010 budget as presented by Andrew Medlar, ALSC Budget Committee Chair, in document 12A.

VOTED, to approve the revised, streamlined board schedule per board discussion for the 2010 Midwinter Meeting.

VOTED, that the purpose of the new, \$100,000 endowment will be to support board initiatives and that it be named the Board Initiative Endowment.

VOTED, to instruct the Education Committee to solicit proposals for an online course to be made available to all ALSC members at no cost beyond a cost-recovery registration fee, the balance of which will be paid by the spending interest from the Board Initiative Endowment. The course should take place and the money should be expended in FY-2011.

VOTED, to postpone the "Motion to Amend" voted on July 13, 2009, by the ALSC membership until a future board meeting or electronic meeting, to allow time for research on ALSC's actual electronic discussion list policy and on other ALA divisions' policies, and to refer to ALA Council, if necessary.

VOTED, to put forward as an ALSC Emerging Leaders project an environmental scan for the ALSC Strategic Plan.

Bylaws Changes Adopted

ALSC members voted to approve changes to the ALSC Bylaws during the ALA elections this past spring. The text in Article VIII (Committees) has been revised to reflect these changes adopted by membership.

The opening sentence for Article VIII, section 2, now reads: "The Newbery Award Committee, the Caldecott Award Committee, the Sibert Award Committee, the Wilder Award Committee, and the Notable Children's Books Committee."

The following new text was added as section 2e: "The Notable Children's Books Committee shall consist of the following eleven (11) members: a chairperson appointed by the president and ten (10) members appointed by the president."

Section 2f reads: "No individual may serve on the Caldecott Award, Newbery Award, Sibert Award, or Notable Children's Books Committees more often than once every four years. The four year period shall begin from the last year of the term of service regardless of length of term. This guideline will apply to the Caldecott Award, Newbery Award, Sibert Award, and Notable Children's Books Committees only. This guideline will not apply to the selection of nominees for Chair. This guideline will not apply to other ALSC prestigious award committees."

Suggestions Welcome

ALSC members are encouraged to suggest titles for the 2010 media awards. Send recommendations 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. Chair: Katie O'Dell, kodell@multcolib.org.
- The Caldecott Medal is given to the illustrator of the most distinguished American picture book for children. Chair: Rita Auerbach, rita.auerbach@alum.barnard.edu.
- The Mildred L. 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 language other than English in a country other than the United States, and subsequently translated into English and published in the United States. Chair: Annette Goldsmith, agoldsmith.fsu@gmail.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 2011 lecture to Carol Edwards, cedwards@denverlibrary.org.
- The Pura Belpré Award, 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. Chair: Lucía González, gonzalez1575@bellsouth.net.
- The Andrew Carnegie Medal, supported by an endowment from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, honors an outstanding video production for children. Chair: Joan Kindig, jskreader@earthlink.net.
- The Geisel Award is given to the author and illustrator of the most distinguished contribution to the body of American books for beginning readers. Chair: Susan Veltfort, susanv@kcls.org.
- The ALSC/Booklist/YALSA Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production is given to the producer of the best audiobook produced for children and/or young adults available in English in the United States. Chair: Sharon Grover, sharon.grover@yahoo.com
- The Sibert Medal is given to the author of the most distinguished informational book for children. Chair: Vicky Smith, vicky.smith.me@gmail.com.
- The 2011 (Laura Ingalls) Wilder Award is given in alternate years to an author or illustrator whose books published in the United States, over a period of years, made a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children. Chair: Megan Schliesman, schliesman@education.wisc.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: Eliza Dresang, edresang@u.washington.edu
- Notable Children's Recordings: Janet Weber, janetw@tigard-or.gov
- Notable Children's Videos: Sue Rokos, srokos@mvls.info

New from ALSC/ALA

ALSC is pleased to announce two new products available through the ALA Store at www.alastore.ala.org.

Remind parents and parents-to-be that it's never too early to start visiting the library where they can read and play with their little ones. Promote early childhood reading initiatives at your library with Born to Read library card sleeves. The durable sleeves are waterproof and tear resistant. It's the perfect gift for little hands! Item number: 5274-0942; 50/pack: \$30.

The newly revised Born to Read brochure contains great tips on how to read, share, talk, and play with your baby. It also includes a list of recommended books. Item number: 978-0-8389-8527-4; 50/pack: \$22.50.

"The Newbery and Caldecott Awards: A Guide to the Medal and Honor Books, 2009 Edition" covers the most distinguished American children's literature and illustration. Librarians and teachers everywhere have come to rely on this annual guide for quick reference, collection and curriculum development, and readers' advisory. Thanks to its fresh look and format, locating information on the award-winning books is easier than ever before. The 2009 edition features Kathleen T. Horning's essay, "Newbery and Caldecott Medal Books: Revised, Revamped, and Revitalized," which highlights notable revisions made to republished Newbery and Caldecott Medal books and cites the most common types of changes made. ISBN-13: 978-0-8389-3585-9; \$25.

Get Your Name in Print

Submit an Article to *Children and Libraries*

Children and Libraries (CAL) is the official publication of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA). CAL is a vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with children, and showcases current research and practice relating to library service to children and spotlights significant activities and programs of the association.

Manuscript Consideration

Submit manuscripts that are neither under consideration nor accepted elsewhere. Send one copy of the manuscript to the CAL editor at the address below. Editor will acknowledge receipt of all manuscripts and send them to at least two referees for evaluation. Accepted manuscripts with timely content will have scheduling priority.

Manuscript Preparation

For information on formatting your manuscript, editorial style, guidelines for text and art, and copyright forms, contact the editor at the address given.

