

# MSLA Forum: Winter 2008

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## President's Message by Sandy Kelly

*"Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we react to it."*

~Dennis Kimbro

Happy New Year and welcome back to another issue of MSLA Forum Online. Fall went flying by and brought us many opportunities for fabulous professional development, networking with colleagues and bringing issues of school libraries to the forefront.

Survey results from MSLA's annual conference revealed a happy ending. Although some of us were conflicted by the unfortunate date change, the reviews were extremely positive and some members commented how pleased they were not to have missed a day at school. We promise not to let that type of conflict happen again, if at all possible, but I personally would like to thank the several hundred people who gave of their personal time to participate, advance their skills and knowledge and to support our organization. Also, a sincere thanks to the hard working conference committee and every member of the MSLA Executive Board who attended the event. It was an invigorating and information packed experience. We are already excited about the theme and speakers for next fall...but more about that another day!

**MSLA members reap many benefits**, some that we do not even think or know about. In addition to a network of professionals and colleagues, MSLA provides some of the best opportunities for professional development, PDPs, information resources and advocacy for every member. Recently, a somewhat awkward incident occurred when parents in a school district contacted us for help staving off projected school library cuts. While MSLA board members are always available to advocate for good school library programs both legislatively and in individual districts, it is uncomfortable when we or the parents learn that their school library teacher is NOT a member of their own professional organization. We advocate for ALL school library programs, whether or not the librarian is a member of MSLA, but it is difficult to know you have contributed to saving someone's job when they do not feel the effort on their behalf is worth the cost of membership. We are all in this together

If you or someone you know has not renewed membership or is new to the district or our profession, please, encourage them to join one of the most active school library associations in the country. Other states are looking to MSLA as a proactive organization that understands the issues. We are considered leaders among our colleagues. We have developed strong relationships with our national association and several MSLA members now hold leadership positions in the American Association of School Librarians. Membership in MSLA is an absolute bargain. Our dues are among the lowest in the states that I have polled. MSLA has not raised dues in 15 years but we have been discussing a small increase. It would not be more than a couple of lattes or a dinner for one at a moderate restaurant – and not even close to one tank of gas – but definitely a good investment in your job, your knowledge base, a network you can depend on, and your professionalism. MSLA is working hard for you.



### **As for your budget...**

If you are a certified school library teacher I hope you are a member of your regional library system! The services they provide are worth thousands of dollars if utilized effectively and membership is FREE. It is also an effective way to add value to your position. In order to be a member of the regional library system the school must have a certified LMS. In this edition, Susan Babb and Lucie Gallagher from NMRLS (Northeast Massachusetts Regional Library System) give us important basics on the hows and whys of membership. This year I receive a discount up to 46.7% on trade hardcover books with free shipping through the regional cooperative. My third graders are doing research on my *Grolier and New Book of Knowledge Encyclopedias*, ONLINE and FREE through the NMRLS databases. When they get to the upper grades it will be second nature to them to go to our subscription databases rather than Google for dependable information. They are learning to use the subscription resources first.

### **And the glamour and glory...**

Check out the January *School Library Journal* article linked inside this Forum!!! As many know, last September Maureen Ambrosino from the Central Region joined us at the State House to give testimony for our bill, H564, before the Education Committee. If you think sitting in that cold room looking up at a group of people that sometimes didn't even appear to be listening was easy, think again!!! It can be quite intimidating the first time you do it. Maureen wrote up her feelings about the experience and submitted her article to *School Library Journal*. They liked it so much they took it one step further and had it illustrated as a "graphic" article! Maureen is now our famous "Advocacy Librarian!" Don't miss it.

## **Birth of a Library Activist**

### ***Or, How I Went From Being a Quiet Bystander to a Raging Library Activist***

**By Maureen Ambrosino**

art by Gary and Laura Dumm

Our Legislative Committee, chaired by Judi Paradis and Bob Roth, has been continually asking us for help and input in supporting the school libraries and lobbying for Bill H564. One of our more vocal librarians, Maureen Ambrosino, shared her experience with *School Library Journal*, and – surprise! – they published it ... as a *comic* !

Maureen's excitement is evident through her email:

*Hi everyone,*

*Just wanted to share some great news! The article that I wrote on advocacy, after testifying at the State House for H564, has been accepted for publication in the January issue of School Library Journal. Even more exciting - instead of publishing it as text, they are making it into a comic! The art director asked me to send photos, so it will look like me too! Wow!!*

Maureen Ambrosino is the Youth Services Consultant for Central Massachusetts Regional Library System in Shrewsbury, MA, and has been instrumental in creating informative programs at CMRLS.

