

MSLA Forum: October 2013

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President's Message



Like many of you, I spend a great deal of the summer reflecting on the year that just concluded and planning all manner of changes and improvements for the coming year. It is oddly wonderful to work in a field where this ability to rethink your work happens so consistently and intentionally.

So, since we have this opportunity, let's take it—let's begin this year with some good intentions and do our best to follow through. Here's my list for the coming year, and I hope you find that many of the items I list resonate with you:

Connect and work with teachers! At a workshop this summer, Professor Judi Moreillen suggested that we consider teachers, and not students, to be our primary focus. We all hope to make a strong impact on student achievement, and Moreillen suggested that this is most likely to happen when we work collaboratively with teachers. There are more opportunities for this than ever. The Common Core Standards provide us with an opportunity to share resources and research skills, and to help teachers authentically integrate technology into their teaching. Our new teacher evaluation system provides an excellent opportunity to help teachers meet their goals while we meet ours. In my district last year, teachers HAD to collaborate for one of their goals—how great was that for me!

Develop an advocacy plan! Late spring is too late to hope our principal and other administrators understand and appreciate our work. We need to collect data, share our success stories, have a presence on the web, and join committees. We need to host (or at least attend) legislative breakfasts this year. Amy Bloom is starting an advocacy committee through MSLA this year to focus on how we can be proactive in reaching out to administrators. She'll need help! MSLA's legislative committee, chaired by Julie Farrell and Kendall Boninti also will be looking for help to pass a bill to evaluate the status of school library programs in Massachusetts' public schools.

Keep learning! I get so excited when I talk to colleagues who are developing new skills and expanding what they can offer to their teachers and students. There are some outstanding opportunities for school librarians this year—from our e-book workshop with Chris Harris on September 21 at Concord-Carlisle High School, to the American Association of School Libraries annual conference in Hartford, CT in November. MSLA's annual conference in Hyannis in March is looking to be terrific—focusing on ways librarians can provide support and growth opportunities to school communities in unique and exciting ways. Area directors are also working to set up some educational opportunities at a location near you.

Have Fun! We have a great job. Think about the weird and wonderful things you learn at work every day, the lovely kids you support, the amazing books you read, and the young teachers you mentor. I try to remember every day that I'm incredibly lucky, and that if everyone who comes into the library (or visits my website) is engaged and excited, I'm doing okay—even if the books aren't cataloged just right or the shelving isn't perfect or the email is backed up. Please have some fun.

Judi Paradis, President MSLA

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From the Editors



Welcome to the new school year and another year of the Forum!

First, we'd like to introduce ourselves: we are Alida Hanson (Librarian at Weston High School) and Emily Tersoff (Librarian at Norwell Middle School), the new co-editors of the Forum. While we've been busy learning the ropes this summer, we've also enjoyed getting to learn about the fabulous things our colleagues are doing at other schools. We look forward to working with you (yes, you!) in the future, and while we hope the articles we publish here will be helpful and interesting for

you, we also hope you'll keep us in the back of your mind and consider sharing some of your questions, explorations, and successes over the coming months.



To that end, we're tweaking our format here a little bit. There will be no print issues of the Forum; instead, we plan to make the most of our digital format by opening up submissions to include podcasts, screencasts, videos -- whatever medium you think will best communicate your ideas. You're still welcome to write an article, but if you're more comfortable speaking or if you want to try out a new app or format here's your opportunity! Seeing how others use different media and Web 2.0 tools may also give us ideas for how best to use technology with our students and colleagues.

Finally, we are launching new columns in this issue, and even more will be coming in the January 2014 issue. The columns cover topics ranging from comics to the common core--and almost everything in between. These columns exist because MSLA librarians generously share their expertise, passion and time. We are grateful for their commitment to professional development and MSLA.

The Forum is always looking for content, so if you have an idea for a column, please talk with Emily or Alida and we will help you make it happen. Also, please look at the "Help Wanted" page for Forum positions that still need filling. This is not a "closed shop." When we asked librarians to write columns for the Forum, naturally we asked librarians whom we knew. This resulted in a heavy (almost total) representation from the Metrowest area. We are looking for librarians from other regions to be a part of the Forum. Please step up and make yourselves known! We need you.

Sneak Peek: 2014 MSLA Conference

For many of us school libraries are our "second place" -- the place we go to work, the place aside from our homes where we spend most of our time. The same could be said for our students and colleagues. Certainly we spend a lot of our time focusing on how best to accomplish the work of teaching and learning both within the library itself and through our collaboration with others in the school.

