

MSLA Forum: April 2012

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President's Message

Leading by Example: A Salute to MSLA President Valerie Diggs

By Judi Paradis, Gerri Fegan, Kathy Lowe and Ann Perham
Photo credits: Linda Coviello

Authors' Note: *We have all experienced "Perfect Storms" of demands in our professional and personal lives. For the MSLA President Valerie Diggs, this is her Perfect Storm. Not only did the accreditation visit at her school overlap with the MSLA conference, but she has had the added challenge of moving... twice. We have taken this as an opportunity to turn the regular "President's Message" into a Salute to Valerie and all that she has done for MSLA and school libraries. She exemplifies the many attributes of a leader, and particularly that of leading by example. Thank you, Valerie; we salute you!*



LEARNING COMMONS VISIONARY

Since 2009, the Chelmsford High School Learning Commons has been making headlines in the school library world. Valerie has been generous in welcoming the flood of visiting school librarians with administrators in tow. She has hosted multiple workshops and meetings in her space and has written articles about this rebirth of her facility. Read her piece, ["Chelmsford Learning Commons: From Program to Facility"](#) in the Winter 2009 MSLA Forum.

Just a few weeks ago, it was announced that Valerie was named a "Learning Commons Visionary for 2012" by the editors of *Teacher Librarian: The Journal for School Library Professionals*. Also named was Robin Cicchetti of Concord-Carlisle Regional High School. Read more on this honor in the [Member News](#) column of this issue.

Valerie's role in the revolutionary learning commons is an indicator of her leadership in our profession.

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NEASC

For a high school in New England, “NEASC” means high stakes. Although the accreditation is optional and schools are not mandated to undergo this rigorous process, the value of the rating motivates most high schools to opt in. Valerie Diggs was selected as the Chelmsford High School co-chairperson of this self study.



Being named to lead the NEASC accreditation is definitely an indicator of the esteem that Valerie Diggs holds in her school. At the same time, however, it is ADDED to her normal job as Director of the Libraries in Chelmsford as well as the sole school librarian in her Learning Commons at the high school. To say that it is a juggling act is an understatement.

The Accreditation Team arrived on March 4, the same day of our MSLA conference in Hyannis. Following the NEASC panel discussion, Valerie drove to Hyannis in time for the Sunday evening Awards Banquet. Following the awards and Susan Ballard’s address, Valerie was back in her car, headed for Chelmsford. The NEASC visit lasted through Wednesday the 8th. When the chairman of the team gave the preliminary report, one of the top commendations was the Learning Commons. They definitely enjoyed the “Listening Lunch” and were impressed with the central role that the Learning Commons plays at Chelmsford High School. Kudos to Valerie!



LEGISLATION DAY

On April 11, MSLA and MLA held their annual joint Legislative Day to meet with statewide decision makers and remind them of the importance of all Massachusetts’ library programs. This year was particularly important for MSLA, as we presented Representative Garballey with our Joan Gallagher Legislator Award for his outstanding advocacy for school library programs. Rep. Garballey filed a bill seeking to create a commission to assess the state of school library programs in our public schools. If passed, this commission will be charged with evaluating both staffing and collection status in all public school libraries. Once armed with data, the



commission can make recommendations for school library standards. This legislation, similar to a bill passed recently in Pennsylvania, is a strong first step to finally establishing a long-term plan for school library services at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Legislation Committee Chair Julie Farrell coordinated visits to several of the legislators co-sponsoring this bill, and uniformly heard praise for Rep. Garballey's advocacy efforts.

The centerpiece of our Legislative Day remains our annual bookmark contest. Bookmark Committee co-chairs Linda Coviello did a great job in her first year organizing this committee, ensuring each student and school librarian were

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honored with prizes, citations from legislators, and a tour of the State House. Several school librarians attending expressed great enthusiasm for this event and were impressed with the attention they received. A group of students touring the building with Linda Coviello had the good fortune to encounter Governor Patrick, who congratulated them as well. As we enter our 10th year of participating in Legislative Day work, it is exciting to see how established this event has become for MSLA, and how well received we are each year.

From the Editor, Ann Perham



INSPIRATION

Recently, my head has been swimming with two thoughts. First, the victory for our profession in the realm of EDUCATION awards, fortifying our image as teachers. Second, the power of leading by example and inspiring others.

On Monday, April 23, 2012, I attended the Goldin Foundation Educator Forum, named a recipient of the "Excellence in Education" award for 2012. I shared this honor with Joanne Schmidt, school librarian at Medfield High School. This is so positive for our profession because this is an award for educators; co-recipients included a history teacher at Framingham High School, a Physical Education teacher at Holliston Middle School, and the coordinator of a mentor program at Framingham High School. Librarians have been recognized for the role they play in the success of our students.

An excerpt from the April 28th Goldin Foundation press release explains the purpose of the awards and underlines the fact that the school library is the largest classroom in the school. "Our goals are to foster the respect for appreciation of educators, seek the retention of outstanding educators, and attract dynamic, intelligent, and creative future educators. ...The Goldin Foundation for Excellence in Education is a non-profit organization that was established in 1990 to recognize 'unsung heroes' in education for their excellence, expertise, and demonstrable achievement in education."

At the Educator Forum, I was the third speaker; the text of my speech is in the [article on the Goldin Awards](#). One of my main points was that parenting and teaching are very much related and how we are role models for our children and our students. Joanne Schmidt was the fifth speaker. In her speech, she explained that I was her predecessor at Medfield High and she thanked me for the strong program that she "inherited." Her next sentence has been echoing in my head and has been such an affirmation of my passion for school libraries and work in MSLA: "[Ann] also serves as a role model for me and many teacher librarians across the state. She's a leader in our state association and her work has inspired me to do more work outside MHS."

I have always believed in working for what I believe in, and also the need to culture new leadership. I guess I had never thought of myself as a role model for my colleagues or considered that I was inspirational. Along that line, I do hope that my work as Editor of the MSLA Forum has resulted in the MSLA Forum as an agent of inspiration for our members.

MSLA President Valerie Diggs has served as a role model to school librarians across the nation; MSLA is fortunate to have her on the Executive Board. Read the "President's Message," a tribute to Valerie.

School librarians, by nature, always "borrow" ideas from one another; we are the best at sharing. How many of us have visited the webpages of the "MSLA Web Seal of Excellence" winners and seen an idea of two that

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could be useful? Check out the articles by Leslie Kmiec and Paula Myers (Lincoln Sudbury Regional High), Erin Dalbec (Wayland High School) and Jennifer St. Michel (Hurley Middle School in Seekonk) to get some ideas....yes, inspiration!

And how about the 2012 Bookmark Contest winners... and get some ideas and inspiration. The 2013 contest is around the corner.

Thanks to Sandy Kelly, we have two great roundup articles on the conference speakers and authors. Now here is where we school librarians are great pupils, gathering and adapting ideas. Be sure to check out these two features in this Forum issue. If you did not come away from the MSLA conference with your head afloat with ideas, you were unique. Turn your inspiration into a bit of perspiration; go for it and try those new sites and buy those new books! You never know who you will inspire.

So, my takeaway is that sharing and helping is what we do in our work, and the side benefit is to give each other courage, to inspire our colleagues! I hope that this issue of the MSLA Forum will give you courage and inspiration. If you would like to share your inspiration and write an article for the Forum, the next issue will be the summer Forum PLUS, our print edition (deadline, June 1). ***I am hoping to hear from you.***

Conference Roundup: Major Speakers

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Coordinated by Sandy Kelly; Photos by Richard Curran

As one observer stated, “It was as good as any national conference I have ever been to!” I would have to agree. The speakers were engaging, the authors wonderful and if you felt a bit overwhelmed and exhausted when it was over, you definitely got your money’s worth. I know what I will be doing on vacation, reliving the day by reading my notes, browsing through all of the handouts, previewing a myriad of websites and curating my new “School Library Scoop” website, thanks to Joyce Valenza. You can follow me at <http://www.scoop.it/t/school-library-scoop>.

If you didn’t make it this year, mark your calendar for March 3-4, 2013 in Sturbridge. We are already lining up another well known author you will not want to miss. A special “thank you” goes out to our members who took their precious time to submit the following presentation summaries. *On our own we are good, but together we are fabulous.*

Keynote Speaker: ROSS TODD: "Living the Dream"

by Amy Bloom, MS Librarian, Natick, MA



I have always found Ross Todd to be one of the most inspiring speakers I have ever heard, and his talk, "Living the Dream: The Library Connects it All and Makes it Happen," was no exception. The address focused on new trends in education and librarianship - transformations that are occurring at breakneck speed, and the school librarian’s role in integrating these new initiatives into the curriculum. Todd’s strength is in research, developing questions that go to the heart of our profession. His latest study focuses on student learning in New Jersey schools, and the contribution that quality school libraries make to education in the state.

Key characteristics of a quality school library program were identified through an initial survey. The most successful programs had similar attributes:

- State certified school librarian
- Support staff
- Responsibility for technical hardware support
- High levels of cooperation, coordination and instructional collaboration with the teaching staff

Further investigation of those school libraries with high levels of collaboration, explored four themes:

- In what ways does the school support learning through the school library?
- In what ways, if any, does the school library contribute to learning?
- What do students learn through their interaction and engagement with the school library?
- How do they envision the future of school libraries

The findings of this study conclude that with strong administrative support, and a culture of collaboration, the school library program can have a huge impact on student learning. Some of the major takeaways for us to be considering in our practice included:

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- Collaboration with classroom teachers is a key mechanism for professional development: teaching our teachers- transferring and independence.
- Being seen as an Information Learning Specialist
- Enabling inquiry through information
- Being on the cutting edge: educational landscape scanners: both strategic and programatic: in the areas of reading theory, learning theory, and information technology research.
- Being present in forums where new developments/tools/learning approaches are made available (think Common core)

Ross' research identifies numerous ways effective library programs engage students, teachers and contributes to learning. There is way too much information to relate here, in this overview. I would suggest that his presentation is required reading!<http://www.slideshare.net/annperham/12handouts-todd>

I would leave you with the qualities of Effective School Librarians as identified in this study:

- Having high visibility as teachers and works to sustain this as a priority
- Actively building a profile of the school library as an active learning center
- Being non-judgmental with students and teachers
- Building an atmosphere of open communication
- Being willing to go the extra mile to be supportive of teaching and learning
- Being sociable and accessible, inclusive and welcoming
- Having a strong "help" orientation, this is about learning on the library
- Focusing not so much on our libraries, but on their commitment to enabling learning needs to be met
- Being solution-oriented
- Creating an ethos of the library that is an invitation to learning: a place to be, do and become
- Having high expectations for colleagues and for students
- Liking and caring about young people and having flexibility in creating a learning environment that appeals to them
- Being leaders and instructional innovators who are not afraid to tke risk, be creative, and do what best serves learners of all ages.

Is this you?



Keynote Speaker: ALAN NOVEMBER: "Librarians as Key Leaders"

by Laurie Lingham, Librarian at the Carroll School

Alan November described a lively and plugged-in future for librarians. With humor, asides, and many stories, he connected the numerous dots he examined in his anecdotes and challenged us to take a leadership role in 21st century information literacy.

The Internet has become a cut-and-paste, get-your-research-done tool; it has

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lowered critical thinking! Alan's preference is to build and create content, to be an author (like early pre-Internet), not a consumer of content. The new role for the library is as a global publishing center for kids, creating meaningful content for the world. We should also work with teachers to do this. For example, screencasting software is really easy to use for broadcasting a message or lesson. It takes only seconds to create a tutorial. It is faster than note-taking. Librarians should teach teachers to teach kids to cover the curriculum that we the librarians will then tag in [Diigo](#) ! He also recommends Jing and Skype.

Because of the Internet we have the opportunity to find classrooms all over the world for authentic conversations. [Epals](#) is great; use it to collaborate with your choice of country. It is the largest student database in the world. The fewest participants are from US. The US has more connectivity than any nation in world, but Americans do not reach out because we have so little empathy. Empathy is the single characteristic that separates the great employee from the average, according to the CEO of the world's largest bank, HSBC. Librarians to the rescue! Librarians can show teachers how to design assignments where kids must reconcile points of view.

