Children & LIBRARIES

the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children

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ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY SERVICE TO CHILDREN

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ON THE COVER: Kimberly is one of the students at the HS for Law Enforcement and Public Safety in New York who worked on a Muppets program funded by an Ezra Jack Keats Foundation Mini-Grant. Photo courtesy of the school.

WINNER 2018 APEX® AWARDS FOR PUBLICATION EXCELLENCE

Editor's Note
Why We Do What We Do

By Sharon Verbeten

See this picture below? That's the root of why we do what we do.

When my friend, Jillaine, sent me this picture of her son Max and daughter Harper reading together—unprompted and unposed!—I knew I had to share it with other librarians. It warms my heart to see these littles sharing their love of books together—even if both are too small to read the literal words.

To me it's the perfect picture of early literacy and what drives us all in our daily lives. From planning fun storytimes to engaging parents, being a children's librarian is, quite simply, one of the most rewarding careers.

Preaching to the choir? Yes, but sometimes in the midst of budget constraints, staffing shortages, disgruntled patrons, wild afterschool kids, and employee squabbles, we might overlook the little stuff that really matters.

Kids remember the smallest things. The hand motions to Itsy Bitsy Spider. The dancing hippo hand stamp. That crazy "Alabama, Mississippi" song Miss Sharon sings—loudly!—at storytime each week.

What they'll really remember is YOU, doing what you do—modeling something as simple as holding a book, paging through a book, singing a silly song, or reading a rhyme. Simply engage.

We really DO have the best jobs on earth! &

Max may be too little to read, but he loves sharing a book with his new baby sister, Harper. Photo by Jillaine Sturdivant.

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Statement of Purpose

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Does Cultural Competence Matter?

Book Reviewers as Mediators of Children's Literature

JUDI MOREILLON

School and public librarians have a moral imperative to purchase, provide, and present authentic and accurate children's and young adult literature. To succeed, librarians must be culturally competent.

Cultural competence involves values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices that enable librarians to work cross-culturally to serve increasingly diverse constituencies. A considerable amount of work has yet to be done for the library profession to fully embrace and understand the needs of culturally diverse populations, particularly since the cultural background of many library professionals differs from those they serve, and issues surrounding diversity (e.g., immigration, English-only legislation) have become increasingly complex."[1]

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), as well as other ALA youth divisions, promotes competencies for librarians related to providing culturally competent library services, including advocating for equity and displaying empathy, respect for cultural diversity, and inclusion of diverse cultural values.[2]

In addition to these competencies, librarians who serve as reviewers for children's and young adult book review sources must practice cultural competence as they read. Reviewers must be aware of their own cultural biases, be curious and accepting about other people's cultures, and commit to increasing their knowledge of cultures other than their own. "Competency in matters of cultural pluralism are not intuitive and must be learned, like any other essential skill."[3]

Children, educators, and families (and review sources, too) rely on librarians' careful review and selection of resources for literacy and learning. Library patrons should also be able to trust that the books on library shelves, used in programming, and promoted to patrons will support youth as they develop intercultural understanding—a critical aspect of living and working in a global society.

Global literature is a comprehensive term that encompasses both international and multicultural literature. It "honors and celebrates diversity, both within and outside the United States, in terms of culture, race, ethnicity, language, religion, social and economic status, sexual orientation, and physical and intellectual ability."[4] In recent years, there have been a number of publicly condemned children's books that have been published with negative stereotypes and cultural misrepresentations. In addition to book editors and art directors, the initial book reviewers and book review source editors may have missed the fatal flaws in such titles and initial published reviews for these titles provided undeserved positive comments.

In this context, many publishers, book review sources, and book reviewers have raised their consciousness about the complexity of authenticity and accuracy in children's literature. Many are making sincere efforts to end the publication of or praise for inauthentic or inaccurate titles.

Still, questions remain regarding how and how well book reviewers are prepared to review titles that are written with perspectives outside their own experience and culture. Some

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in the publishing industry and in the library world believe that only cultural insiders are capable of reviewing global literature. Others believe that cultural outsiders can develop the necessary cultural competence to thoroughly vet and review literature with cultural components that are outside their own cultural experience.

Reviewing Global Literature

"Global literature expands our worldview so that stories become a window for readers to see and experience cultures outside their own personal contexts. They also function as a mirror, reflecting back human experiences and helping us understand ourselves and our lives better."[5]

Librarians and other educators seek to share mirrors and strive to open windows into diverse cultures. "In today's increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, cultural competence is vital for preparing [children and] young adults to be active and engaged citizens of the global community."[6] Global literature offers a way to support young people who are growing up in an increasingly diverse global culture.

Global literature also presents challenges for children's book reviewers. As mediators between literature and readers, reviewers have the responsibility to compose reliable reviews. Parents, educators, school and public librarians, and university faculty rely on published reviews for selecting titles that they themselves cannot physically examine or are unable to read in advance of purchase. With the moral imperative to share authentic, accurate global literature and the constraints of tight book budgets, book buyers count on reviewers to apply cultural competence in assessing the accuracy and authenticity of the books they review.

Using the results of an anonymous online survey administered to librarians living in the U.S. who review books for well-known journals, this article explores these questions:

1. What in their personal lives or professional training prepares U.S.-based book reviewers to be reliable mediators between global literature and readers?

2. What processes do reviewers use to determine the authenticity and accuracy of a book that is situated in a culture that is not their own?

In addition to the survey, the researcher conducted a four-part interview with Mary Margaret Mercado, children's librarian at Pima County Public Library in Tucson, Arizona, who reviews children's literature for *Kirkus* and *School Library Journal*. The goal of this study and this article is to further the conversation among book reviewers, authors, illustrators, publishers, educators, librarians, and book review sources regarding strategies to elevate the competence of reviewers and the accuracy of global book reviews, in particular.

Anonymous Online Survey

In fall 2017, an invitation to children's (and young adult) book reviewers to participate in a ten-question anonymous online survey was posted to two national distribution lists: alsc-l and LM_NET. Thirty-one people responded to the invitation; twenty-six people participated in the survey. The first eight questions on the survey were multiple choice focused on demographic questions and the participants' preparation for serving as children's and young adult book reviewers. The last two questions were open-ended. One sought to discover challenges book reviewers have faced in reviewing books outside their own culture. The other asked for their responses to the trend of assigning books for review based on the ethnicity, race, or other demographic characteristics of the reviewer. In the data that follow, references to specific publishers, book titles, and authors or illustrators have been removed.

Of the twenty-six respondents, twenty self-identified as White. Three identified as Asian, two as Hispanic/Latinx, and one as Black or African American. There were no American Indian or Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander respondents. Ten of the respondents served in public libraries, and four were school librarians. Three were college or university librarians and three were retired. There were two consultants, two journalists, two who worked for library associations, and one college or university educator. (One respondent self-identified in two categories.)

Several of the respondents reviewed books for more than one review source. Table 1 shows the most frequently mentioned review sources for which these participants were contributing reviews at the time they participated in the survey.

Other review sources noted included Bank Street Children's Book Committee, *Canadian Materials*, *Catholic World*, *Children's Book and Media Review*, *CM Magazine*, *Hornbook*, *Library Journal*, participants' own blogs, and Florida State University.

One demographic question was related to the participants' work and home communities and another asked about their ability to read in languages other than English. Thirteen reported they work in culturally diverse communities; ten reported they work in monoculture, predominantly White communities. One participant reported working in a monoculture, predominantly non-White work community. Fifteen of these book reviewers reported that they live in culturally diverse home communities; ten reported that they live in monoculture, predominantly White home communities. (Not all participants responded to this question for both their work and their home communities.) When asked about languages read fluently, eighteen reported that English is their only fluent language. Six reported Spanish, three reported French, and one of those reported both French and Spanish.

Table 2 shows the source of these book reviewers' training regarding issues related to cultural diversity in children's

Table 1. Book Review Sources (N=26)

Source Name	Number of Reviewers
School Library Journal	14
Kirkus	7
Booklist	3
School Library Connection	3
VOYA	3

Table 2. Sources of Cultural Diversity Training (N=26)

Source Name	Number of Reviewers
College or university course	19
Review journal training	16
Public library training	9
School district training	4

Table 3. Processes for Determining Cultural Authenticity and Accuracy (N=26)

Process	Number of Reviewers
Reading information included in the book	24
Reading additional information provided by the author, illustrator, or publisher	21
Conducting research found via free-range Web searching	19
Conducting research found in scholarly articles/databases	11
Reading additional information provided by the review journal	10

and young adult global literature. Respondents were asked to mark all of the sources that apply and were invited to add other sources as well.

In addition to these training providers, survey participants noted diverse book award committees, national and international conference sessions, self-directed reading of current professional literature and social media sources, and their own experiences of living outside of the U.S. Participants were also asked to rate the effectiveness of their training on a scale of one (being the least effective) to ten (being the most effective). The average rating was 7.6 out of ten. Two respondents skipped this question.

Table 3 shows the processes these book reviewers use to determine the authenticity and accuracy of a book that is situated in a culture that is not their own. They were invited to check all that apply.

Participants mentioned additional strategies including consulting cultural experts, consulting scholarly and practitioner resources, reading and comparing with new titles of other culturally accurate children's and young adult literature. One reviewer who focuses on fantasy and science fiction felt that authenticity and accuracy do not apply to those two genres.

Reviewing Books from a Cultural Outsider Perspective

The last two open-ended questions sought to provide respondents with the opportunity to freely share their experience and their opinions. The penultimate survey question asked them to describe a review that presented them the greatest challenge as a reader who is not a member of the culture portrayed in the book. Twenty-three responded to this question; four responded that they had not had this experience or could not remember such an experience. Since the other nineteen responses were unique, these are a sample of their responses.

> "I had a book that had some pretty big flaws with the portrayal of a Native culture. I did my cultural research by talking to members of that group and looking into the author's background. When I submitted my (very negative) review, I included a lot of notes as justification. The review was printed in its entirety with my harsh language in it. I felt my editors were very supportive."

> "I review many books about Middle Eastern culture and Islam, but this was a particularly political book. I believe that I could be an impartial reviewer of this book, but I had to think carefully about my perceptions of Israel, the settlers, and the occupation."

> "As a non-Latina who has worked with Latino communities my entire career, I found [the book's] presentation of the characters stereotypical and troubling. I chose to discuss the feeling with my editor and asked her to reassign the book to someone within the culture, out of fear of oversensitivity. I'm glad I did this, because the book wound up getting a great review and being very well received by Latinx librarians. When I talked with others later I learned little winks and loving jokes it made to insiders that I simply didn't have the experience or exposure to understand."

> "I didn't know much about the cultures or the schools that First Nations and/or American Indian populations were forced to attend. I did some searching about the cultures presented [Haida and Chinook], but I struggled with knowing if I had conveyed appropriate information or been critical enough in both of those reviews."

> "I couldn't find information in the back matter, jacket flap, author's website, or other online research to verify exactly which Traveler culture the author was referencing. Without that information, I didn't feel comfortable recommending the title. Here is the note I wrote to my editor: 'My main concerns are that the author is not clear on whether this is an original or traditional tale and it's not exactly clear which culture he's drawing from. Although there's an author's note that attempts to provide cultural context it's not quite

enough. The story is good enough, but I'm not sure I'd recommend this title given its vague origins and culture.'"

"It was supposedly a Puerto Rican origin story of the indigenous Taino people. Yet the book included clothing, architecture, food, and cultures spanning all five hundred years of Puerto Rico's history. Talk about artistic license."

"Even books featuring characters with whom I share a culture still pose a challenge to me because cultures are not monolithic and friends from the same ethnic background can have very different experiences and values taught."

Readers of this article may be interested to know books focused on American Indian and other indigenous peoples were most frequently mentioned by survey participants as difficult to review—seven times in nineteen responses.

Pairing Culturally Specific Books with Cultural Insiders

The final survey question asked for participants' opinion or experience related to book review sources pairing reviewers with specific books in order to help ensure they publish more culturally authentic and accurate reviews of global books. Again, twenty-three participants responded to this question. Four respondents noted they had no experience with this practice. One of them thought it was a "good idea" and wrote, "I think it would make sense to have members of the community or ethnic group provide feedback on its authenticity and respectfulness for the culture." Another noted this was not an issue for science-focused nonfiction titles.

The following are a sampling of unique responses that show a range of opinions and experiences among the other eighteen responses to this question:

"I'm not sure about how I've been matched with books. My editor knows I'm a Spectrum Scholar but didn't ask about my ethnic background."

"While I am white, I am married to a member of a Native group and know socially and by family many others. My editors usually send me books related to our place of living and those Native groups because they know I have the cultural context to read them."

"I took a diversity course sponsored by a review source that was both informative and eye-opening to me, in that I didn't fully realize biases I had or how that could affect my reading and reviewing of materials. In general, I think the source that I review for, does its best in trying to match reviewers with materials of interest and relevance to their qualifications. I realize my skin color is well-represented in the publishing and reviewing industry though."

"When joining a reviews team, I completed a document explaining my cultural Latinx experiences and personal background (I'm first-generation); meanwhile, I have studied Middle Eastern literature, poetry, religions, history, cultures, and geopolitics. I have also spent quite a long time traveling and living in either Muslim, African, or Middle Eastern countries."