To view her comic, link to the *School Library Journal's* page, for the January 2008 issue:

<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/info/CA6515886.html>

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Thanks to SLJ for granting permission to publish this through the link.

### Legislative Update

by Judi Paradis and Bob Roth  
Co-Chairs, Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee continues to work on several fronts this year to improve working conditions for school librarians in Massachusetts. Our annual Legislation Day is planned for April 2, 2008 at the State House in Boston. For the first time, we are combining forces with the Massachusetts Library Association. Our hope is that a joint venture will draw attention to the needs of ALL libraries. We will award prizes to the winners of our annual bookmark contest at Legislative Day, and hope that all our members will participate in lobbying for our bill to include school libraries in Chapter 70.

The Committee met with lobbyist Chris Gregory in early January, and took his advice to keep the pressure on the members of the legislature's Joint Committee on Education to pass bill H564. Chris believes that our constant letters, phone calls and e-mails are having an impact, and he hopes that a push from our members early in 2008 will result in passage of our bill.

Another tactic we are trying this year is to have a constant presence at the regular meetings of the Massachusetts Board of Education. Our Executive Director, Kathy Lowe, presented information about the status of school library programs to the Board in November. We are hoping to have a group of our supporters at each meeting to make the case that Massachusetts needs better standards for our school library programs. Our ultimate goal is to have the Board of Education appoint a person to the Department of Education specifically to oversee school library programs. We would expect this person would create a long-range plan for Massachusetts school libraries that would encompass staffing with professional library teachers and adequate budgets.

Members of the Legislative Committee are also working with area directors and members of the public relations committee to develop an advocacy workshop that our members could use to provide information about the value of school libraries to parents, school administrators, and community members. We continue to expand our e-list of parent supporters. If you have names and email addresses of parents who would be willing to occasionally speak out on behalf of school library programs, please send them to Judi Paradis at [judiparadis@rcn.com](mailto:judiparadis@rcn.com)

Finally, thank you to the many members who worked to collect data on school library legislation from almost 30 states this year. We continue to solicit information from remaining states, and hope to use the information we collected to shape legislation supporting school libraries in Massachusetts.

The Legislative Committee can always use help—we have many discrete tasks, and many long-term projects. If you would be interested in getting regular emails from our committee chairs to keep you up to date on our efforts, please let us know.

## Lunch with an Author: Janet Tashjian

**by Linda Redding – Silver Lake Regional High School**

Students and staff at Silver Lake Regional High School read *The Gospel According to Larry* by Janet Tashjian, as part of the "One School, One Book" summer reading program. During the first week of school, small discussion groups were formed to share thoughts on the book. Teachers planned classroom activities based on the book and many students participated in a school-wide essay contest. The big event was a visit by Janet Tashjian.



***Prior to being a successful author you had other careers. Who or what inspired you to become an author?***

When people say "a book changed my life" it sounds like a cliché, but that's what happened to me. I had a fifteen year career in sales when I read Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*. After the last chapter, I closed the book and told my husband I was quitting my job to become a writer. That's how powerful the book was for me. I quit my job the next day, bought a stack of notebooks, a box of pens, and began writing. After filling a mountain of notebooks with stories, I knew I needed to work on craft, so I applied to Emerson College's MFA program. I took Jack Gantos' class, "Novel Writing for Children" and wrote the first draft of *Tru Confessions* in his class.

***What is a typical day of work like for you?***

I get my son off to school, then sit at my desk and work until the second he comes home! I don't have much of an outside life on work days. I pretty much go from one writing project to the next. I write many of my books in longhand so there's a lot of tedious inputting time too. And, of course, 90% of the job is rewriting, so that's really where most of my time is spent. I usually try to sneak in some time in the woods with my dog as a reward for a good day's work. When my son's home, it's all him.



***Your presentation at Silver Lake was well received by students and staff. Tell us about the presentations you offer.***

I love doing school visits; for someone who spends most of her time in a room by herself making up stories, it's a great connection with the real world. I don't play any sports, so giving large presentations is a real workout for me; I expend a lot of energy. It's so exciting to hear how the books have affected kids - whether it's anti-consumerism, special needs, dating violence - they always have a lot of questions. Plus, I'm such a writing cheerleader - it's such an important basic skill -- that I could talk about that all day. In school, most of the students' time is spent writing for assignments; one of the reasons I do school visits is to remind them how much FUN writing can be.