Librarians have critical thinking skills. Librarians are more important than the databases in their libraries. Students do NOT know how to use the Internet, so they need librarians' critical thinking and question-asking. Critical thinking on the Internet is the single thing Alan would teach every year. He gave many great examples that are covered in his book, *Web Literacy for Educators*. Conversation with /direction and input from the librarian is missing now that students go directly to Internet; the mad rush to devices such as iPads (with their incredible ease of use) bypasses real learning. What flows through the wires is more important than the wires. The real revolution is information and communication. Librarians can ask, "what information do you want?" A device does not ask. Kids need to ask the smart questions. That's critical thinking. The teacher/librarian's role is to pose smart questions (the Socratic method).

There is little tolerance for innovation or transformation in US schools; plenty of technology, but not real change in the US. Not so in China and other countries. CIPA The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) creates too much fear of losing control! Alan assured us that CIPA will be replaced with more critical thinking. He told us of the [Clintondale School using the flip model of learning](#)

See also [Teach Less Learn More](#) , which has replaced the spoonfeeding model of knowledge-transfer with inquiry-based problem-solving, question-asking, and critical thinking.



We should apply video games to learning. Study them! The 4 strategies used in creating them are:

1. immediate feedback.
2. rise to the level of your capacity.
3. positive reinforcement; no penalties.
4. mastery is built in.

Keynote Speaker: JOYCE VALENZA: "10 Big Things"

by Marnie Bolstad, Library Teacher at Newton South HS

In one hour Joyce Valenza covered, in rapid-fire fashion, 10 Important Things Librarians must Teach using 320 slides!

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While addressing each of the “10 Things” Joyce introduced numerous digital resources that will help library teachers teach 21st century skills. To view the presentation and link directly to the resources she introduced, view her [presentation on Author Stream](#) .

1. Digital Citizenship:

Our libraries are becoming centers for digital learning and our students are using numerous types of media (in other words, they are becoming transliterate). How responsibly they use digital media is another matter. With this in mind, Joyce stressed the importance of teaching students to be ethical and socially responsible users of media; that they understand the importance of using common sense and appropriate behavior. Students must understand they leave “digital footprints,” and learn to manage their e-reputations. As part of this process, they must be aware of how colleges and prospective employers investigate digital footprints and what can be done about it.

2. Copyright Education, and 3. Best Practice and Fair Use

The use of digital media makes it easy for students to plagiarize materials created by others. We need to teach students the concepts of fair use and intellectual property. In so doing, we should emphasize the use of sites such as Creative Commons and Flickr. Students should be aware they can license their own work on the Creative Commons-type sites. Also, they should know there are numerous online citation tools they can use to create bibliographies with annotations, note cards, outlines and more.

4. Research 3.0:

Traditional written papers are no longer adequate in today’s electronic environment. Students should be encouraged to develop e-portfolios which make their learning “transparent, interactive, meaningful, and original.” Depending on the nature of their research, students should learn to use online survey tools, Twitter, and other forms of social media, as they compile data for their research.

5. Curation:

Library Teachers are already curating resources for students through the use of pathfinders and LibGuides. Students should become part of this process. They can assemble the resources they use for projects on sites such as Paper.li and Scoopit. In so doing, they use critical thinking skills and become “knowledge citizens.”

6. Keeping Up with the Search:

Many students rely on a small number of resources and utilize the same approach each time they do a research project. They should be encouraged or make use of Google’s unique features or, better yet, move beyond Google. We need to increase students’ awareness of sites such as Mashpedia, Duck Duck Go (which doesn’t track their searches), Wolfram Alpha (a knowledge search engine), Glean.org, Quintura for Kids, Searchy Pants, etc. These sites can generate different types of searches with different points of view.

7. Gigo (“garbage in, garbage out”) or, Joyce’s words, “Developing a filter for crap.”

We all need to recognize that it is becoming increasingly difficult to evaluate digital media. Students should learn to keep their antennae up as they conduct research. Sources that may appear to be valid must be verified against other sources. And, library teachers, need to recognize that Wikipedia may be a good source, if the information can be verified. Annotating resources helps students evaluate and defend the credibility of their sources. Joyce recommends students address the following questions in their annotations: Who wrote it? Why did they write it? How does it help me answer my questions or make my case?

8. What is a Primary Source?

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We must teach students to be skeptics. They should be aware that what is represented on the Internet may not always be true. Remember, for example, that the 'Gay Girl in Damascus' turned out to be an American male.

9. Creativity

We need to give students permission and the latitude to "geek out" and use/experiment with multiple forms of delivery. There are many resources available to them to use when producing their work. The resources range from digital story telling to cartoon writing to poster makers, etc. As students are allowed to use different media, we need to develop new ways to evaluate projects.

10. "The Network is the Learning." (George Siemens)

Students live in a networked world. We need to take advantage of that by linking classrooms and authors on Skype, using eBooks that "promote interactivity, connectivity and access," creating online book clubs, etc. We must recognize and embrace that "learning takes place outside the doors of our school and library."

11. And, New Rules for our Practice

In Joyce's view, this is the best time to be a library teacher. We all need to "imagine our role and create a 2020 vision."

Whew! Joyce covered a lot in a short period of time. I hope I have done justice to her presentation.

BUFFY HAMILTON: "Participatory Learning"

by Deborah Sweeney, Dennis-Yarmouth and Sandy Kelly, Carlisle School

"Participatory learning is a lens to help us see the possibilities and create a context for crafting a shared vision of library in learning communities."

How can being in the library be like an archeology experience where one excavates and discovers? Libraries are a catalyst for participatory learning and culture. They are communal places and the shared story of the human experience.



Confronting the challenges of participatory culture, we must develop empathy for each others ideas and work by sharing and publishing and exhibiting. Members of a participatory culture feel some degree of connection with each other and they believe their contributions matter.

Librarians can be the spark to larger change in the learning ecosystem. It is empowering for students and shows others what goes on in the library. Kids love it!

The librarian is an essential part in the student learning network. We can change students from being knowledgeable to knowledge able. Right now we have a system of education that devalues inquiry. Buffy is really focused on her role as a teacher.

Transliteracy is a "convergence of literacies." Media literacy, digital literacy, technology literacy and information literacies become blurred when individuals become consumers of information to producers of content. Transliteracy

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focuses on the interaction among the different literacies. Characteristics of participatory learning include motivation and engagement, a learning ecosystem, co-learning, relevance and creativity. It encourages play, social interaction with home, school community and the world. This does cause resistance because students aren't used to this type of learning. They are used to sitting there and regurgitating information. It makes demands on time. It provides opportunities to create and solve problems. It will not work without a strong bond between teacher and student built on trust, mutual respect, care and an ongoing effort to get to know each other. Social media and Web 2.0 tools can help develop conversations for learning.

There is not a "one size fits all" model for participatory learning. Students must connect by building on prior knowledge. Then develop questions and wonders by reading, brainstorming and collaborating. The next step entails research, gathering and organizing information, synthesizing and reflecting. Finally they must construct new knowledge and understanding. It is the act of creation that distinguishes the student from the scholar.

You can follow Buffy Hamilton at <http://theunquietlibrarian.wordpress.com/>

Christopher Harris, "Reading beyond Print"

by Julie Farrell and Sandy Kelly

Chris spoke with his usual wit, skepticism and broad knowledge of digital media.

The best take away from his presentation was, "People don't buy an eBook reader, they buy books." One of the hot topics in the ebook world right now is digital rights management. Access vs ownership, what should the model for libraries be? Currently there are three models. In local ownership the library owns the copy of the eBook but there are questions concerning how many times the book can be circulated before the eBook evaporates and must be repurchased. Some publishers will allow as many as fifty downloads at the same time and most only one. Some publishers stream the books which are hosted on the company's servers. The eBook/econtent from Gale, Capstone and Rosen, among others are provided this way. This is the format generally used in a database. The third type of ebook is downloaded. This is what is done with Overdrive. There are pros and cons to consider when deciding what to purchase. Additional considerations include the selection of books, package deals, very expensive overhead. Two major library vendors have their own products. Mackin as VIA and Follett has Follett Shelf. Each company has their own interface for school libraries.

There are also concerns with different eReaders such as the Kindle or Nook.

In our library we buy content and we loan out content. With ebooks we don't own anything. We have access to econtent but no ownership. That econtent can be altered or taken away. If the ereader breaks, we need to buy additional access to content.

Some questions to ask before investing in ebooks-

- What format do you need or your patrons want?
- What purpose will the econtent serve?
- Ownership of the content?

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- Are you reading the book?
- Are you studying the text?
- Is it a one time purchase or a subscription?
- Will the content change?

Chris Harris purchases ebooks regionally. He feels pooling resources and sharing the benefits will widen access to econtent. In his district \$6.25/student is budgeted for library resources and \$1.25/student is set aside to pool the resources. He also mentioned a program called kickstarter.com - pledge to start projects. Groups within the region can bid how much of their budget will go to an eBook. This may be a way for districts with limited budgets to raise funds to begin or expand their ebook collections.

MICHELLE LUHTALA: "Banned Sites"

by Ken Mullen, Social Studies Teacher at the Pioneer Valley Regional School

Michelle Luhtala did a brilliant job of presenting the issues facing school libraries when it comes to banning web sites. She opened the presentation by discussing the numerous ways to contact her or access her multiple resources on the web, http://mluhtala.blogspot.com/p/presentations_20.html

She then discussed her findings after analyzing the Common Core, ISTE/NETS, P21 and AASL standards to see what skills the four have in common. Her findings looked at which words most often appeared in each of the four. Her findings were charted using a word cloud and then further analyzed.

Michelle looked at the most common words and found that the most used words fell into four categories (the four C's).

- Category- most common words from ISTE, P21, AASL, CCSS
- Collaborate-partner
- Communicate-argue, listen, read, speak, write
- Create-decide, innovate, plan
- Think Critically-evaluate, identify process, prove, reason, solve, think



Michelle then focused on websites that allow students in the same school to achieve these "four C's". By utilizing web sites, students can collaborate without meeting in person. Michelle cited the example of Shannon Miller, a school librarian from Iowa, who utilized social media like Twitter & Skype to provide her rural students a much more worldly experience and bolstered class offerings as well.

Michelle was then quick to point out that the opportunities that Shannon provided her students in Iowa couldn't be duplicated in many US schools since so many districts ban social media sites from students AND teachers. Michelle cited a recent survey of high schools that found 87% of schools block Facebook, 67% block YouTube and 15% even block the search engine Google! These bans obviously hinder the ability of students and teachers to collaborate, communicate, create and think critically.

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Michelle was proud to point out that her current school, New Canaan HS in CT, allows their student access to all of the websites listed above. She screened a video that starred her outgoing seniors that was made for the incoming freshman. The main theme was that the school TRUSTED the students to make the right choices with these sites that had been banned in their sending middle school. What a novel concept, trusting kids to do the right thing instead of expecting them to do the wrong thing!

Michelle discussed numerous rich and authentic lessons she had done with her students and teachers that utilized web sites and that helped students complete the four C's. She showed an anti-bullying video that students had filmed and edited using their smartphones and then uploaded to Youtube and Facebook. The video was then watched by other students who were able to offer critiques and feedback.

Another project about revolution utilized twitter feeds that related to tweets related to Arab Spring. The students looked at various tweets as well as news articles and analyzed them to look for bias and discussed the difficulties in finding the "truth" on the Internet.

Another project Michelle touted was examining gender roles using ads from Life magazines from the 1950's. The students took smartphone pictures of ads that portrayed women very differently than today. The pictures were then uploaded to Facebook groups that were able to post comments and discuss how much had changed in the last 60 years. This was then incorporated into a Catcher in the Rye unit that the same students were covering in English class.

One prominent theme that ran throughout the presentation was "Banned Websites Awareness Day" which had widespread support from groups like the AASL, ACLU and NASSP. She was a big factor in getting this day into the national press. Michelle pointed out that schools should be helping students learn how to use sites like Facebook, Twitter and Youtube as effective tools for collaboration and innovation. If this is left up to the students and parents, the result may have an impact on the students' choices after high school since 70% of colleges take a students Facebook profile into consideration before accepting them. She also noted that CIPA rules do not stipulate that YouTube must be blocked. Many tech admins do not want to take the time to sift through the regulations and prefer to just block with a broad brush.