"It seems unrealistic to say that only a member of X group can review books about X, especially as a reviewer with the needed qualifications might not be available or interested." (comment submitted with the previous question)

"After reading the books and reviews regarding titles dealing with the Mexican or Chicano cultures, I found so many inaccuracies that I read the reviews to see how these inaccuracies were discussed. I discovered that none of the reviewers had caught the blatant errors and wrote the review source's editor. I have since been given more assignments for books dealing with my culture to provide a more balanced and accurate perspective."

"Although I appreciate the reasons for (pairing books with reviewers based on cultural background), I feel that I have a very broad background and strong interest in reviewing books from many cultures. I must admit that I resented receiving that information."

"I totally respect this. It does make me somewhat sad though that I won't have as much of a role in highlighting excellent diverse literature as I used to."

"In my opinion, review sources are not very proactive in this effort. I believe that they are more reactive to demand from consumers (individuals, libraries, and bookstores). Thankfully, consumers are demanding more authentic and diverse materials."

As these comments attest, the practice of pairing books with reviewers can be a complex proposition. During the interview with Mary Margaret Mercado, who is Mexican American, she commented on the specificity of her cultural competence. "Even though I am culturally competent in both Mexican culture and Spanish language as spoken in (parts of) Mexico and the U.S., I would not be a competent translator for a story situated in Cuban or Puerto Rican culture. It is not appropriate to assume that anyone who is fluent in both English and Spanish can effectively translate any story into the other language."[7]

Discussion and Recommendations

One anonymous study participant summarized the ongoing issue of critical reviews and wrote this about a source for which she had previously reviewed books. "I reviewed for a review source for one year, but eventually decided to stop for two reasons. One, I was taking on more responsibilities at work and so my schedule was going to be busier. Two, I wasn't a big fan of the fact that this source only provides positive reviews. As a librarian, I want to know the flaws of a book, just

as much (or perhaps more) than the merits." Readers, librarians, other educators, and parents deserve accurate book reviews.

A number of book review sources are making efforts to improve the quality of published book reviews. Several survey participants reported that their editors send them books they feel competent to review or mentioned the support they get from the review journal's editor when needed. Some review journals are offering free or fee-based cultural competence training. Trainings include examples of previously published accurate and inaccurate reviews, resources for specific cultures that detail their worldviews, and other information provided by cultural insiders.

In January, 2018, *School Library Connection* (SLC) formed a Reviews Advisory Panel charged with developing policies, guidelines, and workflows to combat bias, including providing regular training opportunities for reviewers. *SLC* recognizes that their book reviewers are volunteers who may miss negative stereotypes or may categorize books as appropriate for readers of various ages based on their own (and often) unconscious biases. *SLC* wrote about this effort: "Recognizing the central importance of professional reviews in the collection development policies of school and public libraries, the Reviews Advisory Panel will promote best practices for reviewers in pursuit of the mission to establish *SLC* as the most trustworthy, high-quality outlet of professional reviews for librarians."[8]

Authors and illustrators who create literature from outside their own culture must be vigilant as they write and illustrate books for children and teens. In addition to research, consulting with cultural experts is a more effective way to ensure that their texts are culturally authentic, accurate, and free of stereotypes. Cultural advisors who contribute an introduction or other informational note to the book add further assurance to publishers, book reviewers, and readers who may be evaluating or reading the book from an outsider perspective. As noted by survey participants, reviewers rely on this information when reviewing books.

Book publishers, editors, and art directors have an essential role in ensuring that the titles they select for publication are worthy. When evaluating a manuscript written or illustrated from a cultural outsider perspective, it is imperative that publishing house staff vet the title thoroughly. Similar to the authors' and illustrators' quest to ensure authentic and accurate representation of cultures other than their own, staff can consult cultural insiders to ensure parents, librarians, and other educators will have worthwhile texts to share with young people.

Book review source editors must stand behind their reviewers and the reviews they publish. To that end, editors must ensure that book reviewers are culturally competent to review the books to which they are assigned. Practices such as pairing books with reviewers from specific cultural backgrounds may be an effective strategy. This practice should be explained to book reviewers who may feel that their training, experience, and expertise has prepared them to review literature from a cultural outsider perspective. Review sources can provide ongoing training and review source editors can provide on-going guidance to ensure the accuracy of children's and young adult book reviews.

It would be difficult to learn the number of reviewers and their demographic characteristics who are currently reviewing for book review sources. Although the sample size of this survey was small, the reviewers who participated understand they have a responsibility to accurately represent the titles they review. Regardless of the status of the author or illustrator in the industry, every title submitted for review must be thoroughly analyzed.

Book reviewers are charged with documenting the merits as well as the flaws, if there are any, in the books they review. Reviewers who do not feel qualified to review particular books can seek further information from cultural insiders, the book review source, publisher, author or illustrator, or return the book unreviewed as appropriate.

As mediators between young people and their literature, it is essential that book reviewers accept their moral responsibility to honorably serve the literacy needs of all readers, librarians, other educators, and families. Authors, illustrators, publishers, editors, and book review sources share in this responsibility. Working together, book publishing and book promotion stakeholders can ensure that the literature available to children and young adults is of the highest quality and worthy of all readers. &

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Ten-month-old Edie gets a head start on literacy with a visit to the University of Minnesota Kerlan Collection exhibit "The ABC of It: Why Children's Books Matter." Photo courtesy of her librarian mom, and ALSC committee chair, Anna Haase Krueger. &

Fifty Years Strong

The Coretta Scott King Award and Its Enduring Impact

CLAUDETTE MCLINN

ALSC joins ALA's Ethnic & Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT), administrators of the Coretta Scott King Book Awards, in celebrating the award's fiftieth anniversary. The award recognizes outstanding African American authors and artists of children's books who demonstrate an appreciation of black culture and universal values.

The road to CSK 50 Years Strong began in 1969 out of a fortuitous chat at the ALA Annual Conference in Atlantic City, NJ, between two school librarians—Glyndon Flynt Greer, of Englewood, NY, and Mabel R. McKissick, of New London, CT. They discussed the absence of African American authors and illustrators on the list of winners of the two most eminent awards in the field of children's literature.

Their conversation was overheard by publisher John Carroll of Carroll Books Services who suggested, "Why don't you ladies establish your own award?"

The trio envisioned an award that would recognize the talents of outstanding African American authors and encourage them to continue writing books for children and young adults. And today, many African American authors and illustrators would not have been recognized had it not been for these trailblazing founders.

A humbling moment shared by Congressman John Lewis, who won the 2017 CSK Award—among scores of other accolades—for his book *March: Book Three*.

The first Coretta Scott King Book Award, recognizing an author, was presented in 1970 at the New Jersey Library Association conference in Atlantic City. The award went to Lillie Patterson, author of *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Man of Peace*.

Four years later, the committee, selected by Greer, honored an illustrator for the first time—George Ford for his acrylic painted illustrations of *Ray Charles* by Sharon Bell Mathis (who also won the CSK author award). As the first illustrator award recipient, Ford said it was "totally unexpected.

Dr. Claudette S. McLinn *is Chair of the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee. She is Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature (CSMCL) in Inglewood, CA.*

Among other honors, Jason Reynolds won the 2015 John Steptoe Award for New Talent the year his book *When I Was the Greatest* was published. Two of his 2016 books received CSK honors: *All American Boys* and *The Boy in the Black Suit*.

Although the award was a recognition of artistic excellence, I was most proud of the fact that it was a reward specifically intended as a source of inspiration and encouragement to African American children."[1]

That same year, Lev Mills, an internationally renowned artist from Atlanta, GA, designed the Coretta Scott King seal to identify book jackets of award winners.

Over the years, some of today's most notable authors and illustrators have been recognized—and it has impacted their careers greatly. Just ask Bryan Collier, 2001 CSK Illustrator Award winner for *Uptown*, which he also authored. He said, "I went door to door to nearly every publishing house in New York once a week for seven years in search of a book deal. For my very first book, *Uptown*, I received a CSK Medal, a few months later I was offered ten book deals from four different publishers."[2]

After receiving her first award, a 1984 CSK Author Honor for her book *Because We Are*, Mildred Pitts Walter said, "Winning the Coretta Scott King Award affected my career, I believe greatly. It gave me confidence that perhaps I was a writer. After that award I received [many] awards [and recognitions]."[3]

Attendees of the 2002 Coretta Scott King Book Awards Breakfast join in song at ALA Annual in Atlanta, Georgia.

Noted illustrator and multiple award winner Jerry Pinkney said, "I received my first CSK Award in 1981 for *Count on Your Fingers African Style*. At that time, my creative and artistic practice was not entirely focused on bookmaking. I was also new to the publishing community and did not yet understand the mission of the CSK Awards and its taskforce (now called the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee).

"However, I was able to take in and fully appreciate the fact that the illustrations for my thirty-second book were noted as deserving of special attention, and it was beyond gratifying—a green light to pursue what would become my primary way of expressing my passion for making pictures: children's literature. It became a springboard for me to introduce children to what was often their first experience with art, and my intent from the beginning was to entertain and at the same time spark curiosity in young readers."[4]

Other CSK winners and honor award–winning authors and illustrators have expressed the impact the award had on their careers. Vaunda Micheaux Nelson said, "After being honored with a 2010 CSK Author Award for *Bad News for Outlaws: The Remarkable Life of Bass Reeves, Deputy U.S. Marshal*, it felt like I had been admitted to a special club. My work became widely recognized in the children's book world. I began receiving more invitations to speak, and readers and publishers were asking what I was working on next. I'm humbled to say my work has been honored with other awards since."[5]

Nonfiction author Tonya Bolden calls winning a CSK honor (in 2006 for *Maritcha: A Nineteenth-Century American Girl*) a "huge hug to my heart, mighty wind beneath my wings . . . more teachers and librarians began to take notice of my work . . . in the thirteen years since *Maritcha*, I have received many honors and awards for subsequent books."[6]

Renée Watson, 2018 winner for *Piecing Me Together*, said, "Receiving my first CSK Award was such an honor. The award brought visibility to my work and introduced my writing to

educators and young people who hadn't read my previous books. But more importantly, for me personally, the award validated that little girl in me who spent hours in the public library tracing my finger along the 'sticker books' dreaming of having my own one day."[7]

Multiple award-winning author Jason Reynolds was awarded the 2015 John Steptoe Award for New Talent—the first award he ever won, he said.

"It forced my book (*When I Was the Greatest*), and furthermore, my name into the conversation of new writers at that time. I'm not so sure I wouldn't have slipped through the cracks if Coretta Scott King committee hadn't recognized my work.

"Furthermore, I had a chance to give a speech in front of a room full of librarians and bibliophiles which was another opportunity to stake my claim and say, 'I'm here.' To announce that I had a voice and an unwavering commitment to this work. For that, I'll forever be grateful.

"After the CSK, I went on to win many others. But it all began with the recognition from the Coretta Scott King committee—the first stamp of approval."[8] &

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Checkout STEM

Expanding Access to STEM-Literacy Experiences

SARA NELSON, CONSTANCE BEECHER, AND JERRI HEID

"I wanted to thank the individuals or individual who came up with the idea for the STEM kits . . . I am a nanny of three boys aged eight to thirteen years old, and all three enjoy working with the problem-solving skills, engineering, science, and other learning opportunities that the kits offer. Thanks so much for making education exciting and fun!"

As the above email illustrates, the response to Checkout STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) at the Ames (Iowa) Public Library has been wonderful.

Checkout STEM is a program that works to support the development of STEM and literacy skills through learning events that are engaging and responsive. Each kit includes two carefully chosen children's books, developmentally appropriate play materials, and a research-based activity guide focused around a STEM topic such as coding. We have been pleased, and a little surprised, by the amount of community interest in Checkout STEM. However, given the prevalence of STEM books and toys on the market today, it makes sense that the community would be excited and engaged by these kits.

Closing the STEM-Literacy Gap

Research by Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, and Maczuga[1] notes an increasing and persistent STEM achievement and participation gap. As educators, this gap was troubling to us so we began to brainstorm ways to help close it. Stevens, Bransford, and Stevens[2] state that over the course of a year, 80 percent of a child's waking hours are spent outside of school or formal education. Thus, institutions such as the public library can play an important role in developing STEM knowledge and attitudes of children. We decided a good first step would be to create and increase access to high quality STEM-literacy learning experiences for children, especially books and materials that could be checked out at the public library.

These brainstorming sessions in spring 2017 were the start of Checkout STEM, with the goal of expanding access to research-based STEM and literacy experiences for K-3 children and their caregivers. To help meet this goal, Ames Public Library and Iowa State University began a unique partnership. We felt that, by working together, we could leverage our strengths and work to close the STEM-literacy gap through the development of an innovative, engaging, and sustainable program.

Development of Checkout STEM

To begin, we sat down to create a plan for the development of the kits and divided up tasks. The library would choose the books and STEM play materials while the university would work on developing and writing the activity guides. As a



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group, we worked to create a strong implementation road map to help ensure that this collaboration would be a success.

For the activity guides, we first focused on the development of a learning framework. The Experiential Learning Model based on work from Kolb[3] was chosen due to its strong connection to informal education. This learning model encourages children to first DO an activity, REFLECT on the activity, and then APPLY knowledge learned to other life experiences.

To reflect this learning model, each activity guide first encourages reading a fiction book to help focus the experience around a problem or theme. This is then followed by a variety of hands-on STEM experiences or play (DO). Last, children and their caregivers are encouraged to discuss the experience and learn more about the topic by reading a nonfiction text (REFLECT/APPLY).