***You have a newly-designed website that is great! What can visitors to your website expect to find?***

The new website came about because

- a) I got a new Macbook with all these amazing new capabilities and
- b) me trying to keep up with my fictional characters! I felt like Larry and Trudy in particular were more web-savvy than I, so I spent several months updating the site to their standards.
- c) Since several of my books are used in the classroom, I wanted to put in lots of teacher resources and information on writing workshops, presentations etc. There are readers' guides to all the books, a blog, and even a video podcast where I give kids writing assignments online. I also set up Myspace and Facebook pages, but it's hard because all this fun cyber stuff takes up writing time. I'm still trying to learn how to manage it.

***Can you tell us about what you are up to now?***

I just handed in the third "Larry" which my editor LOVED - thank God. So I'm copyediting that as we speak. Plus I just started a middle reader for reluctant readers which I'm having a blast with. That's pretty much the defining point for me - if I have fun writing the book, then it's usually a book kids will have fun reading. My son and his friends love books but they all have a difficult time with reading. My next few books are aimed at them.

For more information about Janet Tashjian, please visit <http://www.janettashjian.com>

### ***Books by Janet Tashjian:***

***Faultline***

***The Gospel According to Larry***

***Larry and the Meaning of Life*** (Fall 2008)

***Marty Frye***

***Multiple Choice***

***Tru Confessions***

***Vote for Larry***

## **An "Out of Library" Experience: When A Field Trip Takes an Unexpected Turn**

***By Patsy Divver***

Like many of you, I rarely get the opportunity to venture out of the Library. Luckily, I am able to attend our MSLA conference and another workshop/conference during the school year. However, on occasion, when classes are light and chaperones scarce, I get included in the list of teachers who can accompany field trips.

This past November, I was invited to chaperone the Millis High School Art Club's "Museum Tour" trip in Western MA. Mrs. Baseman, the HS Art teacher, planned a terrific itinerary: the Norman Rockwell Museum AND the Mass MoCA (Museum of Contemporary Art), as well as an Improv Show at UMASS. But we had a totally unexpected addition to our agenda and thus the story--how to make a great field trip - GREATER!

As we went to the Norman Rockwell Museum, we knew that Friday was also the 'opening Exhibit Day' for "Lit Graphic; the World of the Graphic Novel". Unfortunately, our expected time at that museum was 10 a.m. and the opening (for teachers) was set for 4 pm. Still, we put in a request for a Teacher's Packet, and thought 'maybe' we could sneak a peak at the exhibit (behind the roped areas).

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Well, we were fortunate to meet Kimberly Rawson, the Associate Director of Marketing and Communications at the Rockwell Museum. I approached her for permission to tour the art gallery with Mrs. Baseman, and Ms. Rawson pleasantly agreed. However, when we learned that there were three graphic artists/authors present for the scheduled 11 a.m. press conference, we asked for the possible inclusion of our students, as members of the press conference audience.

Ms. Rawson was thrilled! This 'filled the room' for the Press Conference, which was attended by other writers, local press coverage and US! (We were even acknowledged in the introduction!)

At this conference, the authors Peter Kuper, Howard Cruse and Dave Sim spoke about their artwork and the rise of popularity and acceptance of the 'graphic novel'. There were numerous examples of each artist's pieces as well as historical information on the development of this art form. (Mrs. Baseman, and I, both such shy people, managed to get in our questions of the artists.)

Overall, this was an awesome experience for all of us. This exhibit is now open in the Rockwell Museum through May 26, 2008. For more information, visit the website, [www.nrm.org](http://www.nrm.org) and it will link to the various programs. (For example, there are a number of educational programs for teachers and students.) Check and see some of the opportunities available.

Meanwhile – our trip to Mass MoCA also included some unusual views of art, which we displayed on by the art room and in the library, with the Lit Graphic materials.

In any case – it was a lot of fun as WELL as a great educational experience. So, if you don't get a chance to 'do' field trips, perhaps this year, you should! Have fun!

## **Cooperative Programs Make the Library Rock**

*by Carole B. Shutzer*

Cooperative programs make the library rock at the E.J. Harrington Elementary School in Lynn, Massachusetts. Believing that supplemental programs bring a library to life, I have attempted to partner with various organizations and schools to bring additional programs to an inner city student population who would not ordinarily have the opportunity to develop this background knowledge to increase learning and comprehension.