Michelle's main theme of using these banned sites to help students collaborate, communicate, create and think critically was well presented and clear. She is clearly passionate about her work and has done a great deal to raise awareness both at the school and national level.

Conference Roundup: Authors

by Sandy Kelly; conference photos by Richard Curran

This year's conference featured 22 amazing authors and illustrators who came from as far away as Maine and New York to be with us. They chatted with attendees, signed books, judged the bookmark contest or spoke to full house crowds. Between attending sessions, trying to squeeze in meals and getting books signed, some equally wonderful MSLA members singled out some of our guests to learn more about them and their work. Whether it was your first conference or you are a seasoned conference participant there was no doubt,

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we had some of the best authors ever. Thank you to our authors, the interviewers and especially our members for making this such a success.

Christopher Bing by Chris Steinhauser

The Author Fest is always one of my favorite parts of the conference. Each year I feel like I get to meet the rock stars of my library world. This year was an especially special year!

Christopher Bing is the illustrator of many great books including *Casey at the Bat: A Ballad of the Republic Sung in the Year 1888*, *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*, *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, and *Lincoln Shot: A President's Life Remembered*. This is the second time Christopher has joined us at the MSLA conference and I found him just as delightful to talk to as I did the first time! A Caldecott honor nominee, Christopher talks about the research and work he does to create historically accurate illustrations such as those in many of his books. When asked to sign a book, he takes his time, doing beautiful artwork inside the book cover just for the recipient.

Christopher is from Lexington, MA and is active in the community, working for the Chamber of Commerce. He does school visits when available. For more information, contact Christopher at cbing1@me.com.

Sarah Brannen by Stephanie South

“Read thousands of books!” This is author/illustrator Sarah Brannen’s advice for aspiring writers. An avid library user as a child (“Oh my God yes!”) who was close to her children’s librarian and would buy favorite books at the library book sale, Brannen now works primarily as an illustrator but has authored a picture book, *Uncle Bobby’s Wedding*, and is in the process of writing several more books.

Brannen is a painter and “always wanted to illustrate children’s books but was worried it might not pay,” she says. She did freelance work for an architect for some time while building her reputation as an illustrator but is now able to work as an illustrator full time – to the extent that writing sometimes has to take a back seat. As an author, she is working on a number of books, but the need to meet illustrating deadlines often leaves her just “a couple of hours at the end of the day,” and it is hard to settle down to writing then, she says.

Her ideas for stories come from the world around her, she says. *Uncle Bobby’s Wedding*, published in 2008, came about because her young niece “wanted every book she read to end with a wedding.” In the book, little Chloe worries that she will not be her Uncle Bobby’s favorite person anymore after he announces that he is getting married to his boyfriend Jamie; he reassures her that she will always be special to him, and the book ends with her being a happy flower girl at the wedding.

At the time the book was written, Massachusetts had just legalized gay marriage (in 2005), and Brannen realized there was very little material for children that covered this subject – another reason for her to write the book. But despite the legal reality, and good reviews from publications such as *Booklist* and authors such as Tomie dePaola, the book became the eighth most challenged title in the US in 2008.



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Even now Brannen is not usually asked to read or discuss the book when she goes on school visits; most often she talks about the process of illustrating books. However, she has had the opportunity to discuss the book challenge process with older students. And the book has brought her new work opportunities as well: on the basis of *Uncle Bobby's Wedding*, Scholastic Press hired her to illustrate *Tooth Truth*, authored by Arthur Levine and due out in February 2013.

Sarah receives support in her work from the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) writers' group and illustrator group as well as online writers' community yellapalooza.com. SCBWI has been a great help, she says; the organization has provided her with grants as well.



Jeannie Brett by Linda Redding

During the MSLA Conference in April, I had an opportunity to meet with author/illustrator Jeannie Brett. Here is what she shared.

LR: *Tell us what a typical day is like for you as an author/illustrator working on a book?*

JB: A typical day for me is waking up at 5:00 and getting my exercise in before the workday begins. I then do my "animal chores" feeding 2 very large cats, an even larger dog (Newf) and a horse. I am sitting in my studio chair at 8:30-9:00 and will work through the day on either deskwork (tending to emails, twitter, fb, website, getting ready for school visits, etc.), or working on my art (working on a book in progress, working on sketches for new book ideas or working on technique, playing with different materials, subjects). On some days I work on my writing. This may be a current project text, new stories, or old stories that I revisit with fresh thoughts. And of course a quick break for lunch. I try to get outside for a bit during the day but it all depends on my workload.

When working on a close deadline, I tend to forgo the exercise, and work early a.m. until late at night, only stopping for meals. I always say, that won't happen again, that I will be organized enough not to let that happen, but life happens and alas, I find I am back at working non-stop before a deadline.

LR: *Are you part of a writing support group?*

JB: I am currently in an illustrator crit. group and we discuss writing a bit. I also have a couple of very good writing friends that I may run pieces by. I try to attend one writing/illustrating retreat a year. This year it will be with two writing friends for a week in the summer in a cottage in Maine. We will get a lot done!

LR: *As a child did you want to be an author and illustrator?*

JB: As a child I wanted to make art. I was not quite focused enough to know it would be children's books. I spent many years working as a free-lance commercial illustrator, working with ad agencies and local businesses. I also did a lot of Educational Illustration at that time. I find children's books to be very rewarding. There are many challenges in this business but it is also very satisfying. School visits tend to be the icing on the cake for me! I enjoy meeting and working with children and chatting with their teachers and librarians.

LR: *What are a few of the children's book you enjoyed as a child?*

JB: *Homer C. Cat* by Mary Calhoun, *Mr. Bear goes to Boston* by Marion Flood French, and many more. My

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parents always gave me a new hardcover for Christmas or my birthday. I have most of them today.

LR: *What are a few of the books you enjoyed sharing with your own children?*

JB: *Good Night Moon* was a favorite of all 3 of my kids. *The Cat that Wore a Pot on her Head* by Ann Seidler, *The Wind in the Willows*, Eric Carle's books, and many more. My kids also enjoyed many non-fiction animal books.

LR: *How do you communicate with readers of your books?*

JB: I communicate with parents on Facebook, also on my website and library and school visits.

LR: *What are your school presentations like?*

JB: My school visits are mostly from my illustration point of view, but that is very similar with my writing process. I offer a presentation that takes my audience from the very start to the very end of illustrating a picture book. I share many original sketches, book dummies, final art along with talking about my reference materials (models, photos, interviews, etc.). I also include the stories behind my illustrations/writing. Again my writing process is similar so they go hand in hand. I involve the students and feel smaller groups work much better for everyone. My presentations are tweaked for age appropriateness. I also offer drawing workshops that are fun for K-5 grades. All ages love my drawing workshops.

LR: *Do you have any soon to be released books?*

JB: I have written and am in process of illustrating a non-fiction book about bears around the world. The title is *Wild About Bears!* It will be released in 2014. *My Cat*, *Coon Cat* and *Little Maine* written by yours truly are my most recent books.

Kathleen Benner Duble by Maureen Tannetta



Although she grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Kathleen Duble is now a Massachusetts author, with several historical fiction titles some of which are set in the state. *The Sacrifice*, her first historical novel, takes actual historical facts from her family genealogy of an ancestor accused of witchcraft as a child in North Andover. "I love doing historical fiction," says Duble, "and I love doing it from an unusual point of view. There were a lot of kids who were accused of witchcraft and nobody has ever talked about what it was like for them."

Duble also wrote an historical novel set in a Berkshire iron works town and studied the current day Saugus Iron Works to gather details for the story. Her latest book, *Phantoms of the Snow*, released in February, will appeal to our New England skiers. In it, orphaned 15-year-old Noah Garrett lands on a Colorado military base where World War II ski divisions are training.

Duble is not afraid of any subject and seems especially willing to create male characters who are not afraid to get their hands dirty. Her newest character is the son of an outhouse cleaner (gong farmer) in medieval times. As historical fiction sales slow, Duble has written a mystery series with a paranormal character who can see historical events which occurred prior to a struggle involving blood if she touches it. "No vampires or werewolves," Duble promises.

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Kathleen writes full time, balancing writing, appearances, marketing, and family and will typically write mornings between 8-12, when home. Her website is www.kathleenduble.com for more information on her works or school visits.

Andrew Lapham Fersch by Robyn York

With a playful and cheerful demeanor Andrew Lapham Fersch handed out free copies of his book of poetry, *The Rough Draft of My Life Story*, to librarians who steadily visited his table during the Author Meet and Greet on Sunday at the MSLA Conference in Hyannis. Fersch is on a mission to donate his book to school libraries, children's hospitals, and other worthy organizations. He says, "If I succeed in nothing else as a teacher, I want to inspire others to do kind things without expecting anything in return." Then he adds, "That's all I want. People to care." His generosity brought out smiles of delight from librarians as he signed a copy of the book for their school's library.



At first glance, the poems in *The Rough Draft of My Life Story* call to mind Shel Silverstein because they rhyme, contain childhood themes, and are humorous. The accompanying black and white drawings by Phillip Ashworth also remind the reader of Silverstein. While Silverstein is an inspiration, Fersch considers him a "true Renaissance man" and shies away from any comparison. Ask if the poetry in his book is truly autobiographical, and Fersch smiles, admitting that, though he has not been to Spain, he has jumped out of a plane. Ask him to choose a favorite poem and he pauses. It's as though I asked him to select his favorite child. After a moment, he answers: " 'The Surprise Prize in the Bottom of the Box' is my best written; 'Why Don't You Act Your Age?' has the best message; and 'Chop, Chop, I Chop,' which is about a vegetarian butcher, is also a favorite." Most people tell him they like "You Made Me, Me" the best.

As a child, Fersch enjoyed reading and writing poetry, especially about baseball. Although Fersch has always enjoyed poetry, he discovered his talent for it when he worked as a classroom aide. When Fersch learned that the young man he worked with learned best when he was entertained, he would reward the student for completed work and good behavior by writing poems and sharing them with his charge. Discipline problems disappeared and the student became engaged. Natural talent and interest led Fersch to poetry, and the practice he got in preparing poems for this student honed his skill.

Currently, Fersch teaches 7th grade Language Arts at Rye Junior High School in Rye, New Hampshire. In his class, every student is known as Sir or Ma'am as a sign of respect because Fersch has found that when his students feel respected, they are more eager to contribute. When they feel valued as an integral part of the classroom, they bring an "unbridled enthusiasm" to the lesson.

Encouraging students to write is important to Fersch. One offer he makes is that any student, from any school, can submit to him a poem they have written. In return, he will offer feedback and write a poem to share with them. Students in his classes are invited to participate in a lunchtime writing club called The Consortium. The challenge he has put to this group is to produce a novel by the end of the school year, and, one of his students has done just that and completed a 227-page novel.

Learn more about Andrew Lapham Fersch at www.andrewfersch.com. *The Rough Draft of My Life Story* is

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available as an eBook on Amazon for only one dollar <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B007JUJHUI>

Mark Peter Hughes by Devika Muruga

On Sunday afternoon I had the pleasure of meeting many authors at the MSLA Conference meet and greet session. I informally interviewed Mark Peter Hughes the best-selling author of *A Crack in the Sky*, *Lemonade Mouth* and *I am the Wall Paper*. The interesting part is that I did not know much about this author as I am new to young adult books and have only been a librarian for about a year. I met up with Mark Peter Hughes and what a thrill it was to meet an author who was very excited to share that his book. *A Crack in the Sky* will be made into a TV movie. He also shared that he loves visiting schools and working with small groups holding writing workshops. He enjoys writing and working with the young adult population.



DM: How did you first become interested in writing?

MPH: I have always been interested in writing. I have written since I was very young; too young to remember. I've always told stories, and things like that. I have a lot of boxes of very bad writing. So, you know, I've always written and it's always something that I've done. Just cannot remember when I started.

DM: What advice do you have for young aspiring authors?

MPH: I suggest anybody who wants to be an author to keep writing. You have to keep on writing to get better. You won't be the best until you have written a lot. So anybody who wants to be a writer needs to keep writing.

DM: What advice do you have for reluctant young readers?

MPH: Keep reading! Find something that they like to read and keep on reading, maybe a different genre or graphic novels. You have to keep looking until they can find the right fit.