The kits needed to be attractive and easy to transport, and we finally settled on plastic bins. Each kit contains two books (one fiction, one nonfiction), materials for STEM play, and a thematic activity guide. The books were chosen based on the following criteria: vibrant language or text, engaging illustrations or photos, correct STEM concepts, and developmentally appropriate concepts and format. Play materials were chosen based on ability to illustrate STEM concepts, sturdiness, ease of availability, and developmentally appropriate format. We were fortunate to receive a grant from the Ames Public Library Friends Foundation to support the development of the kits. In general, grants of about $2,000 to $3,000 are a great fit for starting up this program.

After the books and play materials were chosen, we created one-page activity guides. It took us much longer than anticipated to write one-page documents; we found it tricky to be clear yet concise. University students enrolled in early childhood science methods assisted with the writing. It was a great authentic learning experience for them, and many shared it was a highlight of their semester.

Check Out Process

Before the kits were made available to the public, we finalized our check-out process. The kits are stored in a cabinet by the youth services desk. To check out a kit, children take a tag with the kit name from the Checkout STEM display. Our current seven kits are Bee and Me, Curious Coding, Fabulous Five Senses, Super Slinky, Building Bridges, Humpty Dumpty, and Magic Eye. Each kit can be checked out for three weeks.

Humpty Dumpty kit materials.

Staff then check out a kit to the child and hang the tag inside the cabinet. We ask that these kits be returned inside the library. The kits don't fit through the drop box, and this allows staff to check for any missing or damaged pieces. In addition, videos promoting Checkout STEM and the process for checking them out were created for the library's YouTube channel. For an example, visit https://youtu.be/CLnEtizE7BE.

Feedback and Future Plans

Feedback on these kits has been positive. The kits have now been piloted in six additional libraries across the state with support from an Iowa State University Extension and Outreach grant. This has allowed us to see that they can be successful in both urban and rural public libraries. Based upon circulation data, the most popular kits are Curious Coding, Building Bridges, and Bee & Me.

We do plan to create additional kits. Topics are sometimes spurred by the discovery of an excellent book or by requests from children or caregivers. We are also looking to focus on the creation of Checkout STEAM (STEM + the Arts) kits to include art books and materials.

We'd also like to design kits that complement library programs, such as a program on rockets or force and motion. Our end goal is to create programs and materials that create connections among school, library, and home learning while working to close the STEM-literacy gap. &

All of our activity guides are available free online at www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/checkoutstem.

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PEER-REVIEWED

Creating Environmental Stewards

Nonfiction Prompting a Sustainable Planet

RENEÉ LYONS

These days, I cannot imagine a subject more important than sharing books that celebrate nature and its worth—also relaying the importance of keeping our shared "home" healthy.

Such literature will encourage environmental stewardship, create a generation that recognizes and understands the value, yet fragility, of Earth's resources, and propagate a general consensus as to the manner in which humanity must preserve, conserve, and protect such resources that ensures the well-being of all life forms.

Why should this issue and "green" literature take precedence in our collections, programming, and collaborative efforts? Without argument, present-day environmental warnings, reports, and statistics are overwhelmingly pessimistic; they cannot be ignored! As proof, consider and digest the bulleted list found below, each fact implying a major consequence for our planet, in and of itself:

- Species extinction rates are one hundred to one thousand times greater than the *natural extinction rate.*
- Global populations of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles declined by 60 percent between 1970 and 2014—in other words, an average drop of well over half in less than 50 years. There is no precedent for the current rate of loss of biodiversity and ecosystems, and this extends to all parts of the world.
- The world's warm-water coral reefs, the most diverse marine habitats, may not make it until the end of the century. If trends continue, up to 90% of ALL coral reefs may disappear by 2050. (Nearly 200 million people depend on coral reefs to protect them from storm surges and waves).
- On a global scale, the area of minimally disturbed forests declined by 92 million hectares between 2000 and 2013.
- Two hundred thirty nine million hectares of natural forest have been lost since 1990.
- The intactness of our global biodiversity (think, is there life on Earth?) has dropped from 57.3% in 2001 to 54.9% in 2012.[1]

As can be discerned, one fact builds upon another, to the point that humanity may see a major shift in the planet's ability to sustain *homo sapiens*, and indeed all life forms, by 2020. Also,

- Conservative estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO) show that climate change alone is responsible for over one hundred forty thousand deaths per year (estimates based on data for 2004), mainly of children in the poorest regions of the world. Several million individuals around the globe are at risk from changes in the earth's ecological and bio-geophysical processes, including climate change, ozone

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depletion, biodiversity loss, land use change, and ecological degradation.[2]

Certainly, time is of the essence as we attempt to inculcate the upcoming generation in a lifestyle and mindset that will ensure humanity's (and our planet's) very survival. Part of this mindset, no doubt, will include an emphasis on social justice and equality in order that all peoples will be treated fairly with regards to the sharing of natural resources, food supplies, and clean water. In fact, Clark Wolfe, in *Intergenerational Justice, Human Needs, and Climate Policy*, posits, "Since protection from harm is a matter of basic need, and since significant climate mitigation can be accomplished without compromising the needs of present persons, climate policy is an urgent priority of justice… Where our present activities are not necessary for satisfaction of present fundamental needs, and put at risk the basic needs of future generations, then they are unjust."[3]

The Answer

The World Wildlife Federation states that "sustainability and resilience will be achieved much faster if the majority of the Earth's population understands the value and needs of our increasingly fragile Earth."[4] This understanding is promulgated by education (parental and institutional) and information sharing. The United Nations Millennium Development Goal #7 reads: "Education helps ensure environmental sustainability: Education helps people make environmentally sustainable decisions."[5]

In fact, the 2016 UNESCO World Education Report propagates this theme across the globe: "Educated citizens have a greater ability to make informed decisions on how to use resources and preserve ecosystems."[6] Cambridge's *Children, Their World, Their Education* notes, quoting Alexander and Hargreaves: "Children who were most confident that climate change would not overwhelm them were those whose schools had replaced unfocused fear by factual information and practical strategies for sustainability."[7]

What specific strategies are required? The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) considers the following outcomes critical:

- Young people must examine and clarify their values about and attitudes toward the environment, including the natural world and the human-built environment;
- Build skills to address environmental and social issues; and
- Undertake behaviors that help protect the environment and work toward a more sustainable future.[8]

I agree with these stances by the United Nations and NAAEE, but further argue that the literature needed to insure proper outcomes, in association with these objectives, is at our very fingertips.

As librarians serving youth patrons, we must do all that is necessary to place these books in the hands of our nation's youth. We must discover, collect, use, and share these texts, for as Mickenberg and Nel argue, "Children's literature…has been and continues to be an important vehicle for ideas that… promote environmental stewardship…"[9] Appropriately, let us consider several "key" means of completing such crucial tasks and roles.

Fostering Awareness

First, which source tools assist librarians in finding and accessing quality, environmentally-based children's literature (as a means of encouraging sustainable life practices)?

Since 2005, The Nature Generation has sponsored an annual Green Earth Book Award—the nation's first environmental stewardship award for children and young adult books. Themes found in the 2017 winners include the devastating effects of coal mining, sea turtle rescue, and seed preservation. A self-explanatory winner in 2018 included the young adult nonfiction title *Geoengineering Earth's Climate: Resetting the Thermostat* by Jennifer Swanson. Librarian Pam Spencer Holley, author of the ALA's *Quick and Popular Reads for Teens*, said, "One of the beauties of the Earth Book Award is that it recognizes an author who is writing about a topic that is of vital importance to our Earth, yet, it's an area that, until recently, received little attention."[10]

Other avenues for finding quality children's literature promoting environmental stewardship amongst our youth include:

- The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children, awarded since 1989. The 2018 winner was *Grand Canyon* by Jason Chin and a 2018 recommended book was *If Sharks Disappeared* by Lily Williams.
- The American Library Association's Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal. First presented in 2001, this award honors books written and illustrated to present, organize, and interpret documentable, factual material. While the award encompasses all nonfiction, many years the books selected speak to environmental concerns, as well as social sustainability, such as the 2017 winner authored by Congressman John Lewis, *March, Book Three*, winner of the National Book Award. As Lewis said, the purpose of the book is to encourage young people to "…stand up, to speak out and to find a way to get in the way when they see something that is not right, not fair, not just."[11]
- Another award that asks children and young adult readers to consider planetary environmental and social justice issues is the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, sponsored by The

Jane Addams Peace Association (founded following WWII to end and avoid wars and establish lasting peace). Presented since 1953, these acclaimed books may be searched by the following nature/climate-bent subjects: access to water, ecological solutions, impacts of poverty, natural disasters, non-violent activism, science or technology as a tool for social change, voting rights, and young people as activists.

- The acclaimed Scientists in the Field series introduces children and young adults to "adventure with a purpose," such purpose being the preservation of endangered species, rehabilitating ecosystems, and introducing unsustainable human practices. Books in the series, such as *The Tarantula Scientist* and *Tracking Trash* have consistently earned distinguished honors, such as the Sibert and the Boston Globe-Horn Book nonfiction award. *Tracking Trash*, in fact, delves into the environmental impact of "human-made cargo," as it spills into our oceans.

- To address social justice issues in greater depth, utilize those titles found at the website www.socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/. Providing more than fifty listings of social justice books for children and young adults, themes directly tied to environmental issues include Changemakers, Economic Class, Environment, Librarian#Resists, Labor, Organizing, and Voting Rights.

Delivery and Programming

Second, how might we utilize these works of children's literature to their greatest effect in our nation's children's and young adult services libraries, also encouraging collaborative efforts with nearby school libraries?

Such works will raise awareness of past and present practices that harm our planet and its creatures; allow children to stand in awe of Earth's natural beauty, while also understanding its fragile nature; offer potential solutions which will be instituted by these readers, budding environmentalists all; and engage youth by the means of creative narratives that allow the reader to vicariously join adventures as broad-ranging as a trip to the Amazon jungle or the forests of Puerto Rico.

For example, in Susan Roth's 2014 Sibert award-winning title *Parrots over Puerto Rico*, readers learn that, prior to colonialism, millions of Puerto Rico's signature green parrots inhabited El Yunque National Forest, yet, due to unsustainable practices, such as extensive hunting, trapping, and logging, by 1967, only twenty-four such parrots remained in the wilds of this territory.[12]

Readers also discern how Europeans mistakenly brought invasive species to the forests, inhibiting the well-being of the green parrot: black rats, honeybees, and predators such as the pearly eyed thrasher. Children realize the practical and aesthetic consequences of this near-extinction: the opportunity to witness the beauty of the parrot itself, the loss of its song within the forest, yet, most importantly, the loss of seedlings to preserve the forest floor (parrots spread seeds when culling fruit), and the resulting predator/prey imbalance.

Table 1. Cause and Effect Timeline (*Parrots over Puerto Rico*)

Initial human involvement – Habitat destroyed to rebuild homes after hurricanes, used for food, kept as pets	Hunters and Planters from South America arrive – clearing forests for agriculture
1 million parrots instead of millions	Numbers of green parrots drop into the hundreds of thousands

On the positive engagement side of the coin, however, readers can imagine trekking into the El Yunque and Rio Abajo National Forests, to join scientists gathering eggs and building nesting boxes, biologists in the coalition-led US/Puerto Rico Parrot Recovery Program.

Inquiring youth also learn how such recovery programs operate, in essence "watching" scientists provide safe-haven habitats, both in the wild and in captivity; return parrots to the forest upon rehabilitation; and create aviaries in alternative locales within the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Utilizing this text, a responsive activity might include asking emerging readers to create a timeline in which they document the reduction in numbers of Puerto Rico's green parrots in relation to the introduction of human activity, events, and migration patterns, an example provided in table 1.

And a most recent and pertinent point of discussion associated with this title involves a recent disastrous natural occurrence. Due to the devastating effects of Hurricane Maria (2017), parrot recovery efforts underwent a drastic setback and a great loss in the still fragile green parrot population. Read https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/did-puerto-rico-parrots-survive-hurricane and ask young patrons to complete a similar chart, as above, in association with just this *one* natural disaster. Young stewards will, by association, understand the fragility of any species as they reflect upon the loss of Puerto Rican green parrots as the result of a major hurricane.

Next, as a group, compare and contrast the status of parrot species worldwide, raising awareness as to endangered parrot types, the consequences to associated ecosystems, and the practices that detrimentally affect healthy populations. As a guide, use https://www.parrotfunzone.com/explore-parrots/parrots-in-the-wild/endangered-parrots.

As a second "adventure," allow higher elementary patrons to join author and true-to-life National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientist Sophie Webb on an expedition at sea in *Far from Shore: Chronicles of an Open Ocean Voyage*, a 2012 Orbis Pictus recommended title.