For citations, use endnotes as described in the 15th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, sections 16–17.

Submit manuscripts and text (including references, tables, notes, and bibliographies) to the editor by e-mail as a Microsoft Word file attachment, copy the text directly into the body of an e-mail message, or send on a CD. Illustrative material (such as high-resolution digital images) MUST be sent via CD. CDs must be PC-formatted.

Full length features (e.g., scholarly, research and “best practice” articles): fifteen to twenty pages, double-spaced.

Short features (e.g., interviews with authors, librarians, or others involved with library service to children): three to ten pages, double-spaced.

The Last Word: 350–500 words, double-spaced.

Long and short features should be well researched with themes relevant and of interest to children's librarians and all those involved and interested in library service to children.

“The Last Word” is an end-page feature that will run in each issue and highlight brief,

light, or humorous essays from children's librarians, such as a humorous story about a library experience; a short trivia quiz or puzzle about children's literature; a brief, creatively written insight on library service, children's literature, or programming; a very short question-and-answer interview with a popular author; a funny story about what kids are overheard saying in libraries. “The Last Word” will be a place for children's librarians to share these stories and get their names in print. Please send your ideas or finished stories to the editor.

Attach a cover sheet indicating the title of the article and the full name, title, affiliation, phone number, fax number, e-mail address, and complete mailing address of the first author. Include a 200-word abstract.

Place tables on separate pages. Notations should appear in text for proper table and figure placement (e.g., “insert table 1 here”). Provide a title and caption for each table and figure.

Supply charts and graphs as spreadsheet programs or as graphics (TIFFs or high-resolution JPEGs). Camera-ready copy is also acceptable. You need not provide graphs in final form. If you prefer, you may provide a rough version, or even a sketch. If so, please mark all data points clearly. We will create the graphic. You will have a chance to review the graphic when you review your typeset pages during the proofing stage.

Photos can also be included with manuscript. Color or black-and-white photos are acceptable. We also can accept digital images of at least 300 dpi resolution. (Pictures from the Web are not of sufficient quality for printed material because their resolution is too low.) Photos will be returned to author(s) after publication.

Submit Microsoft Word files. Double-space the entire manuscript, including quotes and references. Insert two hard returns between paragraphs. Number all pages.

Use a minimal amount of formatting in files. Specialized formatting may

be lost in translation from one program to another; mark specialized formatting with text instructions, such as <extract>. Do not use the automatic footnote/endnote feature on your word processing program; create endnotes manually at the end of the article.

If sending a disk, label it with the first author's name and all file names.

Writing and Bibliographic Style

Children and Libraries follows the 15th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Authors are responsible for accuracy in the manuscript, including all names and citations. Editor may revise accepted manuscripts for clarity, accuracy, and readability, consistent with publication style and journal audience.

Address

Send correspondence and manuscripts to Sharon Verbeten, CAL editor, via e-mail to CALeditor@yahoo.com.



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THE LAST WORD

God and the Swearing Book

My Favorite Reference Questions

By Shutta Crum

The first question came early in my career. A father and son approached the reference desk where I sat with a colleague. The son said, "I want to know what God does all day."

The child—about seven—elaborated. "Just what does God do all day long, anyway? That's all I wanna know." Behind the boy, the father had his hands lifted in the classic "Now, what?" gesture. My colleague whispered, "You can take this one." *Great!* I thought.

Mentally, I began to tick off my choices. Christian texts would contain pictures of Jesus, not God. The burning bush? No. My feet dragged me toward the 200s. Household gods, gods of mythology, totems?

Then my young patron administered the *coup de grâce*. He said, "Ya got a lotta books here. Just any ol' book you got in this whole big library—just any ol' one to tell me what God does all day."

Suddenly, it came to me. "The Sistine Chapel!" I found a picture of Michelangelo's *God Creates Adam*. The child studied it and gave it back to me with a polite, "Thank you. That's all I wanted to know." *Whew!*

I told my colleague, "I'm not sure if I did him a favor. Now he thinks God is an elderly white man who lounges in the sky touching fingertips with others." Still, his library hadn't failed him. Our patron would remember that—even if he forgets what God does all day.

My other favorite question came late in my career. It was whispered by a father. "Do you have any books with swearing in them?"



Photo by Paul T. Hacker

A look must have passed over my face. I'm sure it was due to the scenarios running through my head. Was this person a representative of some gatekeeper group eager to berate me for books that include swearing? Were we about to go through a censorship challenge just as I was due to retire? *Dang!*

He sensed something, for he leaned in and added, "I have two boys, nineteen and fifteen, and they don't like to read. I thought—" he trailed off, squirming.

I wasn't sure if this was an act, or truly, a desperate father. I headed toward our teen section. I found a book I knew was gritty and realistic. It also happens to be well-written, gripping, sad beyond belief, but still full of hope—*America* by E. R. Frank.

I opened the book. About mid-way down a page was the F-word. Dad was looking over my shoulder. He said, "Great! I'll take it."

For two weeks I worried about the incident. Nothing. Then one night, the father came in again. Behind him slouched two boys. I smiled. Here was a father who trusted his sons, and gave them what they needed when they needed it.

Today, I write during the week of Father's Day. It seems fitting. Both of these fathers thought of the library as the place to find the answer. Fatherly love had played itself out before me, twice! ☺

Shutta Crum is a retired librarian and children's author. She was awarded the Michigan Library Association's Award of Merit as youth librarian of the year in 2002. Her newest book is *THUNDER-BOOMER!* published by Clarion.

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.