DM: Are you working on a new book?

I have already written a book which will be coming out in (I believe) early 2012.

Upon my return home from the conference, I walked through the door proudly holding an autographed copy of *A Crack in the Sky* for my high school daughter. The response was "Mom! You should have gotten the book *Lemonade Mouth*. It was the best musical on Disney. You did not know that?" I felt that Mark Peter Hughes was a huge name in my house and I for one was not aware of that until I returned home!



Mark posed for photos before answering some of my questions. Thank you Mark Peter Hughes for being at the conference and taking the time to talk to me. Visit Mark's website for information about his books visits, and more at <http://www.markpeterhughes.com>

David Kelly by Sharon Lux

I had the pleasure of meeting David Kelly at the MSLA conference this year, and I was very impressed! David has only been writing for kids for a couple of

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years, but he's been a writer most of his adult life. Starting off as a programmer, he found himself drawn to technical writing and marketing (moving up to be VP of marketing in a software company and also doing consulting work in business and technology marketing). From there, it was an easy segue to business travel writing (as he traveled around speaking and consulting). Check out his about.com site on [Business Travel!](#) He also does fun travel writing for a variety of publications, including the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, and *Family Fun*.

Becoming an author of children's books was a fairly recent phenomenon, prompted by his own sons' interest in both sports and mysteries. David didn't find any books for young kids that combined these two genres so he created the mix. Going from the early drafts to published writer was a multi-step process: publishers are picky! But in the end, he earned a contract from Random House to write a series of nine ballpark mysteries. These delightful tales featuring cousins Kate and Mike are set in different ballparks around the country. Featured so far are Fenway Park and Yankee Stadium, as well as the Astros and the LA Dodgers. With 30 major league parks available as the setting for these mysteries, David hopes to continue Kate and Mike's adventures around the country (and to travel to those parks, of course, to be sure his tales are authentic).

All four mysteries are available in hardcover and paperback as well as in an ebook version. Targeting 2nd-4th grade readers, these books are part of Random House's *Stepping Stone* venture. Mike, one of the main characters, even maintains a website [The Ballpark Mysteries](#) and writes a [blog](#) where fans can follow his and Kate's adventures. The fifth in the series is due out this June, so stay tuned!

As for David and reading—well it didn't start out easy. David struggled to learn to read, and only with a lot of extra help from his mom was he able to succeed finally in 3rd grade. Perhaps this is why he targets those young readers with his high-interest, action-packed, and humorous stories. His advice for budding young writers is to read, read, and then read some more: books, magazines, websites, whatever. It doesn't matter as long as you're reading. If, as a writer, you are struggling to start a story, don't write the beginning—jump into the middle of the story instead. Be sure to share and share some more; then work in the suggestions you get from your readers. According to David, the revising process is where you really learn to be a writer.

One last item I want to mention is that David Kelly is available to do an author visit and/or a writing workshop, and he lives right here in Massachusetts only minutes from Boston. David's books can motivate reluctant readers, and his presentations can inspire young writers. What more could you ask for? Visit David's [website](#) for great information about baseball (David's stories are meticulously researched) and to find out more about hosting him at your school or library.



Jarrett Krosoczka by Judi Paradis

Lunch Lady author Jarrett Krosoczka was channeling Jon Scieszka in his effort to promote "reading for guys." Sporting a bald cap and clutching a copy of *Squids Will Be Squids*, Krosoczka joined Jordan Brown of Walden Books to talk about how to hook boys on reading at a well-attended session at the MSLA Conference on Monday.

Krosoczka and Brown have collaborated in Scieszka's *Guys Read* series, collections of short stories by well-known children's authors focused on genres that engage boys—humor, thrillers, sports, etc. Scieszka's theory, that

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boys don't read because they don't find things at school that appeal to them, is something Krosoczka believes. "I remember being assigned books to read in school that I had no interest in, and determined I was not a reader," said Krosoczka. "Yet, I'd happily read comics. I read them daily and had a huge collection of Garfield comics." *Guys Read* is designed to legitimize the types of books boys like to read and get them into classrooms.

Krosoczka began writing his popular *Lunch Lady* series as a proposal for a television series about a crime-fighting cafeteria worker who fashions spy gadgets from kitchen tools. After some thought, he realized that it would work well as a comic strip. He was going through his childhood artwork and discovered that he'd written "tons of comics" as a kid. His idea followed closely on the success of *Baby Mouse*, showing a strong interest in this format. Krosoczka's books appeal to both boys and girls, but he reports that he's especially proud that he has boys reading books with a female hero. He said that lots of kids write to him with ideas for new villains and new gadgets. He also has a great collection of photos of lunch ladies posing as crime fighters.

Krosoczka and Brown talked about using genres boys like as a way to get them to start reading. For example, tell them *The Giver* is science fiction, or that Jack Gantos books have great stupid humor. Guys like to read when they think they are getting away with something, according to Brown. "And getting boys to read is an end unto itself."

They also cited the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series as a great series for capturing boys' attention. Krosoczka talked about the illustrations Jeff Kinney uses in these books. "These heavily illustrated books help kids understand what they are reading," said Brown. Krosoczka said that books with illustrations that look like something a kid can do make kids comfortable. He talked about studying comic strips he'd created as a child to get ideas for how to illustrate *Lunch Lady*. He pointed out that books such as the *Wimpy Kid* series and the *Origami Yoda* books also do this.

"Guys live in a multimedia world, so graphic novels and heavily illustrated books have a real appeal." Brown and Krosoczka also pointed out that books with ties to a computer website or a movie also can be a hook for readers. They also noted that series books or books by a well-known author can be good for boys who don't want to think too hard about what to read next.

Krosoczka's newest series is called *Platypus Police Squad*. It is a chapter book about two detectives, who are both platypuses. One is an old-timey cop and the newest is a rookie cop who plays fast and loose with the rules. Krosoczka is still looking to make connections with guys, and visiting schools is part of this mission. "Jack Gantos visited my school when I was in the third grade and complimented my drawing, and that had a profound effect on me. I think of that every time I enter a classroom." Jarrett Krosoczka can be reached through his website at <http://www.studiojkk.com/>

Marcella Pixley by Cindy Erle

The students at my school love the book *Freak*, so it was a pleasure to interview the author, Marcella Pixley. She wanted to be a writer before she was able to read. "I wanted to be a writer so badly that it sometimes made me cry." When she was a little girl she would, "tell stories into a tape recorder, and then later, I would write them down in spiral bound books." In fact, she still has some of the frayed books in her



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office! Marcella had people in her life that believed in her, and told her that someday she would indeed become a professional writer. That is the same advice she gives her students in her class today, "Have faith that you can do this. You are a real writer. The only difference between you and me is that I've been at it for longer. Find an adult writer who inspires you -- a teacher, an author, a parent, and read your work to them. Find a friend who enjoys your imagination. Read them your poem or your new chapter. And if you are too shy, or not yet ready to share your work, read, read, read. Find the inspiration you need to keep going."



When asked about how she juggles her writing with her day to day responsibilities of being a mother and teacher, Marcella simply stated that she is patient with herself. She doesn't write every day, but when she has even a moment she will write just a sentence, a paragraph or a page. She has faith that the book will come to fruition. Her thought is that, "If you keep on putting pennies in a jar, eventually you will fill it." There is a quote by F. Scott Fitzgerald that came to mind in this interview, "*Writers aren't people exactly. Or, if they're any good, they're a whole lot of people trying so hard to be one person.*" Marcella will carry around a story inside her as she goes through her daily routines, then she writes. "When I pick up my kids from school, when I teach, when I clean, when I drive across the state or the country -- the characters are all rumbling around inside me. So, when there is finally an open moment, and I can sit in a quiet place to write, it comes quickly like a sneeze you've been holding in for too long. I create all day long, and then I write when I can."

The only real support Marcella gets in her writing process comes from the students in her eighth grade English classes. When they are proofreading their drafts, she looks over hers! "I teach them how to give each other feedback and many of them use those same techniques and give me feedback as well. I run a lunchtime writers' group called Writers' Guild. Students in grades 6-8 come with their lunches and their drafts, and we sit in a big circle and give each other feedback. Every month or two, I bring a chapter, and they tell me what works and what doesn't. I find it invaluable, especially since they are the intended audience for the books I have written so far"

Marcella has always been an avid reader, and always found the library to be a place of comfort. She was very shy, and would prefer to eat her lunch with a book rather than in a crowded cafeteria. The librarians knew her well, "After *Without Tess* came out, I did a reading at Newtonville Books. A woman came up to me who I recognized but couldn't quite place. She was the middle school librarian from Brown Junior High. She remembered me, and wanted to see what I looked like now that I was grown. She told me she always knew I would be a writer one day. All I could do was hug her and tell her thank you."

When doing school visits, Marcella shapes her activities based on what the school wants and needs. She has done poetry and memoir workshops for small groups, run critique groups, and readings where students can ask questions. "I often share photographs of me as a goofy high school student and tell stories about the things that shaped who I have become. I also enjoy staying in touch with the kids I meet. Sometimes they send me their writing and I give them encouragement. If I can inspire someone to become a reader or a writer, I have done something precious."

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Irene Smalls by Deeth Ellis

DE: How do you juggle your writing with your day to day responsibilities?

IS: I tend to be an independent and entrepreneurial spirit, and writing is becoming a tool in a repertoire of skills that I've developed.

DE: Can you talk about the publishing process and how the illustrator is selected?

IS: I submit the manuscript then the publisher says, "Good-bye, Irene." I'm separate from the publishing process.

DE: Where do you draw your ideas from when starting the writing process?

IS: From the tip of my nose. I draw from what I see, my children, my life in New York. In *Jenny Reen* it's my daughter who's the main character. Then sometime you get captured. A story captures you, and you have no choice but to tell that story. *Ebony Sea* was a story that I had to write, it wasn't particularly that I wanted to write it but had to. It was not an easy story to write. My new book *Hair Math* was like that. You can get consumed with a topic.

DE: Can you say more about *Hair Math*?

IS: I read about Dr. Gloria Gilmer, a mathematician, and her work on African American hairstyles and how mathematical they are. I was hooked. I spent 7 years researching fractals, geometry, hairstyles, I'm also a licensed hair stylist. Now it's a 25 page picture book that came from file cabinets of stuff. My other intellectual property brand is Literacy+Exercise. Literacise connects exercise and stories. Literacise is the Brain, Body, Book connection. Research shows that exercise stimulates the formation of new brain cells and stimulates connections between brain cells. Exercise produces a more effective brain because the brain is given more oxygen and more nutrition from the heart.

DE: When you were a teenager were you an active reader? Where did you get your books from?

IS: It was teachers and librarians who gave me books. They made me into a reader. And Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement really opened things up for African Americans and provided opportunities for kids like me that weren't there before.

DE: What is your best advice to teachers and librarians when choosing books for children?

IS: They must expose children to the world. We are in a global economy; we rank 25th in math and 21st in science internationally out of 30 nations. American kids are competing with many different nations. American kids will be handicapped if they cannot relate to diverse groups of people. From my personal point of view, African American history is American history. There is no African American history separate from American history. Teachers and librarians particularly with no African American students or limited diversity in their schools need to purchase and provide books about African-Americans, Latinos, Muslims, Asians, etc. to students.

DE: What kind of things do you do when you visit a school for a day?

IS: It really varies. I respond to the audience in front of me. For the younger kids, I bring costumes and instruments, and I give props to the kids. We are up and moving the whole time going through 3-4 different books. My performances are Literacise in action. When with 3rd/4th graders and older students it is more

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about talking about the writing process, revision, revision, editing, rejection, failure and success. I talk about the importance of developing resilience, getting a setback but coming back strong.

DE: Do you have any final words for the school librarians here at the MSLA?

IS: I appreciate having the experience to share and be here with the school librarians.

Sarah Smith by Amy Short

Sarah Smith, author of a number of adult fiction books, made her mark in the Young Adult Lit world recently with her haunting book, *The Other Side of Dark*, winner of the 2011 Massachusetts Book Award for Children's/Young Adult Literature. I had the pleasure of meeting and interviewing her during the MSLA conference.