Webb's text informs young readers that shorebirds (which Webb is responsible for monitoring) serve as a "canary in a coalmine," warning scientists as to potential threats to life

Table 2. Think-Tac-Toe Example (*Far from Shore*)

Based upon the map on page 14, and the text, describe what makes the ecosystem exciting	Explain why the 100m zone depicted on the graph at page 13 is an ideal location for mammal life	Based upon the graph at page 25, and the text, write your opinion as to why the dolphin population is not increasing
Determine why scientists need to track "zones of probability" as found on the graph at page 46?	Based upon all the drawings of marine mammals in the book, choose the one you would most like to encounter and explain why	Write a letter to the chief NOAA scientist telling him which part of the ship you would like to work in, based upon the text and the drawing on page 9
Based upon the text, and pages 53 and 71, explain how a biopsy of a marine animal occurs on open seas	Find what borders (countries) dolphins most like to swim near based upon the graph at page 58	Based upon all the drawings of sea and shorebirds in the book, choose the one you would most like to encounter and explain why

forms along our ocean's shorelines and within the ocean itself. Today's youth will be introduced to the catalyst for the threats as well—plastic and plastic bags, oil pollution, entanglement in fish lines, cigarette lighters and butts, combs, and balloons. A portrayal of the trauma and stress marine life endures as a result of catch-and-release practices is narrated, too.

Reader engagement is fostered by Webb's accounting of her four-month adventure over the tropical Pacific Ocean. Young adventurers will imagine riding the waves upon a 22-foot boat, complete with marine mammal and shorebird scientists and oceanographers. They will encounter spotted and spinner dolphins (whose populations are decreasing), and the least known and most mysterious of marine mammals, the Curvier's whale. Unique scientific methods will also be envisioned, to include obtaining biopsies of dolphin tissue with crossbows.

This informational text is perfect for practice in writing interpretive narratives rich in effective technique, descriptive details, and step-by-step sequencing. For example, use the charts, graphs, diagrams, timelines, and animations in *Far from Shore* to interpret data clearly and concisely, choosing three such incidences within the text to develop greater understanding.

The Think-Tac-Toe example in table 2 provides ready-made choices, and such an intriguing reader response tool may be compiled for any and all quality nature-based works of children's literature, even shared in public/school library collaborative efforts. Such collaborative associations will no doubt improve if these tools are created and shared county-wide via youth programming outreach. (See table 2.)

Or use the video *The Majestic Plastic Bag* to discuss the literary terms sarcasm and/or irony as these concepts are presented in *Far from Shore*.

A final example of an award-winning text lending itself to the objective of creating young environmental stewards, by means of collaborative planning and programming, is Phillip Hoose's *Moonbird: A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor, B95*. In this 2013 Sibert honor title, patrons develop an intimate connection with B95, a red knot shore bird tagged for scientific observation in 1995, recaptured at least three times, and spotted, miraculously, again, in 2014. Readers marvel at this scientific miracle in the face of data revealing that 80 percent of red knot shorebirds disappeared during Moonbird's lifetime, all as a result of food sources being disturbed and disrupted by human activity (for example, along the shoreline of Delaware Bay, rubber tire pollution was destroying the red knot's food source).

The adventure encountered by the young reader is none other than Moonbird's annual flight pattern. The shorebird flies from the Rio Grande, to Brazil, to Delaware, to the Arctic, to Quebec, back to northern Brazil, and to South America's southernmost tip, Tierra del Fuego (Argentina). Patrons become friends with the avian world's consummate athlete, a bird that tackles an eighteen-thousand-mile-circuit each and every year.

Learners can draw evidence from the text to support analysis, reflection, and research, explaining the relationships among historical, scientific, or technical events, ideas, or concepts. A RAFT strategy (Role, Audience, Format, Topic) allows young scientists to choose writing queries conducive to such higher-order thinking tasks, fitting perfectly into programming themes or partnership efforts. See table 3 for an example.

The responsive activity suggested above will certainly help in the development of young people who examine and clarify values about, and attitudes toward, the natural environment, all the while acquiring skills leading to the resolution of ecological issues. For, as Mickenberg and Nel state, carefully chosen children's literature texts and related service-based activities truly "explain to children the true consequences of pollution, resource depletion, decreasing biodiversity, unrestricted development, and lost animal habitats."[13]

Reading Promotion

John Dewey stated that children need books that present models of "action that gets to the heart of the matter."[14] Reading promotion activities, field trips, and associated events deliver such opportunities for action modeling. And, as Kudryavtsev relates: "many education programs combine experiential and instructional approaches, which we think is an effective strategy to nurture place meaning and strengthen place attachment," such attachment contributing to "pro-environmental behaviors."[15]

Table 3. R.A.F.T. Example (*Moonbird*)

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Student	Author	Letter	Explain what adventure most impressed you – whether of the scientist or the moonbird – and why
B95	Student	Telegrams	Write telegrams from B95 explaining the conditions upon landing at his stopping points
Student	Friend	Friendly account	Write an explanation of B95's journey to a friend unaware of this amazing athlete
Student	Tri-athlete	Letter	Write a letter to an Olympian tri-athlete explaining why Moonbird is an inspiration
Scientist	Public official	Letter	Write a detailed letter as to why the Moonbird's habitat must be protected by law
Student	Parents	Memo	Write your parents a memo as to why it is important for the family to take walks and make observations of birds within your community
Self	Self	Diary entry	Write down your thoughts as to what action you wish to take to support and protect B95 and his kin
Student	Scientist	Observation	Write a detailed observation as to a scientific career that fits your psychological "habitat" or learning style and interests

Thus, reading promotion plans must be instituted on a wide-ranging basis, for "attention to the sense of place literature may enrich an already vibrant place-informed scholarship in environmental education."[16]

First, consider Sy Montgomery's *Kakapo Rescue: Saving the World's Strangest Parrot*, the 2011 Sibert Medal-winner. In this text, children are introduced to New Zealand's kakapo parrot, a flightless and night active bird whose feathers smell like honey. If left to natural causes, kakapos can live from seventy to one hundred years. Readers learn that in 1995, only fifty-one such birds remained in the wild, though their biological constitution may someday help humanity understand how to fight "bad" bacteria (their honey-smelling wings could hold the secret to "good" bacteria, serving to ward-off life-threatening bacteria).

Discerning a "sense of place" via descriptions of Codfish Island off the coast of New Zealand, children read about a differing topography, ecosystem, and geological locale. But they also are introduced to a culture completely different than their own. Based in these readings, librarians may plan a programming activity in which the national symbol of New Zealand, the kiwi bird, is highlighted along with the kakapo. As patrons create kiwi or kakapo crafts, they may also be introduced to the reasons New Zealanders are referred to as "kiwis" (see https://theculturetrip.com/pacific/new-zealand/articles/why-are-new-zealanders-called-kiwis/#); the similar fate of the kiwi (population also dwindling—http://nzconservationtrust.org.nz/Kiwi+Projects.html); and the respectful (and therefore sustainable) manner in which indigenous cultures in New Zealand have been embraced by the national government.[17]

For young adult readers, share yet another work written by Phillip Hoose, *The Race to Save the Lord God Bird*. Relaying the story of the now extinct red-billed woodpecker, nicknamed the Lord God Bird for the exclamation observers used upon viewing the magnificent avian, Hoose presents a story of what *not* to do when a species is faced with possible extinction. He explains how unsustainable hunting practices, habitat destruction, and corporate greed all contributed to the demise of this incredible, myth-inducing woodpecker, whose territory once spanned twenty-four million acres (from Memphis to Little Rock) and whose appearance and presence was striking: a lightning-bolt-shaped, white streak down the back, white patches on the wings, and a call sounding like a tin horn.

Certainly a reading promotion event could be planned for an entire community in which a local Congressional representative is invited to a youth services event for the purpose of discussing conservation efforts on a local, national, and global scale, also delving into how best, legislatively and via community organization efforts, young people may take action to prevent additional losses of this magnitude and encourage "place-based scholarship."

Last, but not least, allow young readers a "growling" good time as they join an expedition, within the pages of Sy Montgomery's *Saving the Ghost of the Mountain*, to the Himalayan Highlands in search of the endangered snow leopard. Unfortunately, centuries-long human cultural and food-based practices have contributed to the demise of the snow leopard, to include a belief the snow leopard's bones are medicinal in nature, the domestication, herding, and shepherding of goats and sheep (which prevents the proliferation of the wild goat, the ibex, the snow leopard's major food source), and the desirability of the snow leopard's coat (fur coat production).

A quintessential field trip might be arranged in association with a community read of this quality children's nonfiction material, such as a trip to a nearby reputable zoo that houses big cats. Ask zookeepers to address the current status of snow leopards and big cats in their natural habitats, also addressing why most such animals need to remain in the wild (not in the zoo) as a benefit to natural habitats.

Or, as a book discussion group, collect pennies and adopt a snow leopard to assist the efforts of the World Wildlife Federation's Snow Leopard Trust.[18]

Indeed, these summarized and highlighted literary works, conducive to reading promotion efforts, help children's and youth services librarians instill a "sense of place in

environmental education that will draw not only on environmental psychology but also on critical theory, anthropology, cultural geography, and other frameworks and studies."[19]

Based in scientific evidence that details the current unfortunate state of our planet's health, and/or nature's current inability to sustain mammal, marine, plant, avian, invertebrate, and reptilian life in a healthy manner, today's youth require an immersion into works of quality children's literature that promote and encourage environmental empathy. Resulting environmental education service delivery, as well as reading promotion responses/programming/collaborative efforts based in these materials, will assist in raising a generation aware of the environmental challenges that must be faced, understood, internalized, and resolved, for the continuation and preservation of not only wildlife, marine life, and birds of the air, but also for the well-being of our own species.

Such efforts should concentrate on engaging readers in vicarious scientific adventures and reader response activities, all the while building an intellectual skill base amongst twenty-first-century learners responsive to the resolution of complex environmental problems, and creating within the next generation a "sense of place" conducive to empathetic responses to the wonders of life, known collectively as "nature." &

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To Tech or Not to Tech?

The Debate about Technology, Young Children, and the Library

KATHLEEN CAMPANA, J. ELIZABETH MILLS, CLAUDIA HAINES, TESS PRENDERGAST, AND MARIANNE MARTENS

The authors' panel, entitled "To Tech or Not to Tech: The Debate and the Research around Technology, Young Children, and the Library," took place at the 2018 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans. This article is based on that presentation.

Recent discussions on the ALSC electronic discussion list signaled a need for a better understanding of the research around young children and technology. The controversy and debate around using technology with young children has been going on for several years. While research is emerging in this area for libraries, there is still not a huge body of research out there and data do not yet exist at this point that answer some of our most basic questions of how technology use will affect children long term. However, new research in this area is emerging regularly so it is important to have opportunities to explore the findings that do exist. Ultimately, we see that a majority of families are already using technology with young children so libraries can play an important role by providing guidance on what to use and how to use it effectively with their young child. We wanted to share the content of our panel presentation with readers to further disseminate the research as well as some recommendations for effective practices that can impact and enhance practice, especially when working with families.

Our goals for the panel were (1) to share some of the research that has explored technology use by young children and their caregivers; and (2) provide some practical guidance in the form of scenarios to help attendees understand some ways that technology use with young children and their caregivers might come up in the workplace, and how best to approach it when it does.

The panel was structured in three main sections:

1. We provided a quick overview of some of the research that exists, which comes directly from the bibliography that can be found on our website: https://sites.google.com/view/ycnml18/home.

2. We offered several scenarios that may occur in daily work around technology with young children. For each scenario, we identified information needs and introduced options





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for how to address them and how the research can inform those options.

3. We provided some effective practices and concluded the session with news about upcoming projects in the area of technology, libraries, and young children. Visit https://sites.google.com/view/ycnml18 to learn more about this.

Research Overview

What is the research saying with regards to technology and young children and their caregivers?

According to a 2017 report by Common Sense Media:[1]

- Children ages zero to eight are spending more than two hours with screen media per day (we don't know if this is passive versus active screen time; and this is based on parents reporting);
- 42 percent of parents report that the TV is on all or most of the time at home;
- 98 percent of homes own a mobile device; and
- 35 percent of screen media exposure is on mobile devices.

We can see from this report that children and their caregivers have media readily available to them, they are using and consuming media, and media is a prevalent part of their daily lives.

A 2016 survey from the Technology in Early Childhood Center (TEC) at the Erikson Institute[2] shows that 85 percent of parents let their children use technology at home, and 86 percent of parents said they are happy with the ways in which their young children access and use technology, believing there are benefits to this use, such as positive child development, literacy learning, and school readiness and success. However, parents also worry about some of the disadvantages present in the use of technology among young children, such as excessive screen time, inappropriate content, less time for outdoor play, and thus less active play.

Also in 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)[3] revised their guidelines to recommend:

- unplugged, creative play for infants and toddlers except video chat;
- high-quality educational media for children ages two to five years that is watched with a parent or caregiver for mindful media use and is limited to one hour a day; and
- that for children six and older, media should still be watched with a parent or caregiver, for mindful media use, and should be balanced with other activities for a healthy media diet.

We can see, from statistics like the ones found by the TEC Center at Erikson and Common Sense, that parents are using technology with their children, and pediatricians want to help encourage a balanced, healthy media diet for families and young children.

A big theme we see in the research is that technology is *one* of many learning tools for young children—not the only tool available to them. I-LABS (Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences) at the University of Washington emphasizes the importance of knowing why a child is using technology, whether it is for entertainment or education. If it's for education, it's important to think about what children are able to learn at what age and how that developmental progression affects their ability to learn from screens. I-LABS research has studied language learning among infants and has shown that live human interaction works best for infants to learn language.[4]

For toddlers, they are able to learn to a certain extent from screens with lots of live human interaction that scaffolds the interaction. However, even if they show some learning from screens, they're going to show more meaningful learning from a live human.[5] This is partly because children younger than two-and-a-half to three years of age cannot distinguish 2D from 3D on screens.[6] They see a screen image as the same as a real object, which hinders their ability to understand that what is taking place on the screen is not real.