In one such program this past fall, the library partnered with the Tower School, an independent school in Marblehead, Massachusetts. Tower has been a supporter over the years to the Harrington School, partnering with us on a reading program for our first graders on a weekly basis as well as sharing other cultural programs. This year Tower hosted an exhibition of quilts by the Gee's Bend quilters from Alabama. These quilts have been displayed at many museums all over the United States including the Whitney Museum in NY and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. These quilts tell the history of a small rural town in Alabama founded



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before the Civil War. After the war, the all black community continued to survive in almost isolation, each generation of women producing distinctive quilts that tell their story. Quilts continue to be made today.

Tower School invited our entire 4th grade to their school to view the quilt exhibition. There are many books available with a quilting theme and to build background knowledge, all the 4th grade students were read stories about quilts, including *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco, *The Josefina Story Quilt* by Eleanor Coerr and Sam Johnson and *the Blue Ribbon Quilt* by Lisa Campbell Ernst. The 4th grade social studies curriculum includes regions of the United States. We tied this program into the study of the southeast region as well. The computer technology teacher developed a lesson for the 4th graders in the computer lab as well, researching the history of Gee's Bend. Traveling 5 miles by bus to the Tower School, we were treated to a special program and a viewing of the Gee's Bend Quilts. The students were divided up into groups, some going to a music program to learn hymns that the Gee's Bend women sang while quilting, some participating in a cooperative physical education program with Tower 4th graders, each group touring the quilts exhibition with a lesson planned and presented by the Tower School community relations director. What a day it was! The Harrington students learned US history, viewed museum quality modern American art and interacted with students from another school.

The Harrington School Library was a critical part of the program, developing the special day with Tower, providing the books on quilts to the classrooms and working to instill in the students a life long love of reading as a way to develop background knowledge to increase learning.

Carole B. Shutzer, Library/Media Specialist, Harrington School, Lynn



### School Library Journal Summit

November 30 – December 1, 2007, Phoenix, Arizona



Compiled by **Sandy Kelly**, with excerpts from the SLJ Summit Wiki <http://sljsummit.pbwiki.com/>

The Arizona Biltmore Hotel was the beautiful setting for third School Library Journal Leadership Summit. Known as the "jewel of the desert," every president since Grover Cleveland has stayed here at least once. It was a fabulous location to discuss **"Where's the Evidence? Understanding the Impact of School Libraries."**

*LEFT: Brian Kenney of School Library Journal greets the Massachusetts contingent: Sandy Kelly, Ann Perham, Valerie Diggs. Taking the photo, Kathy Lowe.*

The keynote speaker was Linda Perlstein, author of *Tested: One American School Struggles to Make the Grade* (Holt,

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2007). Linda Perlstein worked at *The Washington Post* from 1994 to 2004, most of that time writing about education and children. Her latest book, *Tested* examines the costs and benefits of the standards-based testing movement, through the real-life stories of the staff and students at a high-poverty Maryland elementary school.

*RIGHT: The Summit was a very full program of presentations, breakout sessions, and discussions. Ann Perham and Valerie Diggs consider the ideas of one of many terrific speakers.*



Following Linda was a panel discussion, "Evidence Across the Profession". Panelists included David Watkins, Chair & Senior Principal, WHR Architects, Houston, and author of an upcoming book from Wiley on evidence-based architectural and design practice; Jonathan Eldredge, Associate Professor for the School of Medicine and the Health Sciences Library and Informatics at the University of New Mexico and author of 21 articles and seven book chapters on Evidence-Based Library and Information Practice (EBLIP); and Lindsay Glynn, Health Sciences Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the Editor-in-Chief of the open-access journal Evidence Based Library and Information Practice. It was fascinating to hear from people other than those directly involved in school libraries how evidence based practice can be used to improve and build advocacy for our programs as well.

Later on Friday and Saturday morning we met in small groups to hear and discuss case studies of different evidence-based practice projects in school libraries. In all, there were eight different case studies presented.