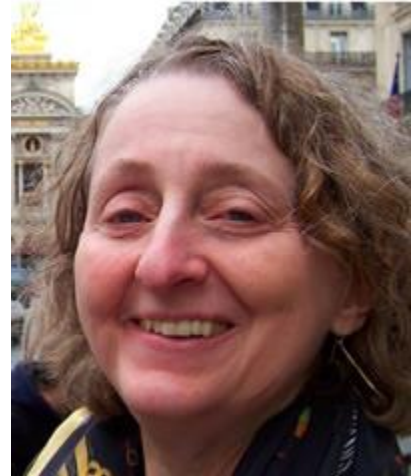
When asked where she came up with ideas for her books, she laughed and told me that her husband had given her a pin once that said, "I do whatever the little voices tell me to do." She said she could relate to that sentiment because that is how her book ideas are formed. "Ideas come to you from anywhere...they go into the unconscious mulch pile and come out completely differently," she explained.

Her inspiration for the characters/plot of *The Other Side of Dark* came from a number of different places. The first whisperings of this story began early on. When she was younger, her grandmother had once given her a picture of a young boy who had vanished. Sarah started asking herself "what if?" questions. She always remembered that picture and has also long been interested in ghosts. Sarah was also intrigued by the story of Pine Bank, the Perkins Estate on Jamaica Pond, Boston, and the real-life mystery of the Perkins Bequest and she has woven elements of this historical mystery into the plot. With her grandchildren in mind, Sarah also wanted to write a book where multiculturalism was present. It was a scary book for her to write, she explained, because she "didn't feel qualified." She had a lot of friends read the drafts of the book to offer feedback and soon realized that to do the story right, she would have to present it from both points of view (Katie's and Law Walker's). Sarah said she was nervous that she would not do a good job, but in the end she decided that she "had to do it," to tell this powerful story. After all, she remarked, "the little voices dared her to."

Heidi Stemple by Cindy Erle

You know what it means to assume, and I assumed that any child of Jane Yolen would naturally want to be an author too. Well I couldn't have been further from the truth. In fact, when she was in school, Heidi Stemple didn't think her writing was as good as others and thought it was "immature." Heidi got her degree in psychology, entered the police academy, and then worked in probation and patrol in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. It wasn't until she was sick during her pregnancy, and bored, that she started writing. Her mother did have a role in that she asked her to help write a story for a book, *Great Writers & Kids Write Spooky Stories*. The story was called "Daffodils", and she found that while writing was difficult, it was enjoyable and allowed her to stay home with her children.

Heidi says her car is her "mobile office", and she juggles her day to day responsibilities by taking her writing with her wherever she is, even on vacation. She believes that writers work all the time, so she writes in



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sections. But, when doing a big project, she finds she has to separate herself and make the time, often waking up early for alone time before she has to get breakfast ready.

When asked where she gets her ideas when starting the writing process, her reply was simply “Everywhere! Sometimes it comes from publishers, and other times it comes from your own curiosity and the things that interest you.” A good example of how influential an interest is in writing is that her father was an ornithologist, she goes owling, her mother wrote *Owl Moon*, and her brother photographs birds for books of his mother’s poems.” When she finds she’s interested in a topic, she will immerse herself in it and buy all the books on the topic!

Heidi herself has always been a very avid reader, and she says, “One book changed the direction of her life; S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders*.” It actually made her choose her career, wanting to be a gang officer. She did borrow books from the library as a teenager, but often she’d, “...take out a book, read it, then go buy it!” She believes that, “The librarian makes the library...if they know the books, they can match them up with the reader.”

Heidi’s advice for young writers is to, “Read, and when done, read some more. That way you find out the things you don’t like!” She believes that a book is about the story, and if you want to tell a good story, you have to know what you like and don’t like. Once you find out what that is, the story could come out as a book, poem, etc. “Write for yourself...relationships with the audience comes later.”

“Everyone supports me!” Heidi has lots of support from her kids. They give her space, the space she needs to work. There is also tremendous support for writers in Western Massachusetts, because there are lots of writers who live there. She used to think it was a very solitary place, but now she feels lucky to be in such a wonderful, big, connected community.

When Heidi visits a school, she heads straight to the library and looks at the artwork of the kids. She loves to interact with the students and make it casual, so she likes to have lunch with them. Where she lives now, everyone knows an author, or is related to one. However, in the places she visits, this is not the case. “Kids don’t often get to know an author” so she likes to make the authors approachable. Heidi keeps it real, and tells the kids that, “My job is similar to a student.” Publishers are her teachers, she gets red marks and doesn’t get it all right from the beginning!

Tui Sutherland by Devika Muruga

Tui T. Sutherland is one of four authors who writes the bestselling animal fantasy *Warriors and Seekers* books under the name Erin Hunter. Her her most recent titles in the series *Seekers Book One: The Quest Begins* and *Seekers Book Three: Smoke Mountain*. Imagine my surprise when Tui revealed that she is the author of the *Seeker* Series.

DM: How did you become interested in writing?

TS: I used to read a lot and started writing in high school and then college. After college I went to work as an editor for Harper Collins Publishing Company. I continued to write but after working and editing some of the *Warrior* series books, I decided to write my



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own books.

DM: How many books have you published?

TS: Big smile! I don't have all of them here. I have many books as I write under different names. *Avatars* series, *Mo and Ella*, *Glitter Tattoo Books*, *Seekers* series, *Pet Troubles* series, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Legends of the Brethren Court*, *Pirates of the Caribbean Movie Storybook*.

DM: What would you say to youngsters who want to become an author?

TS: I'd say the same thing every author does: read read read and write write write! The more you write, the better you'll get. Make sure you're writing because you love to write, not just to get published. Finally, if you can eventually get a job or an internship in the publishing world, it'll give you great connections and, more importantly, a really helpful understanding of the whole publishing process. I think my years as an editor were incredibly useful in teaching me to be patient and persistent about my writing goals! And I'd also say a lot of luck! You can do it!

DM: Thank you very much Tui for taking the time to chat with me. She is a gracious, generous and very talented writer. I highly recommend you to check out her website <http://www.tuibooks.com/> for more information.

2012 Bookmark Contest Winners

The Massachusetts State House was the stage for the 2012 Awards Ceremony for the MSLA Bookmark Contest. Student artists, their achievements.



WINNERS:

Division 1: Kevin Cavanaugh, Grade 4, Center School, Hopkinton. His School Librarian is Susan Mello.

Division 2: Vincent Canciello, Grade 4, Job Lane School, Bedford. His School Librarian is Linda Coviello

Division 3: Emily Sollecito, Grade 4, Job Lane School, Bedford. Her School Librarian is Linda Coviello

Division 4: Dasol Lee, Grade 7, Canton Middle School, Canton. Her School Librarian is Nancy Stockwell-Alper

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DIVISION 1:

Honorable Mention: Mac eline Ki
Grade 1 Bridge Elementary, Lexin
Her School Librarian is Lynnette A

Winner: Kevin Cavanaugh , Grade
Center School, Hopkinton. His Sch
Librarian is Susan Mello.

Honorable Mention: Mecha Mor
Grade 1 Bridge Elementary, Lexin
Her School Librarian is Lynnette A



DIVISION 2:

Honorable Mention: Emily Carlso
Grade 3 Joseph Martin Elementar
North Attleboro. Her School Libra
Tricia Svendsen.

Honorable Mention: Shana
Wolckenharr, Grade 3 Jo Lane S
Bedford. Her School Librarian is L
Coviello.

Winner: Vincent Cancelli, Grade
Lane School, Bedford. His School
Librarian is Linda Coviello



DIVISION 3:

Honorable Mention: Audrey Gall
Grade 5 Bancroft Elementary, And
Her School Librarian is Nancy Sno

Honorable Mention: Wei in Berke
Grade 5 Oakdale School, Dedham
School Librarian is Meghan Nels.

Winner: Emily Sollecito, Grade 4
Lane School, Bedford. Her School
Librarian is Linda Coviello



DIVISION 4:

Honorable Mention: Felicia Alice, Grade 7 Overlook School, Ashburn. Her School Librarian is Julie Farrel.

Winner: Dasol Lee, Grade 7 Galvin Middle School, Canton. Her School Librarian is Nancy Stockwell-Alper.

Honorable Mention: Marissa Nos, Grade 9 Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School. School Librarian is Pamela Mark.

Goldin Awards: Recognition for School Librarians

On April 26, 2012, the Goldin Foundation awarded the "Education Award" to five area teachers. Two MSLA members, **Joanne Schmidt**, school librarian at Medfield High School, and **Ann Perham**, school librarian at



Needham High School, were among the five honorees.

Educator Forum panel L-R: Christopher Martell, Framingham High; Lowell Mazie, Framingham High School; Ann Perham, Needham High School; Debra Pinto, Hopkinton Middle School; Joanne Schmidt, Medfield High School.

This is an excerpt of the April 28th press release from the Goldin Foundation:

The Goldin Foundation for Excellence in Education is a non-profit organization that was established in 1990 to recognize "unsung heroes" in education for their excellence, expertise, and demonstrable achievement in education. Initially, the foundation served fourteen school systems represented by The Education Cooperative (TEC) in metro-west Boston. It has since expanded to include school systems served by the Education Collaborative of Greater Boston (EDCO) and other school districts in California and Texas.

Excellence in Education awards are given to any persons working directly with students, teachers, or other support staff within the school or community. Individuals are nominated by their fellow teachers, administrators, parents and other members of the community. Awards are



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decided by an Advisory Board comprised of previous Goldin Foundation award recipients. Central to the Goldin Foundation's process are: the Educators Forum, a time when recipients, nominators, and community members gather together at one of the schools to present and reflect on their projects and experiences inside and outside of the classroom; internal recognition and support that occur within a given school and local community; professional development; and networking with current teachers, college students preparing to be teachers, and industry representatives.

Ultimately, students are the recipients of the instruction and personal connections by outstanding educators. According to Harriet Goldin, president and founder of the organization, "It is the Goldin Foundation's belief that educators play a vital role in society in supporting young people's growth and preparing them to be adaptable, flexible, creative, and responsive to future societal changes. Our goals are to foster the respect for appreciation of educators, seek the retention of outstanding educators, and attract dynamic, intelligent, and creative future educators." For additional information, refer to the website: www.goldinfoundation.org

ANN PERHAM

Here is the text of Ann's speech:

What an amazing honor!

When I learned that I had been named a winner of the Goldin Education Award, I had no words. It launched me into a very reflective mode: thinking about my path in education, the role my parents played, my responsibility as a parent and teacher, being a role model, about choices I have made in spending my time and energy, about my passions in life.

It wasn't until this past Saturday afternoon that my ideas crystallized. I am a typical teacher in that when I am not in school, I am working from home....evenings, weekends and yes, during vacations. It was a day that I had to go into school in order to be ready for Monday and the startup following the spring break. I talked with my daughter Lindsay on the way home and was telling her that since January, it's been a "perfect storm" of projects and events and that I had been very busy during vacation. Without missing a beat, she laughed and said, "Mom, it would be weird any other way."

I thought about the Mom-Lecture that my kids could recite by heart, my lecture on choices: choosing friends, being involved, making your own decisions, taking pride in what you decide to do. Now, I am reflecting on my own choices.

RIGHT: Judi Paradis, MSLA President-Elect; Ann Perham, Goldin Award Recipient; Kathy Lowe, MSLA Executive Director

Yes, it IS about choice, choosing how to spend the one commodity we all have: TIME. It's the most precious

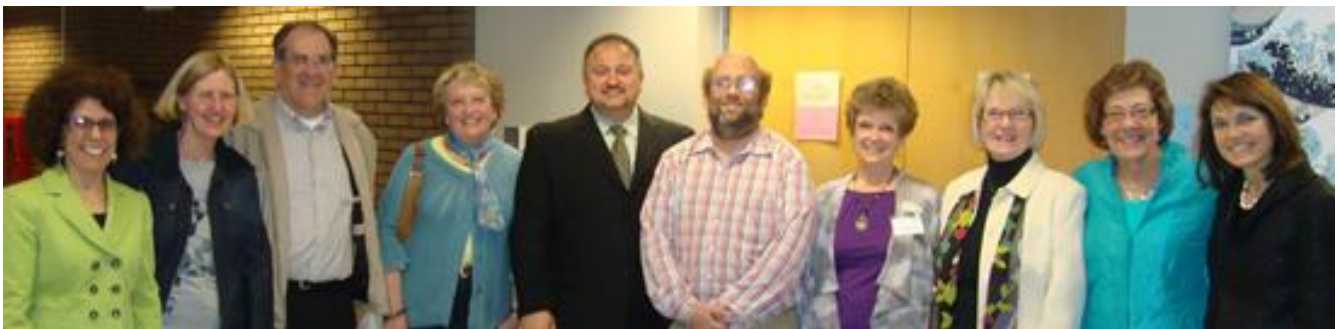


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thing that we have and our choices need to reflect our passions. We don't have the luxury of complete freedom of choice, because life presents its own realities. It's the decisions we make within the confines of reality that define us. Some things, life decides for us as chance or happenstance. But no matter the path that we are on, we should infuse passion into what we do.