Furthermore, Lisa Guernsey, a researcher with New America, talks about the three Cs: child, context, and content,[7] with respect to technology use. We need to think about the individual *child*—not every child learns the same way or interacts with technology in the same way. Parents know their children best and we can help them to make good decisions about media. We also need to think about the *context* of the media use—is it intended for entertainment or education? If it's meant to be educational, how does it map onto what children are learning at various ages? Finally, we need to think about *content*. Is the content of the media interactive, social, positive, and appropriate in terms of age and cognitive development? How can we help by recommending high-quality media to families for their young children?

Another thing to think about is how media and technology are being used by families with children with special needs or by families with low socioeconomic status. Several reports from the Joan Ganz Cooney Center mention the importance of considering all kinds of families' needs when using and recommending media.[8] Technology has been used extensively for children with communication disorders for years. The platforms have changed with tablet technology so the devices are now mainstream. This means children who use communication devices might now use an iPad instead of a dedicated Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device.[9] These might be children with autism spectrum disorder or children with other conditions that affect communication. However, research is also suggesting that tablets are helpful

with the overall academic learning for kids with disabilities because the tablets themselves are engaging, children enjoy them, the tablets offer another form of print motivation, and children will stick with the tasks on the iPad because they like them. For kids who struggle academically and have to work harder to learn how to read, for instance, keeping them engaged while learning is key.

So what does this research looks like on the ground in libraries with young children and their caregivers? Following are five different scenarios to give you an idea of what it looks like to use and share media with young children and their caregivers.

Scenario One

An aunt is looking for resources to help her nephew with autism interpret others' emotions through facial expressions. She explains that he likes to look at picture books with her, but she wants to use something more portable as they take public transportation to some of his therapy appointments and she'd like to do something "useful" during that time.

Here are some ways to address this scenario using media mentorship:

- If the child is not present, ask her to tell you a bit more about his age and abilities and what he likes and what motivates him. (Is he verbal or nonverbal? Does he use an AAC device?)
- If the child is present, talk directly to the child, and get feedback/responses from the aunt as necessary—don't assume he can't or won't respond to you, given enough time. If he uses a communication device, give him time to use it without prompting help from his aunt until you are sure he needs help answering you.
- Since she wants something more portable than print books, look through your library's offerings of e-books (i.e., Tumblebooks) to see if any address emotions/feelings and have stories that they can read or listen to.
- Suggest apps for this specific purpose—if you are stuck and can't think of any, offer to send her weblinks to either the Apple iOS or the Android versions via email or text later so she can decide if she wants to download them onto her own device.
- Ask if he attends any library programs and make sure to invite/encourage the child and caregiver to attend, especially inclusive ones that use sensory materials and are open to all children so he can interact with peer models with and without autism.

Research-Based Discussion of This Scenario

In this scenario, we can see that the caregiver is demonstrating both usage of technology and a desire for quality media, as well as a way to help her nephew through challenging moments in life using technology. She is viewing technology as a tool that can play a role in supporting a variety of different learning needs. Librarians can help caregivers understand how to effectively use technology as a tool and what kinds of devices to use. Building on the research about which apps are truly educational[10] and understanding how children are actually learning using apps,[11] we can start to recommend media and work with the caregiver to help her find what she needs for her nephew. This is a perfect media mentorship moment—meeting an information need with resources and tools.

Scenario Two

A father has a child with motor delays due to a developmental disability. The father is looking to help his child learn how to make letter shapes more clearly. Although interested in letters and able to recognize most of the alphabet, the child is having trouble holding a pencil and making letter shapes at the same time. This is causing frustration in school where all the child's friends are learning to print nice neat letters.

Here are some ways to address this scenario using media mentorship:

- Recommend some letter apps and show the child and caregiver how to use the apps. Emphasize that making the shapes with his fingers will help his brain remember their basic shapes and build up the muscles in his fingers so that he can better hold a pencil.
- If his school isn't already providing them, look up some pencil grip options (even wrapping elastic bands around the pencil can help) or egg-shaped crayons and markers that are easier to hold.
- See if the child likes making marks on an iPad screen that he can easily erase if he thinks he's made a mistake. He can start by using his finger and then move on to a stylus.
- Suggest playing with play-dough. Find a good recipe to try at home and explain that those muscles are getting a workout with every roll and squeeze, plus he can make letters out of the dough to help him learn their shapes.

Research-Based Discussion of This Scenario

This is an example of how technology can be a tool, whose use is mediated by a grownup, as well as opportunities for joint media engagement for father and child. We can also see that the father is concerned about how the technology is being used, more than the fact that the technology is being

used. This is in line with many studies finding that parents are less concerned than previously thought about technology use by children;[12] instead they want information about how to offer quality media for children. Several studies demonstrate ways in which devices such as tablets can be useful for helping young children learn important skills.[13] Using the Diverse and Inclusive Growth Checklist, created by KIDMAP[14] (www.joinkidmap.org), a librarian can also look for diverse representation in the media they recommend to the father for added representation.

Scenario Three

A mother comes to the library with her preschool-age child and asks if she can work on a Microsoft Word document on one of the public computer stations. She tries to keep her child under control, but her task drags on. The child is getting antsy and the mom is getting frustrated.

Here are some ways to address this scenario using media mentorship:

- Approach and gently distract or refocus the child for a few minutes to defuse mom's frustration; just chat with them for a few minutes.
- Bring stamps, stickers, crayons, and paper and encourage the child to make something (e.g., a card, a bookmark).
- Bring a few puppets, dolls, blocks, etc., and encourage some dramatic play.
- Ask mom if there is anything you can do to help her with her task. It is clearly stressing her out, so see if there is something you can do to alleviate that; she might need something simple like a dictionary.
- Ask mom if it's okay to share book/play apps with the child on the library's tablet, which is preloaded with preschool apps or on the public computer next to her (with Tumblebooks, etc.). If it turns out that the child will have to be there for a bit longer, offer to bring the tablet to them to see if the child will watch a few book apps while mom works. If staff changes over, let the new staff member know to pay some attention to them and see if there is anything else they can do to help the mom get her task completed. It is clearly important, so work with what you have to help them.

Research-Based Discussion of This Scenario

This scenario is a bit different, in that both the parent and the child have a need for the use of technology, though those needs are different. The work the librarian is doing to help the mom and interact with the child is grounded in the work of the Fred Rogers Center,[15] which focuses on the importance of considering the whole child when interacting with media. Also, the U.S. Department of Education brief[16] supports this kind of interaction around technology. This is a wonderful example of media mentorship, if perhaps an unexpected one—by helping the mother with her task and by interacting with the child, you're offering a positive experience around technology and you're modeling constructive technology use. If appropriate, once the mom completes her task, you can offer some ideas and strategies on how to interact with her child using technology. It's possible that you can build a relationship with that mother and with the child and use that relationship to build toward a discussion about technology use and recommendations.

Scenario Four

A grandmother comes into the library looking for good apps that will help her three-year-old grandchild learn how to read. They are a multilingual family, speaking English and Tagalog, and a multigenerational household with grandparents, parents, and grandchildren living together.

Here are some ways to address this scenario using media mentorship:

- Clarify her "learn how to read" goal and try gently to reframe that goal to provide the grandchild with early literacy experiences that will translate into skills for later reading success.
- Encourage the child's sustained exposure to heritage or home language, including reading in Tagalog, especially with fluent Tagalog speakers. Research has shown that children should listen to fluent language and fluent reading in their native language.
- Suggest some playful, vocabulary-rich apps for co-viewing, in Tagalog and English. If you do not immediately know of any apps that support Tagalog, offer to do some research and get back to her with developmentally appropriate results.
- Share any library resources (flyers, etc.) about early literacy and digital media for young children with her to take or access at home
- Invite the family to come to a storytime that might offer app activities.
- Emphasize the grandchild's developmental needs for interaction over solo activity. At this stage of development, preschoolers learn language (and therefore early literacy skills) via engaged, interactive relationships with loving caregivers.

Research-Based Discussion of This Scenario

This is also an excellent moment to use your media mentorship skills—offer quality resources, ones that are diversity-rich and emphasize learning through play. This also

exemplifies joint media engagement,[17] especially across two languages and cultures, sharing stories and building a strong vocabulary. You can also consult the Joan Ganz Cooney Center reports on diverse families using technology[18] as well as the report titled "Learning, Is There an App for That?,"[19] which both talk about how children learn using technology—these will help inform the work you're doing as a media mentor.

Scenario Five

Your community is interested in more opportunities to introduce computational thinking and the basics of coding to preschoolers. To meet this need you are thinking about trying to support this in storytime but are unsure of how to get started.

- Computational thinking (CT) is a process that helps us create possible solutions for complex problems. The solution is presented in a way that humans and/or computers can understand.

- CT involves breaking big problems into smaller parts (decomposition), finding patterns (pattern recognition), simplifying ideas to what is important (abstraction) and creating a specific order of actions (algorithmic design)[20]—a recipe, if you will, to complete the task.

- CT can be supported in both unplugged activities (building, playing, reading, talking, etc.) and in using new media (coding, building, designing, etc.). Many storytime activities can support both early literacy and CT if included with intention. For example, in a preschool storytime about robots, CT skills are strengthened when kids: talk about a story's sequence (algorithmic design), build tin can robots with blank tin cans and miscellaneous magnetized parts to represent the robot's antennae, sensors (eyes), arms, etc. after reading and talking about what robots are (decomposition, abstraction), program a "code-a-pillar" to travel to an apple (algorithmic design, abstraction), dance as a group to a song like "Clap Your Hands" by They Might be Giants (pattern recognition), build a robot (as a group) using the Sago Mini Robot Party app projected on the storytime big screen or on the library's iPad Pro, and read, retell, and talk about robot stories and books like Jon Scieszka's *Robot Zot*; James Dean's *Pete the Cat: Robo-Pete*, or David Carter's *If You're a Robot and You Know It* (decomposition, pattern recognition, algorithm design).

Research-Based Discussion of This Scenario

This scenario offers a new way to think about media mentorship and sharing new media with families and children in your library. Drawing on joint media engagement, we can see opportunities for children and adults/caregivers to build and learn together using books, traditional craft materials, and new media, which deepens the learning and offers more meaningful engagement opportunities with the technology for children and families.

Furthermore, we see technology as a tool here, too; a means to discover and explore and learn new skills. Introducing concepts like pattern recognition and decomposition in developmentally appropriate ways during a program like storytime helps grown-ups understand the similarities between early literacy and computational thinking skills and learn new ways to support both. Lastly, we can see opportunities to make connections between what children are using in their media-based play with real life, thus situating the learning in their lived experiences.

Conclusion

In 2014, ALSC ran a nationwide survey asking about new media use in libraries with young children.[21] With 415 responses, more than 70 percent of respondents said they were using some form of new media in programming for young children, including in storytimes. Tablets were overwhelmingly selected as the device of choice. Fifty-eight percent of respondents indicated they planned to increase their new media availability in programs and services for youth going forward. The infographic from this study is available on our website (https://sites.google.com/view/ ycnml18/home).

We re-ran the survey during August 2018 with the original questions to see what has changed as well as additional questions focused on attitude and knowledge as well as use and evaluation of diverse media. We will share findings from the survey in an upcoming article and presentations.

Finally, we will be applying for an IMLS grant to study this phenomenon further—we are currently in the planning stages for what that research will look like going forward.

As you think about technology and media mentorship in your own libraries, consider these questions:

- What is the screen media culture in your library with respect to young children and their caregivers?

- What excites you about screen media with young children and their caregivers?

- What questions/concerns do you have about screen media with young children and their caregivers? &

Visit https://sites.google.com/view/ycnml18/home to find the annotated bibliography we created for this panel. We are continuing to add to it as we learn about new research. If you would like to contribute your answers, feedback, or suggestions, please contact us at childrenandtechresearch@gmail.com.