*LEFT: The Arizona Biltmore was the perfect site for the SLJ Summit '08. The Massachusetts contingent included Valerie Diggs, Sandy Kelly, Kathy Lowe and Ann Perham.*

Saturday breakfast speaker was Peter Pearson; "Just Because They Love You Doesn't Mean They'll Fund You." Peter speaks nationally on library advocacy and fundraising. He is president of The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library in Minnesota, a group that is unique in two ways. First, the organization is both a Friends' group and a library foundation. And second, the organization is in the fortunate position of having endowments of approximately \$14 million. The mission of the 60 year-old organization is to offer programming; to conduct lobbying in support of strong public funding; and to raise private funds. Last year, the organization provided the library over \$1.7 million in financial assistance. The organization has just completed raising \$6 million for a \$20 million public/private capital campaign to renovate the interior of its 80 year-old Central Library in downtown Saint Paul. Peter has a master's degree in educational administration and



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has been a classroom teacher, school principal, and executive director of two non-profit educational programs prior to taking this position as President of The Friends and Foundation of the Saint Paul Public Library. He spoke about how he started a group that assessed needs and relentlessly pursued funding for their library's program.

Finally the busy two days ended with the closing session with Dr. Ross Todd. Ross led the entire group in reflecting on, discussing, questioning, and synthesizing what we had experienced over the past two days.

*RIGHT: Dinner conversation was rich and rewarding for Valerie Diggs, Sara Kelly Johns (AASL President) and Evan St. Lifer (Scholastic Executive).*



### News from the Southeast



#### ***By Heather Macpherson & Lynn Weeks, MSLA Southeast Co-Directors***

November 1st, 2007 marked the first Meet & Greet of the school year. Approximately 12 area school librarians and library teachers attended the event, which included a variety of discussions from curriculum planning, sharing resources and ideas with other professionals in the field, and evaluation processes. We were fortunate to lend our feedback to SEMLS' Assistant Administrator, Vickie Beene-Beavers. SEMLS offers excellent professional development for public and school librarians, but many are held during the school day, making it difficult for many of us to attend.

You don't want to miss our next Southeast Area meeting! Laurie Belanger, Library Teacher and MSLA member is hosting our next event at Lake Public Schools on Thursday, January 24th, 4pm-6pm. MSLA members in the southeast region are encouraged to join us for curriculum sharing. Bring a PowerPoint, lesson plan, or other resources to share with your colleagues, and get copies of the same from other participants. For more information, e-mail Lynn Weeks [lweeks@bourne.k12.ma.us](mailto:lweeks@bourne.k12.ma.us) or Heather Macpherson [macphersonh@wrentham.k12.ma.us](mailto:macphersonh@wrentham.k12.ma.us)

Also coming up is the Legislative Breakfast. This year's breakfast will be held on Friday, February 29th at 8am at The Chateau in Norton. The breakfast will feature "Library Voices"—patrons sharing positive library stories. We will also have a parent speaker who will specifically address school libraries.



## Membership in the Northeast Region

by Susan Babb and Lucie Gallagher

Information about membership can be found at <http://www.nmrls.org/membership/index.shtml>

Information about specific resources for library teachers can be found at <http://www.nmrls.org/youth/index.shtml>

### ***How do I join the region?***

It's really very simple! When you visit our membership page, you will see you can download some documents. What we are looking for in a returned membership packet is:

- The Certificate of Eligibility, and Membership Agreement – signed by you and your principal
- A completed data form for our records
- A hard copy of your Certification [if you are a public school librarian]

The forms are received by Lucie Gallagher, NMRLS Operations Coordinator, and quickly processed. If she has any questions, she contacts you. The Library is the member of the region, not the Library Teacher; but a requirement of membership is to have a certified Library Teacher managing the program and library.

In recent months, the biggest challenge to completing this paperwork is coordinating with your principal. Look at it as an opportunity to educate him or her about the region and what the membership gives the school.

### ***So what does membership give my school? What's in it for me?***

As Lucie Gallagher says, "Let me count the ways!"

- Advocacy – by completing a long range plan you are documenting the need and relevance of a library in a school
- Electronic Databases – available from the Region as well as the State
- Continuing Education – we offer a responsive slate of workshops to the needs of library teachers along with PDPs
- Purchasing coop – you can get considerable discounts for your purchases of books and supplies
- Networking – you can get linked to your school colleagues as well as your colleagues in other types of libraries
- Communication – be in the hub of things and join the discussion list and read the online newsletter
- Grant opportunities – eligibility for LSTA grants by having a long range plan in place
- Consulting – NMRLS staff are available for all types of consulting from facilities to collections
- Summer Reading Program – working with your public library colleagues on this adds tremendous value to what you offer your community.