I commend Harriet Goldin and the Goldin Foundation for her passion for excellence in education. We are seeing tonite the evidence of her passion. She believes that in order for students to have the best education possible, we need to have the best teachers. The Goldin Awards are Harriet's choice, to cultivate excellence in educators.

I thank my lucky stars that Linda Conneely chose me in 2000 to be the school librarian at Needham High School. Needham pioneered the development of standards for school libraries and instructional technology under Linda's leadership as Director of Libraries and Technology. But the stark realization hit me soon after I started in Needham....the job that I expected to do was not the job that the students and teachers expected me to do. My vision of a library program and collaboratively taught lessons was not theirs. Linda advised me to work "one teacher at a time" and to be patient. Change was not easy but it did happen. It was my good fortune to end up in a system that values school libraries as essential to the success of our students. Having a director was key to protecting the program in the face of some very scary financial times. I had been in Needham for six years when the new building project was approved. Thanks to Linda, I was able to work closely with the architects to design a library that would work with our program. Talk about choices!



NEEDHAM EDUCATORS: Deb Gammerman, Director of Technology and Innovation; Margie Modena, retired Instructional Technology; Jim Modena, retired Instructional Technology; Linda Conneely, retired Director of Technology and Media; Dr. Jonathan Pizzi, Needham High School Principal; Ann Perham, School Librarian; Jeanne Pileski, Library Teaching Assistant; Susan Duncan, retired Director of Social Studies; Freddie Kay, League of Women Voters. Missing from picture: Samantha Bookston, Instructional Technology; Char Sidell, School Librarian and Dr. Dan Gutekanst, Superintendent of Schools.

I have a terrific staff that has perfected the fine arts of multi-tasking and flexibility. They are positive and welcoming and can take a large share of the credit for the Library's being a busy place. Without Jeanne, Susan and Michele, I would not be able to collaborate with teachers and work with students. Instead of being a classroom, the library would become a warehouse for books and a cushy study hall conveniently furnished with computers and printers.

To be clear, the Needham High Library is NOT a perfect program; there is absolutely room for improvement. The entire world of school libraries is constantly changing and I am constantly prioritizing and making choices based on educational needs and budget realities.

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But, I confess, I do have the BEST job in the world.

The Needham High Library is usually busy, it's often unpredictable and it's never routine. It's absolutely magic when a class begins their Sophomore Archetype project and they are pouring through the reference section and scouring the stacks for their resources. I can't help but smile when four students sitting at a table hardly have room for their resource books and their laptops. I work with the teachers to have their students brainstorm keywords and do a "shopping list" of books for their topic; I love seeing freshmen clutching their shopping list and very seriously hunting down the books, discovering and being excited with their finds. To see the look of accomplishment on the face of a junior as he staples his 20 page Junior Research Paper....to witness a sophomore talking with the National History Day judges and confidently explaining her exhibit. I enjoy having the Library alive with classes and celebrate that I've had a role in working with the teachers to make their projects rich with the skills of information and technology literacy. These are skills that are not in textbooks, but are essential for thriving in college and in the work world. The landscape of education is being re-shaped as we speak with the Common Core standards. There is absolutely a role for school librarians in the inclusion of research strategies and information texts.

Yes, I have the best job in the world because I am appreciated. When I read the letters of support in my nomination file written by teachers, administrators, a parent and a student, I didn't know what to say. As a school librarian, I work with so many students and staff and it's not about ME, but rather about what I can do to support them in completing a project, designing a lesson, or finding resources. School Libraries, staffed with credentialed school librarians, are classrooms where we teach the critical skills of technology and information literacy.

I could have the best resources known to education, but if the classes don't use the Library, it is only a collection of bookshelves. The NHS Social Studies department has the distinction of being the most frequent flyer in the NHS Library. They require a project each term and projects involving research, creativity and critical thinking make the Library a natural resource. For me in the Library, here is an opportunity for the natural infusion of information skills. A huge thanks goes to Susan Duncan, now retired Social Studies Department head who worked closely with me. She was instrumental in helping to develop the Virtual Library boasting 1500+ ebooks, available 24/7. Under her leadership, we developed a "freshman orientation" project that is within the curriculum – not an extra. The National History Day project, competition and museum is a rite of passage for our sophomores, truly a celebration of student critical thinking and creativity.

But the biggest choice I have made in my life is to be a parent. After teaching high school social studies for 9 years, I began my second career and I was employed full-time for 13 years with the job title of Mom. I have no regrets about the choices I made in being at home and nurturing our five children, but I still sought out ways to be involved. Looking back, I see that my passions were directly tied to my priorities: the golf game was long gone; I started a babysitting co-op; I founded a dining group called "Pampered Palates;" I worked year round on the Christmas Room for the church fair; I was active in school volunteer work; I played a role in starting a daycare center at my church and was on the Board of Directors. My husband Brad was athletic director at Roxbury Latin and worked six days a week, so I took the Perham Cheering Section to lots of games. It was the best way I knew to stay involved as a family. Again, I loved being busy and I was conscious of the added dimension of being a role model for my children.

In 1995, I came to the realization that unless I recertified I would lose my teaching license. My daughter Abby was entering high school and the twins, Chelsey and Lindsay were not far behind in middle school. Hannah

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was still in elementary school and Ross was only 2½. My going back to teaching was key to their going to college.

In the space of two weeks, I had a teaching job as a school librarian. I chose to take classes to close the gap in my professional skills; the Internet had burst upon the educational scene and I was determined to be on top of the wave. I reminded myself that I was a good role model for my children as a working mother and graduate student. This was a tough juggling act and I found that I had to cut back on my volunteer work at church and in the schools. Yes, I felt very guilty, but it reality.

Fast forward to a defining moment. It was 1998 and I was at Medfield High School when I received a phone call asking me to be on the Executive Board of the Massachusetts School Library Association. I asked for time to think about it. I hung up, turned to my assistant and said, "How can I do this?" Without hesitating, she shot right back, "How CAN'T you?" She believed in me and knew how important it was to contribute to my profession and [again] to be that role model for my children. I took the position and have never left the MSLA board. I am passionate about school libraries and have devoted much of my time to the advocacy and public relations.

Outside the Library, I have looked for opportunities to get involved in extracurricular activities at Needham High. I believe that getting to know the students in a non-classroom setting is key to fulfillment as an educator. We aim to educate the whole student, which means far more than textbooks. I celebrate the role that community service, sports, drama, school government and clubs play in developing the students' leadership, and character. I'm the school liaison for "Make a Statement Day" working collaboratively with the Needham Youth Services, and "Take Back the Night," working with the Domestic Violence Action Committee. This year, my role as the National Honor Society advisor has taken a tremendous amount of collaborative work with our principal Jonathan Pizzi and the Faculty Committee; I am proud and hopeful of the new direction.

I look forward to my daily meeting with my Mentor Homeroom students – here are 18 students with whom I have a very unique relationship. I have chosen to put as much enthusiasm and creativity into my homeroom; it is my favorite time of the day.

Teaching and parenting are similar in many ways. We are in the position to shape the lives of the next generation, to be role models and to influence their choices. I tell my children and my students that it is our CHOICES that define us. It is these decisions we make in the face of life's challenges that distinguish who we are and what values we hold.

To be given an award for doing what I am passionate about is a celebration and I thank all of you who wrote letters and those who have come to support me. It is a tremendous honor and I am humbled by your praise.

JOANNE SCHMIDT

Here is the text of Joann's speech:

I am truly humbled to be here. I've attended this event in previous years, been inspired, and actually "borrowed" an idea or two to use at Medfield High School. I don't see myself in the same league as the other honorees tonight, but I will describe one popular program from my library, a program that I am proud.

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CONGRATULATING JOANNE SCHMIDT on her Goldin Award: Harriet Goldin, Director of the Goldin Foundation; Gail Duffy, Medfield High School.

Before I get into that description there are some thank yous I need to make. Much of the library's success for which I get credit is due to the library aides. They work hard to make our library a welcoming and helpful place every day, but especially during Café Read-a-Latte. I also need to thank teachers at MHS and the administrators of Medfield Public Schools. They are always supportive and understanding. They get school libraries. They allow me to try new things. They allow me to apply for grants to fund new technology toys used to improve the library program. Lastly, I need to thank Ann Perham, my predecessor at MHS and a fellow honoree tonight. She left MHS the foundations of a good program (staff, budget, collections, web page.) She also serves as a role model for me and many teacher librarians across the state. She's a leader in our state association and her work has inspired me to do more work outside MHS. I'll be one of 3 school librarians serving as an advisor to the Massachusetts Library System's Online Content Committee. I'm hoping to positively impact what online content the state will provide and how it will be delivered to libraries across the state.



Online content could be the segue way to the heart of my speech. Libraries and technologies are so linked today. I love technology, but tonight I'm talking about a program that supports reading .

Medfield High's Café Read-a-Latte, is about encouraging a love of reading. We want the YA around us to read for pleasure. We've been holding the Café for nine years. We have data about the success of this program.

Data driven decision making is the first of many buzzwords my speech contains - just one of those buzzwords tossed around schools and libraries today: 21st century skills, collaborative partnerships, multiple literacies, inquiry based learning. There are too many buzzwords to keep track of, but I'll try to highlight the best practices or trends that the café embodies.

A little history:

Nine years ago, former English teacher colleague approached me with the name and description of a program she'd been part of in another district. I apologize to anyone here from that district. I reacted to the suggestion of bringing the Café to Medfield with some dread. Not only was I a third year teacher still working hard to keep afloat, I didn't know how to make lattes.

Year one, we set up a small table next to the circulation desk. All work by two LMC staff. We poured lots of coffee and talked about many books. Lesson learned: It's okay to start small.

In nine years the program has evolved. We try to improve it each year, but the fundamentals have remained. Every student gets a chance to visit the café (library) at least once during the week with their required English class. We celebrate as close to National Education Association's Read Across America program, as possible. For those of you who don't know Read Across America, according to the NEA webpage, it is an "annual

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reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading on March 2, the birthday of beloved children's author Dr. Seuss." Guest readers in classrooms is a common celebration.

The NEA believes that "motivating children to read is an important factor in student achievement and creating lifelong successful readers. Research has shown that children who are motivated and spend more time reading do better in school" and on standardized tests.

So, for one week each year we transform the library into a café. Picture Starbucks inside Barnes and Noble. It sounds simple. We sell drinks and snacks and display books in way that helps market them: cool covers facing outward, organized by interesting themes instead of shelving books alphabetically by the author's last name with only spines showing. Some of our most popular themes:

- Teachers picks – featuring pictures of teachers posing with their favorite reads
- Don't judge a book by its movie If you liked Hunger Games (INSERT YEAR'S MOST POPULAR TITLE), try these...
- Banned books
- Own your own freak
- Books that won't make you blush

Café Read-a-Latte is a simple idea that has become part of MHS culture. As the program has grown, so has the amount of work it takes to organize. Organizing starts one to two months before, paperwork (scheduling, soliciting donations, tracking donors, and expenses and income, publicity) is hard, but the Café involves physical work, too. Do you know how heavy milk for 1,000 cups of coffee is? Now add cream cheese for 1,000 bagels and bagels and juice and donuts – so many donuts - think carrying boxes of a dozen donuts 12 at a time.

Scheduling: Scheduling classes and volunteers and donors requires collaboration and teamwork- more buzzwords. Collaboration with the English teachers is key without them the café wouldn't be possible and all my colleagues are so eager to help, the team work is what makes it easy to create Café Read-a-Latte.