Putting Practices into Play

As you can see throughout the scenarios, there are several common and effective practices emerging from research that are important for using technology with young children. The following research-based recommendations are important to incorporate in both your own use of technology with young children as well as the advisory work you do to recommend and share media with caregivers and the young children in their care:

1. **Remember that children are social and like interactivity.**[22] Kids learn best when they explore concepts and content through meaningful social interactions, so it is important to offer media experiences where children actively play, read and create with the media alongside others. The concerns around screen time grew out of the phenomenon of passive screen time in which a child consumes the media alone without active participation. But high-quality apps and tablet use are different—they offer interactive opportunities that can be connected to learning goals. We know that when children make decisions and have control within the media, the learning is deeper for children. Select and recommend media that involves more than "point and click"—that offers choices and enables the young child to direct the play in order to offer meaningful learning opportunities.
2. **Practice, and encourage caregivers to practice, joint media engagement or co-viewing.** Encourage your parents and caregivers to read, explore and play with their children, especially when it comes to digital media use. Parents are their child's first and best teacher—this applies to media use as well. When joint media engagement happens, grown-ups can ask questions, talk about what the child is seeing and learning, and scaffold the experience for the child. A shared media experience deepens and enriches the experience overall for children. Bring screens into the larger media experience in families, including books, music, movies, apps, television, etc.
3. **Support social interaction through video-based media.**[23] In a study of 24- to 30-month-olds, video chat was shown to be a separate category of screen media that needs special attention. The study found that children learn from video chat as much as live interaction. This medium does not behave like two-dimensional media, presumably because the child is interacting in real time with the other person, and in most households this is a person the child knows. So if you have military families in your community, or families with friends and relatives in other countries, you can talk with them about how this kind of screen time helps children learn and maintain relationships with loved ones.
4. **Prioritize foreground over background media.**[24] Foreground media refers to media that you're intentionally using together—it's the focus of what you're doing; this could be a movie, a family app, or playing a video game all together as a family. Background media on the other hand describes media to which children do not attend, also known as secondhand media, and often contains content that is not developed for children. One example is having the news on while you're cooking and your children are playing. (Note that radio is not considered secondhand media.) Background media isn't always bad—we all need to get things done around the house. But background media can hinder the depth and scope of children's unstructured play, which in turn affects vocabulary and comprehension due to a lack of rich conversation. Talk with caregivers about the importance of foregrounding appropriate media so that they're being intentional about what children are watching and consuming. Foregrounded media offers opportunities again for joint media engagement and rich conversation.
5. **Encourage caregivers to make connections to life.** It is important to take what the child is doing with technology and then connect it to real world. When you or a parent or caregiver is using new media devices with children and playing with different kinds of software, find ways to connect those experiences with the world around them, especially with younger children as they are still learning the difference between 2-D and 3-D images versus real life objects. If you're playing with an alphabet app that shows vehicles, talk about where you might see these vehicles in real life, in your neighborhood, so that the child can look for those vehicles during their daily activities.
6. **Scaffold technology use.** This means starting with something the child knows and can do easily and building up from there, like you're building a scaffold around an emerging building. Children will learn new information and skills, and then see connections between what they're learning, when you and the parent or caregiver is sharing the experience and offer additional and varied learning opportunities.
7. **Encourage caregivers to model good technology use.** Balance is important for grown-ups as well. Talk with parents and caregivers about how they're using technology, letting them know that their children are watching them and learning about digital media use from how they use their devices. Be intentional about shared screen time and even time away from all devices to emphasize balance and the importance of face-to-face time. Ultimately, what is most important is the content of the play—does this type of play benefit from digital media? Then use a device. If not, try provide another play experience relevant to the child's needs to again emphasize that balance. There is a role for digital and screen-free experiences—they're a piece of the pie, not the whole pie. Use new media intentionally, use it well.

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Delivering Literacy

Stork Storytime Promotes Literacy to Expecting Families

JENNIFER JORDEBREK

As we librarians know, it's never too early to read to a baby; this innovative storytime idea hopes to get more parents reading to babies before they are even born!

My "aha" moment came during a library conference while listening to a session about an early literacy program. Hearing the details about this wonderful program made me suddenly realize that waiting until *after* a baby arrives to give them board books and share with parents the importance of reading was too late. I had a strong desire to stand up and shout those exact words, "It's too late!"

I've always loved reading and knew it was important to do with my first son, Jacob, when he was born. However, adjusting to this new little person, and all the changes that ensued, made starting and maintaining a daily reading routine more hope than reality. My expectations of what parenthood would be like and the reality of those first few months clashed, as they do for many, especially brand-new parents.

Hospitals give you a crash course on caring for your child right before they send you home. We learned how to feed, bathe, change, and even hold our son. However, we didn't learn how to read to him, or why it was so very important to do—from day one—with him. Even though I instinctively knew it was important, adjusting to parenthood can be overwhelming at times. Adding a daily reading routine to the already chaotic beginning days sometimes proved difficult to accomplish.

It wasn't until I began my library career a few years later that I began to understand and see firsthand how critical developing a love of reading and becoming proficient in it was to a child's future success, not only in school, but in life. Of course, it's never too late to begin reading to your child and helping them develop a love for lifelong learning.

I realized that if I had difficulties establishing a regular reading routine in the beginning, other caregivers probably did too. Families are faced with many challenges and changes after baby arrives but implementing a daily reading routine with their newborn doesn't need to be one of those things.

My mind had been set in motion at that conference, and so began my desire to help expecting families develop a reading routine before baby's arrival and prepare and educate parents and caregivers, right from the very beginning.

Stork Storytime is an expecting family education initiative I began developing in 2015 at the North Liberty Community Library (NLCL) in Iowa. It was originally known as Womb Literacy, but last year, we rebranded and updated the name, but the concept remained intact.

Stork Storytime encourages expecting families to develop a reading routine before baby (and chaos) arrive, learn about early literacy skills and how children learn those skills, and empowers caregivers to be more confident as a child's first teacher.

***Jennifer Jordebrek**, a former children's librarian, is currently the assistant director at the North Liberty (Iowa) Community Library.*

An expectant couple reads to their baby.

Current early literacy programs are good, are making a difference, and need to continue. They all, however, target caregivers and children *after* the children are born. This initiative is a completely new and original approach that moves up the current timeframe from the birth to twenty-four-month age range libraries are currently focusing on, to deliver literacy before a child's arrival by focusing on the expecting family.

NLCL has developed multiple programs under the Stork Storytime umbrella, including Stork Storytime Reads, an annual expo, and monthly talks podcast.

The Stork Storytime Reads program encourages expecting families to do one-hundred read-alouds before baby arrives. For convenience, read-alouds are determined by the family, counting either books or times spent reading. Books are earned as the family progresses through the program. This gets books into the home and starts the child's own personal library. The family begins to develop a daily reading routine so that habit can be continued after baby's arrival. Adults become more comfortable reading out loud and children can practice their literacy skills, and it provides a wonderful bonding experience and sets the tone and expectation that reading is important and valued at home. The Reads program is also a great segue to the 1000 Books before Kindergarten program that many libraries currently offer.

Our annual expo connects new and expecting families and caregivers with valuable resources in the community and with each other, to begin building a network of support. Nonprofit organizations, social services, and businesses share their expertise with attendees and each other. Families can browse, collect information, and learn about what our community has to offer for both before and after baby's arrival at this free community event. We are currently in the process of planning our fifth expo and had approximately fifty vendors last year.

Mini library programs and screenings are available for families with children. The mini programs give attendees a chance to sample regular library programming, and screenings have included car seat checks, vision, dental, and speech/language/hearing checks. The expo is free for the public and nonprofit vendors; for-profit vendors pay a small fee (which provides funding for the Reads program prizes).

The monthly Stork Storytime Talks podcast enables adult caregivers to listen and learn from local experts when it's convenient for them, whether that's during their commute, child's naptime or a 2 a.m. feeding. While we're not professional podcasters, we enjoy sharing useful information. A few of the subjects covered so far have included autism, car seat safety, newborn screenings, milk banks, surrogacy, and safe sleeping.

During our Learn About Literacy episodes, we talk with a different local library each time on a specific early literacy skill. These recordings can be accessed from our website, SoundCloud, iTunes, or however you currently listen to podcasts.

Forming and developing partnerships has been crucial to the success of our Stork Storytime initiative. A local hospital has sponsored our yearly expo and was instrumental in providing and coordinating the funding, design, and construction of our Locally Grown Lactation Room in our children's area. Many of the guests featured on our Talks podcasts are vendors from the expo, and we partner with our local food pantry to offer the Reads program at their site.

Research Supports Stork Storytime

Besides intuitively knowing as a mom and professionally as a librarian that reading to children as soon and often as possible is critical to getting them off to a good start, there continues to be a growing body of research and statistics supporting this. Only half of parents read to their younger children daily and less than 10 percent read to their children from infancy.[1]

The Stork Storytime initiative will not enable babies to know how to read and write in the womb nor be born knowing how to. However, The Reading Womb provides a wealth of research and information on why it's important to begin reading to the bump.[2]

Libraries offer storytimes that incorporate early literacy skills. These skills enable children to enter school ready to learn to read and write. With the advent of baby storytimes, librarians are able to introduce these skills earlier. Now it's time to move that benchmark up earlier still by focusing on expecting families and babies before they arrive.

We continue to develop and expand this initiative and are excited to roll out the first Stork Storytime Summer Reading Program this summer. Expecting families can earn prizes by completing a reading log of activities, such as reading and singing out loud, learning nursery rhymes, touring the children's area, introducing themselves to the children's librarian, and checking out board books and materials from the pregnancy and parenting sections.

Reading and literacy skills are a critical part of a child's future success. As a child's first teacher, caregivers are a vital part of how kids learn the value of literacy and build the habit of reading.

Children's librarians are in a unique position to contribute to this process and offering Stork Storytime programming is another tool we can utilize to set children on their lifelong learning journey, from the very beginning. &

Visit www.northlibertylibrary.org to learn more about this initiative, access the toolkit, and begin delivering Stork Storytime programming at your library.

References

1. Reach Out and Read Iowa, www.reachoutandread.org/our-story/importance-of-reading-aloud.
2. The Reading Womb, https://belly-books.com/research-and-information/.

Couples Who Collaborate

Kevin Henkes and Laura Dronzek

MARY-KATE SABLESKI

Laura Dronzek and Kevin Henkes with their forthcoming collaboration, *Summer Song*.

Kevin Henkes and Laura Dronzek are the creative couple behind several picture books, including their most recent collaborations about the four seasons. Their newest title, *Winter Is Here*, came out in Fall 2018, and their final book in the series, with a focus on the season of summer, is slated for a 2020 publication date, just in time for summer storytimes.

Laura is a painter whose work has been exhibited nationally. In addition to her collaborations with Kevin, Laura has illustrated books by George Shannon, Helen V. Griffith, and Phyllis Rowand. Her first collaboration with Kevin was in 1999 with the book *Oh!* and has continued with *Birds* (2009), *When Spring Comes* (2016), *In the Middle of Fall* (2017), and *Winter Is Here* (2018).

Kevin is an award-winning author and illustrator who has created more than fifty books for children since 1981. He won the Caldecott Medal for *Kitten's First Full Moon* (2004), and Caldecott Honors for *Waiting* (2015) and *Owen* (1993). He also won Newbery Honors for *Olive's Ocean* (2003) and *The Year of Billy Miller* (2013). *Waiting* and *Penny and Her Marble* (2013) also won Geisel Honors. He is widely known for his "mouse books," including *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* (1996). His acclaimed picture books for young children include *Egg* (2017) and *A Parade of Elephants* (2018).

The married couple, who have two grown children, create books together, and separately, from their home in Madison, WI. Their home—and the surrounding cul-de-sac, park, and row of neighboring houses—is the inspiration for much of their work. Despite the widespread appeal and global fame their books have received, Kevin and Laura live a quiet life, focused on creating beautiful works of art and literature. It was a pleasure to talk with them over the phone about their work, their process, and what projects we might look forward to next.

Q: Tell us about your newest book together, *Winter Is Here*. How did that book come about?

K: This book is our fifth collaboration. I gave the text to Laura as a birthday gift. I wrote it with her in mind. We've collaborated on a spring book and a fall book, so this seemed natural. When I'm writing for Laura, I feel a sense of freedom. When I'm writing for myself, I tend to self-edit and not include something that I might not want to draw or paint. But I don't think about that when I write for Laura. I include things she might like to paint. That's always in the back of my mind.

Because this book is part of a series, it has to be similar to the other books. But with each one I tried to do something a little bit different. For example, with *In the Middle of Fall*, I tried hard to write it as one sentence, but I couldn't do it. It's two sentences. And in the winter book, I was thinking about opposites, so I mention soft versus hard, inside versus

Mary-Kate Sableski *is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Dayton, where she teaches courses in children's literature and literacy methods. Her main areas of research interest include diversity in children's literature and struggling readers.*

outside, quiet versus loud. And, of course, I want the words to have rhythm and to be nice to read aloud.

Q: Laura, what was it like for you to create this series of books with Kevin?

L: It has been wonderful! Kevin is such a great writer. The thing that has been interesting for me is that in each book the text is very open to interpretation, so it has been a challenge to figure out how I'm going to weave a story into the book. For example, in *Winter Is Here*, the first line is "Winter is here. It's everywhere." The text on the next page is "It's falling from the sky." Those lines are completely open-ended. There is no mention of a child or an animal. I came up with a narrative based loosely on my childhood experiences and our current neighborhood. We have a park nearby that has a little ice rink in the winter.

So, I set the first page in a park in winter where I could show some of the more fun aspects of winter. On the next page, I did a closer view of two friends (who show up throughout the book) watching the snow "falling from the sky." I try to create a narrative in the illustrations that is not necessarily in the text, to add another dimension to the book. Because the season books are a series, I try to tie the design of each book to the previous books so they are all of a piece. For example, in the earlier books about seasons there are pages with four vignettes, or a circle at the beginning and end of the book. I think about this as I work on the design of each book and try to tie them together visually.

K: It's exciting for me to do something that is highly interpretive. I love seeing what kind of subtext Laura adds. I had no idea the setting was going to be our neighborhood, that the park was going to be the focal point. The park is there at the beginning, the end, and is woven throughout. All of this is something that I had nothing to do with. I love to see how it all works out and what Laura does with it.

Q: Tell us about your collaborative process.

L: We have studios on the third floor of our home, and there is a little hallway in between them. No matter what we are each working on, we tend to go back and forth throughout the day. When we collaborate on a book, I illustrate the text in the way that I envision it. I divide the text into pages and do sketches, and then I'll show it to Kevin. There has only been one instance where Kevin had a set idea about what he envisioned for the illustration. In *Birds*, Kevin wanted the page with the text "and they were gone" to simply have a black wire going across it. I totally agreed. Other than that, it is usually me saying, "What do you think about this?" However, Kevin really hands over the illustration of the book to me.