Parent volunteers have taken a huge burden off staff. Parents serve coffee, collect money, and donate baked goods. They have drastically cutting our costs, increasing profits. Local businesses donate supplies and baked goods. Working with parents and donor develops family and community relations. NEASC and Medfield have goals to develop these partnerships.

The Café is a successful fundraiser with proceeds being used to improve collections. In the past, profits have mostly been used for current fiction, but this year's \$1,800 will be used to load our new Kindles with books. We got the Kindles through a grant and my dream is that every student who requests a book, will be able to walk out of the library that same period with that book – in some format. I also want to start a book club using the Kindles.

From year one, the café has grown each year. We are always busy, but that week, we have twice as many visitors and book check outs as a normal week.

Four years ago, we added a blog. Find it at readalatte.blogspot.com. Three years ago we began surveying all students and teachers about library services during the Café. VoiceThreads were added two years ago and

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last year we added podcasts featuring students discussing their favorite books and authors. Even an event about reading can integrate technology – another buzzword. This year we added a visual literacies game. It was very popular with the students and a way to incorporate multiple literacies – another buzzword.

A word about assessments (another buzzword): We are beginning to use the data collected over the last 3 years to improve our programs. This year the survey asked one open ended question: “If you could change one thing about the MHS library what would it be?” The majority of students took the time to write “nothing” and a compliment, but some did request in writing that they wanted the café to last longer or be a weekly or monthly event- a sign of our success.

Café Read-A-Latte has become part of culture at MHS. From the first notice I send to teachers each year, I feel a positive shift in the mood of our building. There’s something fun to look forward to. Students say it’s their favorite week of the year and ask why we can’t do it all the time. Teachers see it as a harbinger of spring – we are close to April vacation and that’s close to the end of the year.

With students scheduled every minute of a 7 period day, we hope that providing a chance for them to sit and relax with a cup of coffee or tea and a good book will encourage them to always "read a latte."

California Campaign for Strong School Libraries



by Judi Paradis

The California Campaign for Strong School Libraries was a standout presentation at the AASL Midwinter Meeting in Dallas this year. This advocacy campaign organized by the California School Library Association (CSLA) offered a number of ideas that could be replicated in other states looking to promote school library programs.

CSLA convinced an advertising agency to create an advertising campaign for school libraries in their state as a pro-bono project. The agency helped CSLA to develop a logo and slogans that they use consistently in their outreach to decision makers, parents, students, and colleagues. The slogan “Strong School Libraries Build Strong Students” is now used throughout the state.

CSLA members used these materials to develop a strong advocacy plan with several components:

- An advocacy website with materials that can be easily used by school librarians and their supporters

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- A foundation that can fund local advocacy initiatives
- An ongoing advocacy campaign targeting state decision makers

The Strong School Libraries website <http://librarycampaign.csla.net> is designed to be used by anyone interested in supporting California school libraries. It is clearly organized and easy to navigate with links to data, a page of frequently asked questions, and information about the campaign. A blog linked to the site provides updates about advocacy initiatives and information about other libraries. The website can be used to promote school library programs in the state.

Perhaps the most innovative aspect of the CSLA campaign is the formation of a foundation to provide financial support for advocacy efforts. CSLA connected with several local children's book illustrators and asked them to donate artwork in support of school library programs. These illustrations are then placed on mugs, T-shirts, note cards, etc. which are sold on the internet to raise funds: <http://www.cafepress.com/csla> The group also recruits teacher and parent supporters to become a Friend of the CSLA for a year. This builds a base of supporters and also provides another income stream. CSLA members said that funds raised through the Strong School Libraries campaign are then used to offer scholarships to members who develop outreach projects.

CSLA places great value on funding projects that are innovative—such as a recent effort to place signs on busses and taxis in Sacramento state legislators around the city. They also noted that these items become great advocacy tools themselves, presenting school administrators, legislators, and other decision-makers with mugs or T-shirts with Strong School Libraries logos on them when they see them in public.

The Strong School Libraries campaign is a major focus of the CSLA, and they described some of the ongoing initiatives they are supporting. They reported that they are constantly on the lookout for discussions about statewide educational efforts that could be initiated or supported by school libraries, and they encourage members and supporters to write letters explaining the role librarians play in education.

CSLA has developed brochures that parents can use to evaluate their own school library programs to determine whether they have a credentialed librarian. They noted that parents often assume that a person in a library must be a librarian—and parents become more supportive when they see what their children are missing. They also have materials that can be downloaded and adapted for presentation to school boards so that CSLA members and supporters can describe the impact of a strong school library program to local decision makers.

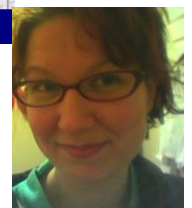
The Strong School Library Campaign relies on growing leadership by targeting MLIS students and offering them internships. They work closely with legislators and foster relationships with the aides to legislators who work on education issues. They recommended that the Congressional and local legislative body to find out who has supported library legislation such as the SKILLS Act. Go to those people and get them on board your campaign.

MSLA members attending the AASL Midwinter meeting agreed that there was much to be learned from California, and look forward to implementing these ideas.

Web Seal of Excellence: Lincoln Sudbury High School



Imagine the library of your dreams—a fantastic space for resources, researchers, readers, and roamers; an inviting, exciting, user-friendly place designed specifically for your patrons' needs. Well, you can have that dream space on the Web, so why not take



advantage of it?

Creating our website was a collaborative process, with each of us generating ideas and discussing their merits and drawbacks. Both of us had some previous experience working on websites—Leslie with the old L-S library website, Paula at her former school library in Chicago. We were fortunate to get summer professional development funding, which enabled us to redesign the [L-S Library site](#) completely. Here are some things we considered and did...and you can too!

DESIGN

Layout Choice 1: Fluid or Fixed Width?

Although many folks start the Web design process by choosing a template, our first design question was, “Should our site be fixed width or fluid width?” Because layout affects website accessibility, this was our first design consideration.

A fixed website has a set width, regardless of the size of the browser window. Designers have more control over what the website looks like, and fixed width sites can be easier to design. However, if one makes the window too narrow or increases text size too much, some text and images are “cut off” so that users must scroll horizontally as well as vertically.

Conversely, when one resizes a window on a fluid width website, the text and images wrap, minimizing the need for horizontal scrolling. Although fluid width sites can be more difficult to design and the designer has less control over how the site is viewed, we felt that ease of use and user control should be our top priorities. We went with a fluid layout (except for the right-hand “Quick Links” column, which does cut off text when the window is resized).



Layout Choice 2: Template

The great thing about templates is that they look professional and reduce the design work. We chose the fluid width [Nautica 2.2 Liquid template by STUDIO7DESIGNS](#) (fluid width layouts are sometimes called “liquid”). We also used some of the coding from [Matthew James Taylor's](#) site to create a third column on some of our web pages. Of course, customizing took some time and experimentation (and frustration), but it was worth it in the long run.

Layout Choice 3: Tabs and Quick Links

The tabs at the top of our site represent the major sections of our website, and allow one to navigate the site efficiently without monopolizing space on the home page. The Quick Links on the right allow users to go deeper into the site with one click (rather than having to “drill down” with multiple clicks). For example, if one wants to see the Book Reviews page, one may directly access it through Quick Links, rather than having to click on the Reading tab first.



CONTENT

Research: Databases

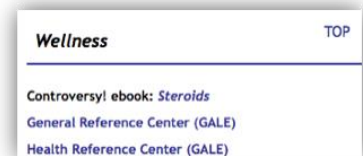
Databases and the library catalog are the core of any school library website. On the old site, databases were listed on a table with notes about the types of resources each offered. This made sense a decade ago when all the databases fit on a single sheet of paper when printed and we put the passwords on the reverse; this was a helpful handout for teachers and students.

The table approach became unwieldy as the menu of databases grew. The Boston Public Library site served as a model

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with its dual pages—one organizing databases by subject and another listing them alphabetically. Though the BPL site employs more advanced coding (active server pages) and library e-card authentication, we were able to create regular HTML pages that function in a similar way and authenticate by IP at school and with passwords from home. Subject area arrangement is conducive to student research and teachers are impressed with the results. We have the flexibility to add a database to a subject area as assignments warrant without adding rows to a table and agonizing over placement.

What makes both of our database pages work well are couple of built-in navigation devices. The [Databases by Subject](#) page is actually quite long, if one scrolls from top to bottom. However, embedded code within the page (using anchors) allows one to jump, for example, from the Wellness link at the top of the page all the way down to the bottom of the page, with a click of the mouse. TOP links to the right of each subject area return one to the top of the page and one can start a completely new search.



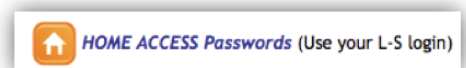
While the Subject page is more frequently used, the [A-Z page](#) is most direct when one wishes to search a single database. On the A-Z page, clicking on a letter in the alphabet links to the list of databases beginning with that letter. Again, it allows a long page with a lot of content to seem like a short page and TOP links provide a way to avoid scrolling laboriously back up the page.



Research: Remote Access

Google is, hands down, the databases' most formidable competitor with its single almighty search box, a treasure trove of hits, and no username/password required! Convincing our students that a million hits may be too much of a good thing and that the quality of information in "premium channel" databases is worth the extra time and effort is a challenge - starting with "the password problem."

Why do some database vendors insist on assigning highly secure, but impossible to remember access codes rather than allow librarians to standardize access across all the library's database subscriptions with a single, easy to remember login? As if school librarians aren't strapped enough teaching electronic research strategies in a relatively brief class period, we must also find efficient ways to disseminate remote access information both in print and electronically. We have found the best solution is to put a PDF copy of our database login info on the school server, which can only be viewed by those with an L-S account. Students and staff are prompted for their school account info and a PDF listing of all the database passwords launches. No more "I lost my password sheet" excuses!



Research: Documentation

Considering the importance of documenting research and the fact that electronic content has multiplied the types of sources one might consult when writing a term paper, it seemed reasonable to devote a special page on our site to bibliographic instruction. [Our Cite It!](#) page offers printable color-coded, properly punctuated cards (that we created) for the most common types of sources. These are a popular choice, especially for those overwhelmed by bibliographical generators. We also keep stacks of them on hand in the library for students to take as needed. In addition, we have links to NoodleBib, EasyBib and a variety of excellent EasyBib handouts, online writing tutorials, and Paper Rater—which has an online proofreader and plagiarism detector!

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Home Page: Library PR & Statistics

It never hurts to have some good PR right on the main page! To encourage those who use our website to come and visit the library and publicize our special displays, we currently have a clip showing [a display of an L-S art teacher's graduate school thesis project](#). Our library goals last year included an emphasis on data collection, so we put these numbers to good use, providing "Library Fast Facts" on the home page of our [library website](#), along with a link to our [School Committee presentation](#). Crank up the volume to experience the full effect!

By the way, if you see those high numbers on our website and wonder how it's possible that our library has that many visitors: Here at L-S, students have free blocks built into their schedules. Many use their time effectively, visiting the library to study, use computers, or do research. We also have many class visits, reflected in these numbers. Speaking of statistics, we use [Google Analytics](#) to track website usage. It's a powerful tool and free. Code pasted into every page tracks many factors – usage over various time periods, the Web browsers used to view your page, site speed, etc., and presents the info in chart format.

Teacher Page: Coming soon ...

We wanted a [Teacher page](#), but did not have concrete plans for it—just some ideas. Nonetheless, we forged ahead, adding the Teacher tab with a "page in progress" warning. We felt that adding the tab before launching the new site was important, so users wouldn't be thrown off by a new tab that suddenly appeared (or worse, never notice the new tab).

The first real content on this page is a link to a Library Resource Guide for English. We hope to add more next year.

Reading Page: Reflecting positive changes in our library

We recently began to emphasize recreational reading more, creating a more appealing display area for new fiction, buying more books for pleasure reading, and starting a Teen Advisory Board to help us select books.

Of course this new focus needed to be extended to our website as well: our [Reading page](#) provides an area for Teen Advisory Board members, links to our book discussion and [book review blogs](#), reading lists, genre specific sites, and instructions for eBook downloading from the public libraries.