K: It's freeing for me to hand the words over to Laura. I love coming to her studio and seeing how she is building the book. I think of what I give her as a skeletal system, and she builds a whole body around it, builds a house around it. It's nice for me to witness.

L: Yes, it has been very easy for us to collaborate. Some people say they could never work with their spouse, but luckily it has always been very easy for us.

K: It's been a joy for me because I absolutely adore them (the books), love the finished product.

L: I'm working on the illustrations for *Summer Song*, and I'm sad that it is the last book in the series. Doing books about the seasons has been so much fun for me, because one of my favorite subjects to paint is nature.

Q: How is the process different than when you collaborate with a different author/ different illustrator?

L: It is different because I don't really collaborate with other authors when I illustrate their books. Most illustrators don't usually communicate with the author, so it's nice when I can walk down the hall if I have a question about an illustration. Also, when I'm illustrating other authors' books, I'm always hoping that the final vision I have for the illustrations is something they'll be happy with.

I did several books with George Shannon and I met him, which was lovely. Otherwise, I've corresponded with the authors of some of the books I've illustrated after the books were completed, but they didn't have any input into the illustration process.

K: I've written a couple of books that other artists have illustrated. I don't do that very often, and I haven't done that for a very long time. When I'm writing a book that I will illustrate, I suppose the biggest difference is that I'm trying to "see" it from the onset. Also, I'm thinking about how I don't necessarily need certain things in the words because I know the pictures can provide that information.

Q: Do any of the books come from your own childhood or from your children's growing-up years?

L: I definitely think about my own childhood. I grew up in suburban Chicago, but there was a field behind our house where I spent a lot of time playing. We sledded and ice skated there in the winter.

I have also been influenced by observing our children growing up in our neighborhood. We have a little park nearby where kids skate and a wooded area that leads to a sledding hill. I've used different aspects of the neighborhood as inspiration for the illustrations.

KH: I suppose I think about what I experienced as a child, and our kids' experiences when I write these books. But then those things fall away, and the concern is, how can I make this book the very best book that it can be? Even if an element of the

book is based on something else, it takes on a life of its own and it becomes what it becomes.

Q: Did you share your books with your own children?

L: They weren't particularly interested when they were young. I think they just thought that all parents go up to their studios and work. We read so many books with them, but not usually our books.

K: I think they did take it for granted, and they didn't necessarily see it as a big deal. We read books constantly, so books were a huge part of who they were when they were little. And they're both readers now, which is wonderful.

L: Kevin started reading to our children at breakfast before school when they were little. I would make their lunches and he would read picture books and then novels as they got older. This continued until they were each in eighth grade.

K: We kept a list in the hall of all the novels I read aloud. It's fun to go back and look at it. When I was reading to the kids, Laura was also in the kitchen, so it was an experience shared by all of us. We'd read a novel over the course of a few weeks and it contributed to our daily conversations. It made me realize how books open the door to so many different kinds of discussions. Sometimes you could sense that it was a bit of therapy for them and sometimes it led to us talking about current events or history. It was wonderful.

L: It was nice because the children were exposed to books they wouldn't necessarily have chosen on their own.

Q: Did any of the novels from that time inspire the work you do now?

K: Not specifically that I recall. But reading aloud made it very clear how beautiful some of the books were. The rhythm of the words was to be admired. I always read my texts aloud to myself when I am writing. It's a great way to see if things are working.

Q: Your books are important examples of the universal story, in which the shared human experiences we all have are celebrated. There is a lot of conversation right now about increasing diversity in books; how do you think your books play a role in that conversation?

K: Every child should be able to see herself or himself reflected in the books they read. I think that helps give one a strong sense of self. And seeing people different from one's self helps one learn empathy. I grew up in the school whose motto was "write what you know," and that is what I try to do as best I can.

Q: *Egg* (2017) is an example of a book that invites multiple interpretations, inviting many types of readers into the story. It is a good example of the universal story.

K: When *Egg* came out, I did a small book tour. I was terrified, because I realized I had never before written a picture book that couldn't be understood by the words alone. I was going to be reading this to big groups of kids and there are no traditional sentences, only single words. But they got it! I was relieved. I remember so clearly reading it to a group of kindergarteners. Their reactions were wonderful. They were so enthusiastic and excited. I said to the teacher afterwards, "That was really fun for me to read. I could tell they had never heard it before." She said, "Never heard it before? I probably read it twenty-five times and they still love it!" I would have bet my life that they had never heard it, given their response. They were full of ideas about what happened at the end of the book, too. I was thrilled.

Q: What is your favorite book that you have done together?

L: I feel that it often is the one I'm working on. I have loved working on all of our books. I'm working on the art for *Summer Song* right now, so it is my favorite book at the moment.

K: I think I would say the next one. I always want the next one to be perfect and, of course, it never is. But thinking that's possible is one of the things that keeps me going.

Q: Any hints on your next collaboration?

L: I am also a painter, so when I'm not working on a book, I am painting. I've mainly been working on books for the last four years. So, if Kevin doesn't come up with something, I will go back to painting, but I really am enjoying illustrating the summer book.

K: I'm thinking. And hoping . . .

Q: How has it been to take a break from your primary work as a painter, Laura?

L: I love the whole process of creating a story and a world through illustrating picturebooks. Although they are very different, working as an illustrator and a painter influences each of those art forms. As an artist, I'm mainly a painter and I approach illustration as a painter. I even paint my book dummies. There are aspects about both that can lead to moments of frustration where I think doing the other is easier. But I feel very lucky to be able to do both.

K: I am going through a similar thing right now. I have a novel coming out in March (*Sweeping Up the Heart*, 2019). When I was working on it, I often wished I were working on a picture book. Now, I *am* working on the illustrations for a book, and I just ruined one this morning. I thought, if only I were writing a novel it would be so much easier—I could just go to the coffee shop and sit and have a lovely time. So, there is something about going back and forth between the two of them.

Q: Do you feel that back-and-forth tension when you are working separately? Do you miss the collaborative process?

K: I love collaborating with Laura, so I'm always thinking about what I can write for her, but sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. I have a file drawer of failed attempts. It's always in the back of my mind.

L: The nice thing about illustrating versus painting is that you have the guide of the words. But with painting it comes from within. It's much more open-ended.

Q: What is it about picture books that has drawn both of you to this genre?

K: I love that picture books can be expansive. They might appear to be simple or small, but when done well they are large—whole worlds between two covers. There is so much going on in Laura's illustrations, so much to look at. There are connections waiting to be made, stories to be discovered that go deeper than my words. That's part of the beauty of picture books. &

Muppets Take High School

EJK Grant Funds Diversity Project

EVE DAVIS

High schoolers playing with puppets? Well, at the High School for Law Enforcement and Public Safety, it was *making* the puppets that had students not only engaged but also learning about diverse cultures.

An Ezra Jack Keats (EJK) Mini Grant funded a powerful Diversity and Tolerance unit taught by art teacher Stefanie Abbey and myself at the inner-city public school in Jamaica, NY.

The High School for Law Enforcement and Public Safety is a small school that caters to students interested in exploring such careers as the various branches of military, police, the Department of Corrections, the FBI, and the Office of Homeland Security. Students leave our school with an overall, well balanced education that exposes them to a variety of educational experiences.

In Spring 2018, our Diversity and Tolerance unit taught students about people and cultures other than their own. As a Title I school, our school is always struggling to bring engaging programs to the school that are low-cost or free. So, we were thrilled to learn about the EJK Mini-Grant. We applied in March 2017 and were awarded $500 for our program.

We taught the unit to four high school Visual Arts classes, with approximately 140 students. The unit began with video clips of general Muppet-making, video biographies of Jim Henson, and clips of Jim Henson's Muppets such as those from *The Dark Crystal* and Kermit the Frog's "It Ain't Easy Being Green" video.

For research, we took groups of these students to the Jim Henson exhibit at the Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria, NY, in February 2017.

Afterwards, the students explored meanings of diversity and what diversity meant to each student individually and then began designing their own Muppets. Students learned basic sewing stiches, and after successfully sewing a pincushion for practice, students traced pieces from a pattern onto fleece, cut out the pieces, and then hand sewed the pieces into the Muppet.

Once the basic Muppet was sewn together, each student personalized their own individual Muppet based on their design sketches and presented their own Muppet to the class.

Finally, students worked in groups to write and act out a skit about diversity, which were filmed and put together in one video. The skits ranged from a group song about diversity to a play about aliens.

The video compilation was shown and the Muppets were displayed at High School for Law Enforcement and Public Safety's Festival of the Arts in Spring 2018.

This was a valuable but costly unit, primarily due to the cost of the fleece used for the Muppet bodies. The grant covered the cost of the raw materials for these diverse puppets.

The Diversity and Tolerance unit was very emotional and heartwarming, and it gave students the opportunity to discuss social issues and to express themselves in a safe space.

Eve Davis *is librarian for the High School for Law Enforcement and Public Safety in Jamaica, NY.*

Students used the Muppets to discuss subjects including LGBTQ, ADHD, incarceration, drug use, bullying, hair color, and more.

One especially poignant presentation was when an immigrant student broke down in tears in front of her classmates as she explained how her Muppet speaks with an accent and, therefore, is not always understood.

The students learned from one another about tolerance of diversity as well. An eleventh grader, an immigrant from Guyana, said, "I will treat people that are diverse with respect and care. They are more special, and I want them to see that."

The impact of this unit was noticed throughout the school building. The unit sometimes had unexpected positive changes on our students. One teacher said that sewing calmed one of her students so much that she instructed him to always bring sewing to her class.

Furthermore, during times of day that students tended to find trouble, students were instead sitting on the hallway floors, stitching their Muppets.

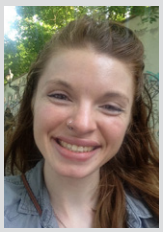
Sewing skills and cultural awareness were just part of the learning achieved thanks to the help of the EJK Foundation grant. &

Lesson plans for this unit can be purchased on Teachers-Pay-Teachers.

Index to Advertisers

Outreach, Summer Programming, and the Advocacy Feedback Loop

Erica Ruscio



Erica Ruscio *is a member of ALSC's Advocacy & Legislation Committee. She currently works for the Madison (WI) Public Library and for the Madison Metropolitan School District, where she runs a Girls Inc. program for middle schoolers.*

Outreach is Advocacy

The ALSC Advocacy & Legislation Committee is tasked with finding advocacy resources and sharing them with the rest of the ALSC community. The committee also educates library professionals about what advocacy actually is—ALSC's Everyday Advocacy initiative defines it as "at its most basic . . . about relationships . . . that have the power to advance or retreat our cause."[1]

Much of the work is already done for us. Many library professionals already engage in positive library advocacy every day, both in positive day-to-day interactions with customers, and through community outreach, especially during the summer months. Outreach, after all, is no longer a feature of exemplary library service; it is increasingly becoming a standard service offered by public libraries across the United States.

The Advocacy Feedback Loop

The advocacy feedback loop allows for continued community investment in both the causes libraries champion, like early literacy, and in libraries themselves. First, children's librarians offer a program, and children and families participate. Second, participants learn about things like essential early literacy practices for emergent readers or reading to prevent summer slide, and they recognize the library's role in offering programs that meet these goals. Third, participants return for more library programs where they have the opportunity to learn more about early literacy practices or to become more accomplished as readers.

This feedback loop happens with families who already use the library regularly. However, through outreach programming, librarians cast a much wider net. By reaching children and families who don't normally visit the library, children's librarians provide needed programming to underserved communities while increasing the strength and size of their advocacy feedback loops.

Summer Program Ideas

The Advocacy & Legislation Committee looked at various ways librarians have used outreach as advocacy during the summer. This is not an exhaustive list, but we hope it will spark some ideas for where you and your library can (or already are!) poised to expand your own advocacy feedback loop.

Early Literacy Programming

- **Playing.** Many parents don't fully appreciate the role of free play in healthy childhood development. Last summer, I helped facilitate a Madison (WI) Public Library program that brought Anji Play[2]—a specific method of

child-directed play—to three different city parks every week. Many of the attendees discovered the program by accident, and parents began to appreciate both the power of true play and recognize the public library as a community leader in providing opportunities for parent education about early literacy practices.

- **Singing.** Singing happens during storytime, but it also happens when performers come to the library—many of whom encourage audience participation. Collaborating with community partners to sponsor a family concert at a venue outside the library or in a local park can help the library cast a wider net to get families excited about singing with their emerging readers and learn about the library's role in providing early literacy experiences for families.

- **Storytimes.** These can happen anywhere in the community; go where the people are. Consider places where public transportation is limited, or pinpoint community locations that are highly trafficked. Members of this year's Advocacy & Legislation committee have hosted storytimes at housing communities, city parks, grocery stores, hospitals, art galleries, farmers markets, and homeless shelters. I also know librarians who have performed at festivals, community centers, YMCAs, and even laundromats.

Summer Reading Programming

- **Promotion.** When librarians visit schools or farmers markets to promote summer reading, they don't just encourage participation. They also educate parents and children on the importance of reading during summer and the library's role in providing access to fun and engaging reading material. If your library has the resources, offer free books to successful participants and make more reading the incentive.