HAVE YOU GOT WEBITUDE?

There's no question that this was a major undertaking and we could not have done it during the regular school year. As with any major program changes, there's a learning curve, but we think that the results were worth the work. If you have the opportunity, we encourage you to revisit your website's design and content offerings to see if it is meeting your patrons' current needs. If a new site is in order and you take the time to redesign thoughtfully, we guarantee it will pay dividends with increased usage of both your website and your school library.

Paula Myers & Leslie Kmiec can be contacted at library@lsrhs.net

Web Seal of Excellence: Wayland High School

Connecting with the School Community Through Your Virtual Library

By Erin Dalbec

MSLA Forum: April 2012

Creating an effective library website does not require special coding skills or a big budget-- just time, creativity and motivation.

When I first started working at Wayland High School, we had a static website that was text heavy; it was unappealing and not user-friendly. The site was designed by a webmaster outside of the school and I did not have editing rights. I knew I would be able to have some control over our virtual presence so I decided to create a website over summer break-- I would have rather been relaxing on the sand, of course. I signed up for a Wikispaces account because wikis are easy to edit and add text, images, widgets, pictures, etc. I was able to get us a free educational site without ads. I would also recommend using Google Blogger as a blogging platform (such as Blogger or WordPress).



There are the obvious things that you want to include on your library's page: your OPAC, databases and links to other resources. I also recommend taking photos of your students and teachers using the library. You can put images up on your website or you can use a slideshow tool such as Picasa or iPhoto. Just like book displays, your website's presence needs to continually change to stay fresh. Change your pictures often and take pictures of your library with no one in it. Showcasing pictures of your library in use will also help to advocate the importance of your library program. One important note: check with your Administration about putting up images of students. Some schools may not give permission.

Adding web 2.0 widgets can also help make your site look more appealing. I use Shelfari to feature our Nook book catalog.



I use Shelfari "bookcase" to feature our Nook book catalog. You could use it to showcase summer reading lists or new books. The great thing about Shelfari is that when you put your cursor on a book it provides a synopsis of the story. I also use a Twitter widget to help publicize library events and promote new books.

Featuring student work on the website strengthens the relationship that students have with the library and it can help build their confidence. An English class at WHS recently did a book trailer project and their work will soon be featured on our website's book recommendation page.

Once you've created your library website you need to start marketing its use to students, faculty and parents. Add the link to your email signature. Ask teachers if they want you to build pathfinders for their research projects-- and add them to the site. Attend a PTO meeting and show parents how to access the site. Ask teachers to add the link to their websites so that students can quickly access our resources. And finally, teach students how to access and use the library site and resources.



Web Seal of Excellence: Hurley Middle, Seekonk



Create an Online Presence for Your School Library!

by Jennifer St. Michel

Having an online presence is a crucial element to my school library program. It is a place where students and teachers can access my library handouts, databases, reading suggestions, research tips, and more! My website has allowed me to extend library services to the school community on a 24/7 basis!

If you are thinking about creating your own library website, here are some things to consider:

Where to host? You may find that your district's site is not flexible enough for your needs. If so, ask for permission to host your site on an external website (such as Teacher Web, EduBlogs, or Weebly for Education). Make sure that you link to this site from the district web page and check any advertising on your chosen website for appropriate content for your students.

Plan your site. Your website is a reflection of you and your school library program, so it is important that your site is organized in a way that best serves your patrons. If it isn't user friendly, your visitors will not return! For example, I listed the subpages that run along the left side of my homepage in descending order of frequency used. (However, I placed the "About My Library" subpage at the top, since it serves as an introduction to my site.)

Showcase the tools you use! I use many web 2.0 tools and have incorporated them within my pages. Visitors are greeted with a Yahoo! avatar, my career day presentation is a Prezi, some of my page headings are Wordles and my library orientation video is done via Go! Animate. My National Library Week page includes a stop motion video of a typical day in the school library as well as a video I created showing some of my statistics regarding my library usage. Videos created by my tech club are included on their project page and a photo slideshow of the library interior is included on the About the Library page. By including these items, you are giving those outside your school community (parents, other SLMS) a better idea of what you are all about! Don't be shy as this is a great chance for you to brag a little!

Reign yourself in. I made the mistake of trying to categorize and link to every great website I encountered from my website. As you can imagine, this became very overwhelming! I decided that keeping it simple was best and now my recommended websites are limited to online databases and e-books only. For current research projects, I do create an electronic pathfinder which contains subject-specific website links. This is manageable for me and has worked out very well for the students!

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Keep it current. Your website will require diligence to keep it up to date. It's a good idea to check your links every so often to ensure that they are not broken. Also, be sure that any document uploaded to your site is the most current version. It is frustrating to your visitors if your site is outdated.

I spent a lot of time getting my site to where it is today, but it was time well spent. My website has become an outreach of my library. It is a place that students can go when they realize that they don't have the necessary library handouts that will help them with their research. It is also a place where teachers can access the resources that I give out in the library so that, even if I am not physically in their classroom, the library presence will be. I hope that these tips will help you get started creating a website for your library.

Working Smarter



By Leslie Schoenherr
Lexington Christian Academy

This is Leslie's final column and she is hanging up the "Help Wanted" sign. Please let Ann Perham know if you would like to step in as editor of the Working Smarter feature. Leslie's final gift is this treasure trove of ideas, compiled in this [WEEBLY](#). Weebly is a great tool for creating online

resources - use that as a "Working Smarter" idea (see page 11)!



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Off the Shelf

Audrey Borus, Editor

Since our last round up, here's what's been on the listserv:

We continue to grapple with **Nooks/Kindles and E-readers**. For example, I just learned that my recent purchase of Follett e-books was a bit misleading. Our sales representative told me that Follett e-books would "work on any platform with a connection to the Web." Yet, in speaking with Susan Saber, Librarian at the Rashi School in Dedham, I learned that in her experience Follett does not work on Kindles or Nooks. Most recently Tara McDonald posted a followup to her queries on Overdrive. Tara found that while there's much interest, not a lot of us are actually using it.

Google docs and permissions On March 14th, Sandy Kelly of Carlisle sent a link to a very [interesting article](#) that appeared in Smart Money "10 Things E-Books Won't Tell You." If you get a chance, you should take a look. Author Kelli B. Grant points out that like the rest of the Web, e-books can be prey to lack of oversight on copyright or "quality control." Grant also points out that the actually borrowing of an item may not be as easy as it seems as first (as many readers of this listserv can attest): titles simply aren't available electronically or are incompatible with hardware.

Queries about **summer reading programs** -- one book, one school vs. varying other ideas; e.g., Tara Draper from Sandwich High reports that her school is implementing a new program in which all faculty/staff "choose their favorite



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book, and a small group of students will meet with them to discuss the book at the beginning of next school year" to Debra Murphy at Essex Agricultural and Technical High School whose students chose from a website of suggested reads she creates and whose assessment can be one of "many options -- works of art depicting their book, sculpture, prologue or epilogues, dioramas... the results were astonishing. Students who never read a book were excited." Laura Gardner from the Dartmouth Middle School wrote that students at her school were given a choice of 25 specific titles and/or 25 authors. Last year, they kept a book journal over the summer, but this year, they'll give book talks, with the hope that students can learn from each other about good books. Ms. Gardner notes that the PTA at her school "bought all the books for our students so every student left for the summer with their chosen book."

Academic Honesty and Copyright: Diane Klaiber of Strugis Charter in Hyannis wrote that her school was reformulating its policy as part of their re-certification process. There were several other messages on this topic, mostly we seem to be looking for wording and standards so if you have a good policy in place, please consider sharing it.

Banned books? Laurie Ann Riley, Library Media Specialist at the Browne & Wright Middle Schools in Chelsea brought to our attention a situation in which administrators called upon her to pull books that might be inciting certain types of behavior. At one point, she was asked to surrender a list of titles checked out by particular students. "I said that I would not give [him] the list because library patrons (even students) have the right to privacy and confidentiality." Kathy Lowe responded with a helpful [compilation of tips from MSLA](#). To me it was a very important reminder of the nature of our role: to guide as well as protect students. Some times that role puts us at odds with administrators.

Another topic that keeps cropping up is **online bibliographic tools**. Erin Dalberg, Library Director at Wayland High posted the results of investigations into the merits of Noodletools and Refworks. Apparently, Noodletools plans to make a number of improvements to its software, including the ability to import database citations. However, librarians agree that online tools really don't take the place of knowing how to write your own citation (and when to cite). To quote Leslie Lomasson, Librarian at Amherst Regional High School, "[students] should be sure to take any classes offered by librarians at their college or university, to save many hours of work later."

Student workers? And finally, this topic piqued my interest: Linda Coviello at the Lt. Job Lane Elementary School in Bedford wrote on March 3rd, that she was considering starting a program at her school. In response, some librarians reported that they have programs in place that work quite well, others not so much. However, all seemed to feel that the experience was worthwhile for the students.

Member News

Nancy Stenberg, Feature Editor

*Put a * Star beside the names of these MSLA members:*

Marcia Bernard , **Valerie Diggs** , **Robin Cicchetti** , **Joanne Schmidt** , **Ann Perham** , **Erin Dalbec** , **Judi Paradis** and **Carrie Tucker** .

* **Marcia Bernard**, Library Teacher at Shutesbury Elementary School has won a \$5000 grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. The federal IMLS/LSTA "A Community of Readers" grant will be used to support struggling and reluctant readers across the school.



The one-year grant combines three strands: an expanded collections of high-interest materials including graphic novels

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and Playaways; creation of a cozy reading area with new furniture to entice students to sit and read awhile; and the development of a Community Reading Partners program. Over 300 new materials have arrived in the library, sparking student interest. In March, the new sofa and chair were purchased and quickly became a popular place to relax with a book. To date, nineteen adult community volunteers have committed to meeting weekly with a student to support their reading. Reading partners meet for 30-minutes each week and spend time in paired reading, discussing books, playing word games or doing reading exercises. Through these initiatives, we hope to see increased skill and interest in reading.

Literacy programming is also included, and will feature an outreach program from the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art on the Whole Book Approach, a hands-on art program, Lola's Fandango, with illustrator Micha Archer, and a year end all-school Community Reading Celebration in June.

Congratulations to our MSLA colleagues * **Valerie Diggs** and * **Robin Cicchetti** on being named "Learning Commons Visionaries for 2012" by the editors of *Teacher Librarian: The Journal for School Library Professionals*. The award is announced in the April 2012 issue of *Teacher Librarian* in which Valerie and Robin's short written contributions are featured along with those of the other co-recipients. In addition, the winners are featured on the cover.

The recipients of the 2012 Teacher Librarian Leadership Awards include: Karen Bonanno, Andrew Churches, Robin Cicchetti, Sydnye Cohen, Valerie Diggs, Vi (Violet) Harada, Lyn Hay, Gwyneth Jones, Carol Koechlin, Sue Kowalski, Michelle Luhtala, Dawn Nelson, Mark Ray, Ross Todd, Joyce Valenza, Linda Waskow, and Tim Wilson.

The Goldin Foundation honors two school librarians at the Educator Forum on April 23, 2012. * **Joanne Schmidt** (Medfield High School) and * **Ann Perham** (Needham High School) were nominated by their colleagues for their "outstanding achievements and contributions in classrooms, school and communities." Joanne and Ann shared their experiences, projects and insights in a panel presentation, along with the three other winners: Christopher Martell (History Teacher, Framingham High School); Lowell Mazie (Director, Mazie Mentoring Program, Framingham High School); Debra Pinto, Physical Education Teacher, Hopkinton Middle School).

Visit the Goldin Foundation website for more information: www.goldinfoundation.org

The MSLA SPOTLIGHT EDITOR is * **Erin Dalbec** (Hurley Middle School, Wayland). She takes over this feature that gives so many MSLA members a very positive "boost."

Congratulations to * **Judi Paradis** who was elected to the position of president elect of MSLA. She will assume her new tasks beginning June 1st.

With the election * **Judi Paradis** as MSLA's president elect, she will not be completing her two-year term as secretary.

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In accordance with the MSLA constitution, president Valerie Diggs has appointed * **Carrie Tucker** to complete the remaining year. Carrie has been the Awards co-chairperson.