- **Circulation.** Today, more public libraries are offering mobile circulation options to their communities through book bikes and other means. Regular and consistent visits to community outposts that are far from the library affords patrons who don't have easy access to the physical library the opportunity to borrow materials and become as invested in the library's mission as patrons who live nearby. Also, visits to community-wide summer events like family festivals and farmers markets will centralize the importance of summer reading in community traditions and make it easier for kids to participate. StoryWalks[3] in public parks also encourage reading together as a family and are active ways to encourage park visitors to read during the summer. If families strolling through love the story, they might visit the library to borrow the book.

A great example of learning through play!

- **Sharing Stories.** In all the places you promote summer programming, share your success stories. Track summer reading participation and share the results at the end of the summer with the public schools you serve—let the kids feel a collective sense of accomplishment. Two summers ago, when I worked at the Needham (MA) Free Public Library, children added one LEGO block to a building for every two hours they read—there was one building for each elementary school, with a separate group for preschool, homeschool, and kids outside of the school district. As the structures grew bigger, people expressed excitement about just how much the community was reading. Images of the structures and a final LEGO count were sent to the public schools.

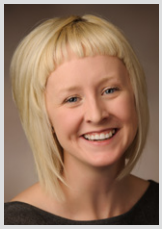
These are all just some ways summer programs stress the importance of literacy *and* libraries in community spaces. What are some outreach programs you or your library have done during the summer months? In what ways did you build relationships with various stakeholders during these programs? How did you share your success stories? How will you use outreach programming to increase your library's advocacy feedback loop this summer? With so much going on, the summer is an excellent time to advocate for your library. &

References

1. "Types of Advocacy," Everyday Advocacy, ALSC, accessed Jan. 27, 2019, www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy/be-informed/types-advocacy.
2. Anji Play was developed in Anji County, China by Cheng Xueqin. It is an internationally recognized philosophy of true play and approach to early learning. For more information, visit www.anjiplay.com.
3. The Storywalk Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition and the Kellogg Hubbard Library.

Resources on Play

Betsy Diamant-Cohen and Katie Scherrer



Betsy Diamant-Cohen *is a children's librarian with a doctorate who loves to present workshops for educators, programs for children and families, and presentations at conferences.* ***Katie Scherrer*** *is the founder of Stories, Songs, and Stretches!, an early-learning startup working to ensure all kids are school-ready in body, heart, and mind.*

We have all heard the phrase "play is a child's work" but how can we convince parents that play should be a meaningful part of their child's routine?

Play, with its inclusion as one of the critical early literacy practices advocated by the Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) initiative, may be the hardest sell of the five practices to parents, educators, and even administrators. It may be seen as optional or extra, something to be done after the child has spent time "learning" if there is time.

But, as early literacy experts know, play *is* learning, and there is some excellent science pointing to this fact, particularly coming out of the health and medical fields.

The following resources are excellent places to find more information, both academic and practical, for advocating for the power of play and building meaningful play experiences into your programming.

Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development: Play-Based Learning
www.child-encyclopedia.com/play-based-learning
This Canadian resource is a project of the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development. Research and practical information on structuring meaningful play experiences for young children can be found here, along with information on a variety of other topics related to child development. Available in English, French, Russian, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Boston Children's Museum: 100 Ways to Play
www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org/learning-resources/100-ways-play
This site features simple and creative ideas on how to play with children in everyday life.

Zero to Three: A Year of Play
www.zerotothree.org/resources/1090-a-year-of-play
In this parent-friendly resource, child development experts at Zero to Three present monthly play-based learning activities that adults can explore with their babies and toddlers. It is also an excellent idea generator for librarians working to incorporate more intentional play into their storytimes.

Stages of Play
www.zerotothree.org/resources/series/the-development-of-play-skills-from-birth-to-3
If parents ask you what type of toy or play is best for a twenty-eight-month-old child, what do you say? This quick guide also produced by Zero to Three covers the stages of play for children from birth to age twelve, describing how the play skills develop and connecting that development to age-appropriate toys and activities. Toys to Explore lists can be helpful when restocking toys or early literacy areas. Many of the explanations can be used as developmental tips.

The National Museum of Play
www.museumofplay.org/about

Although founded as a history museum to house Margaret Woodbury Strong's vast toy and doll collections, today's Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, NY, is a nationally known play resource. In addition to interactive children's exhibits and an old-fashioned carousel, the museum also includes children's public library books that can be checked out with a library card. The Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play is a wonderful resource for questions on play-related topics with a huge collection of primary and secondary sources, play materials, and online databases. Librarians at the Strong are also available to field toy-related questions.

The museum also publishes the *American Journal of Play* (www.journalofplay.org), which explores play from a scholarly perspective across various disciplines, cultures, and institutions.

Ted Talks about Play
www.ted.com/topics/play
This site provides access to many TED talks on play. Topics include how games make children smarter, turning trash into toys for learning, and five dangerous things you should let your kids do. Our favorites are by Kathy Hirsh-Pasek and Dr. Stuart Brown.

Policy Briefs
http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/3/e20182058
An updated 2018 policy brief from the American Association of Pediatrics notes that play is not frivolous; rather, it enhances brain structure and function and promotes executive function. The authors encourage pediatricians to communicate regularly with parents about the role of play in child development, even suggesting they write a "prescription for play" at regular well-visits.[1] What better place to fill that prescription than at the library!

Play Research
https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.2006328
A research article in the open-access magazine *PLOS Biology* studies the interconnection of brain activity when babies and their adults play together. When babies try to pay attention to the objects they are playing with on their own, there are bursts of high-frequency brain activity. When babies and their adults play together, the adult brains echoes those same bursts of activity! Joint play has now been shown to influence joint changes in brain activity. Also, "where the parent's brain is more responsive to the child, the child sustains their attention for longer."[2] This information could be used as a developmental tip to encourage parents' active participation in storytime activities.

Child's Play: Developmental and Applied[3]
This recently reissued 1984 book (published by Psychology Library Editions) provides a scholarly and inclusive look at play. After explaining how play contributes to physical, intellectual, language, social, and emotional development resulting in an "integrated self," other chapters cover bipolarity in play theories as well as play of handicapped children with specific sections on the play of autistic, psychotic, and physically handicapped children. &

References

1. Michael Yogman et al.. "The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children," *Pediatrics* 142, no. 3 (September 20, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2058.
2. Sam V. Wass et al., "Parental Neural Responsivity to Infants Visual Attention: How Mature Brains Scaffold Immature Brains during Social Interaction," *PLOS Biolog* (December 14, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1101/295790.
3. Thomas D. Yawkey and Anthony D. Pellegrini, *Child's Play: Developmental and Applied* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

Pictured back row, left to right: John Sullivan, the 2019 Ezra Jack Keats Award winner for writer; Oge Mora, the 2019 EJK Award winner for illustrator; and Ellen Ruffin, curator of the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection and the Keats Archive. Front row, left to right: Jessica Love, a 2019 EJK Award Honoree for illustrator; Deborah Pope, Executive Director of the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation; and Matt James, a 2019 EJK Award Honoree for writer.

EJK Author, Illustrator Honors Given

The Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, in partnership with the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection at The University of Southern Mississippi, have announced the winners of the 2019 Ezra Jack Keats (EJK) Award, honoring an outstanding writer and illustrator.

"This year's EJK Award winners celebrate human connection and kindness through thoughtful books that remind us of the sheer joy and the lasting impact of Ezra's work. We look forward to their continued, illustrious careers, writing and illustrating delightful children's books that make a difference," said Ellen Ruffin, curator of the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection and the Keats Archive.

The 2019 Ezra Jack Keats Award winner for writer is John Sullivan, for *Kitten and the Night Watchman,* illustrated by Taeeun Yoo.

Sullivan said, "Winning the EJK Award means a lot to me. It means my book has played a small part in bringing people together. Done well, a children's book shows that people have the same hopes and fears, and that how we behave, not surface differences, is most important."

When asked what inspired the idea for his book, Sullivan added, "My first year as a night watchman, many years ago, I found a stray kitten on a worksite, fell in love with her, named her Beebe and we spent the next 17 years together. My book tells our story while showing children the value of compassion for animals."

The EJK winner for illustrator is Oge Mora for *Thank You, Omu!*

Mora said, "I have always looked up to Ezra Jack Keats and I am incredibly honored to be a small part of his storied legacy. Keats understood that diversity isn't an ideal, diversity is our world. For my grandmother, cooking was about bringing people together. My books are my way of honoring that love and sharing it with the world."

Like Keats, Mora illustrated her book using collage and remarked, "I approach collage with no rules. A sky can be yellow. A map can be a pot holder. A floral pattern a savory stew. Spontaneity is what makes collages exciting to make and look over. I use collaged text throughout the book to seamlessly blend my writing and art together."

Honor winners included writer honors for Juana Martinez-Neal, for *Alma and How She Got Her Name;* Matt James, for *The Funeral;* and Keith Calabrese, for *Lena's Shoes Are Nervous.*

Illustrator honors went to Jessica Love, for *Julián Is a Mermaid* and Jane McGuinness for *Prickly Hedgehogs!*

To learn more about the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, visit www.ezra-jack-keats.org. &

2019

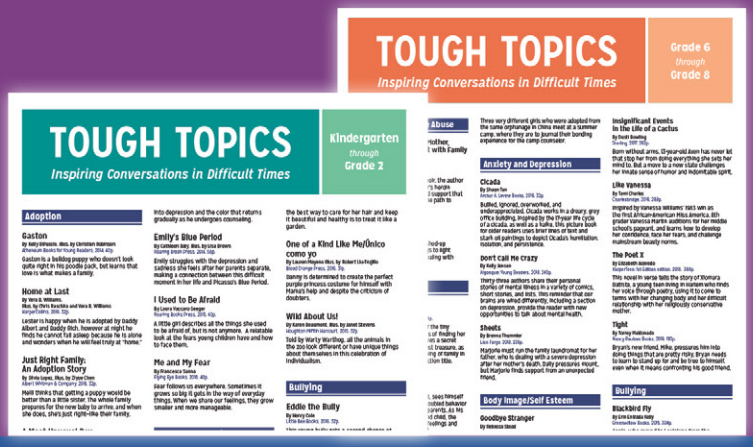
ALSC READING LISTS

alsc
ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY SERVICE TO CHILDREN

Graphic Novels

Graphic novels on this list are defined as a full-length story told in paneled, sequential, graphic format. The list includes classics as well as new titles that have been widely recommended and well-reviewed, and books that have popular appeal as well as critical acclaim.

➔ http://bit.ly/alscgn19



Tough Topics

The books on these lists are to help inspire conversations with children going through challenging situations like the death of a loved one, an unexpected move, natural disasters and more. They are available for grades K-2nd, 3rd-5th and 6th-8th. Resources for adults are also included.

➔ http://bit.ly/alsc19toughtopics

Summer Reading

These lists are full of book titles to keep children engaged in reading throughout the summer. They are available for Birth-Preschool, K-2nd, 3rd- 5th and 6th-8th grade students. The interactive lists can be customized to include your program information and call numbers.

➔ http://bit.ly/alsc19summer

1969 50 2019

Coretta Scott King Book Awards

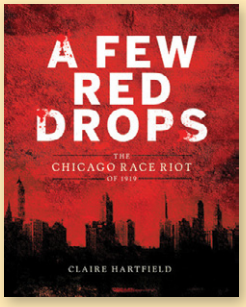
SINCE 1969

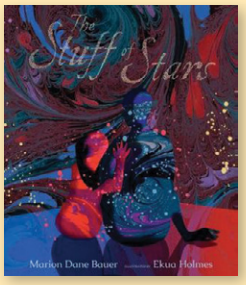
CSK: 50 Years Strong

The Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee of the American Library Association's Ethnic & Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT) celebrates 50 years of excellence in African American literature for children and young adults.

2019 CSK WINNERS AND HONORS

WINNERS





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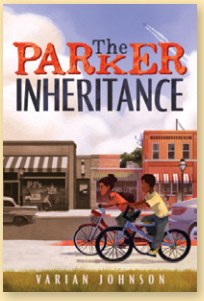
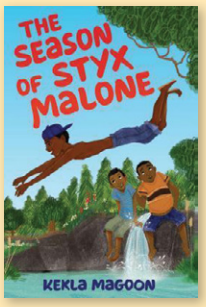
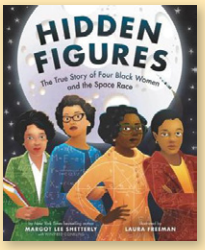
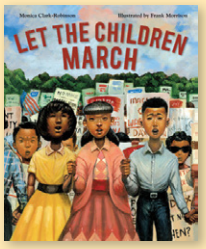
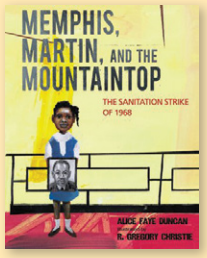


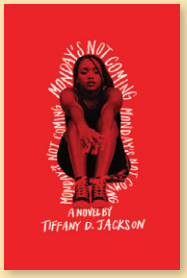








STEPTOE NEW TALENT AWARDS



These awards serve as a guide for parents, librarians and library workers, teachers, and students who are looking for the most outstanding books for children and youth by African American authors and illustrators that affirm the Black experience and universal human values.

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF WINNING BOOKS:
bit.ly/CSK_Books

50TH ANNIVERSARY ACTIVITIES:
bit.ly/CSK50