There is, however, another important role our libraries can serve: as a "third place," a place people choose to go to not because it is their home or their workplace but because it is the place where they can engage with others in their communities. As librarians we have a unique opportunity within our schools to create positive, welcoming social environments that foster communication and community. These positive communal spaces can, in turn, provide

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opportunities for interaction and collaboration that would not -- and often could not -- happen in other classrooms.

Come join us for the MSLA 2014 Conference: "Connecting, Creating, Caring: The School Library as a Third Place" where we will share ideas about how to make sure our school libraries offer a place to connect, whether we focus on welcoming specific populations, using technology to reach out through our virtual spaces, or using the connections we make to facilitate teaching and learning.

[Click here to find out more](#) about when, where, and how to join us, as well as more detailed information about panels and presentations.

From the CircDesk

From the Editors: We are excited that Robin Cicchetti is writing a regular column for the Forum. You will be energized by her passion and insight.

By Robin Cicchetti

One of the missions of school librarians is to promote life-long learning. It is a mission I have always taken to heart, and ongoing professional development is the incredible benefit of this career. Conferences, professional networks like #tlchat, the MSLA FB and listserve, blogs, and all the places librarians gather to share, mean that everyday there is something new to learn, some new app to try, and ideas to play with and consider for instruction. For example, today I found out about [Photofunia](#), an app that allows you to insert a photograph into one of the multitude of effects. This will be a fun way to promote the new books from our summer order.



With all this ongoing learning and the day-to-day creation of digital content, instructional materials, and ongoing work on our [LibGuide](#), I consider myself a flexible and fairly skilled learner. That lovely little bit of self-reflection fell to pieces last August when I enrolled in a program at Northeastern University and became a student again. To say I was blown out of the water doesn't even begin to describe the state of sheer hysteria and gut wrenching terror of the experience. Being a student meant I had to navigate the online classrooms and discussion boards of my professors and understand their logic and organization. I had to participate in weekly discussion boards with people from all over the world as we all valiantly tried to make meaning of theory and research studies. It meant working collaboratively in different time zones on projects with people from all levels and areas of education from kindergarten to graduate level professionals. The experience gave me an entirely new appreciation for what my high school students have to deal with in an increasingly digital learning environment. It is hard.

When the classes started last August I had no concept of how to organize my work. Taking two classes at a time, I couldn't even keep them straight. Once I switched my discussion board posts, and each professor nicely emailed me with a caution to be more careful in the future! I nearly died. A year later I still do a lot of "screaming in my head", which is how I refer to the panic that sets in when I don't understand something or am terrified I won't make a deadline. However, I have learned how to organize my work and keep two classes separate, I have learned how to read faster and take more efficient notes, I can now do APA citation with my eyes closed, and my keyboarding has improved! I have also become a student again, engaged deeply in challenging ideas and research, and cycling it all back to my thinking about school libraries.

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This column will share ideas and theories from the academic literature that may help us as we strive to build robust programs that improve student learning. We have seen school library closures and felt the pain of our colleagues as they shared their stories on the MSLA listserv. Tying research to practice is a step that may help all of us change the perceptions of those school administrators who still aren't aware that school libraries improve educational outcomes for all students. We have the power to change these perceptions.

The Northeastern University **Doctor of Education** program is designed for teachers who are interested in learning more about academic research as it pertains to their field and participating in that academic dialog as scholar-practitioners. My focus is on school librarianship and delving deeply into the academic research that seems so distant from the experience of actually being a library teacher working with real students. It is challenging, and I am still screaming-in-my-head, but it is the most rewarding thing I have ever done. Being a student again has taught me more about being a school librarian than I ever anticipated.

Looking Ahead

In the next issue of the Forum: Understanding the Importance of Perceptions

Robin Cicchetti is the librarian at Concord-Carlisle High School.

Einstein's Secret



Albert Einstein said, "I do not teach my students. I try to provide them with the best conditions for learning."

Editors' Note: We are excited that Deborah Cundy Owen is writing a regular feature for the Forum. She is an accomplished blogger, and we will be sure to learn from her insights about teaching and learning.

Daniel Pink: Take your students' perspective to encourage motivated learning

by Deborah Cundy Owen

Blank, vapid stares. Open mouths, flies about ready to buzz in and out. Even though you are working up a sweat with all of your jumping up and down, begging, cajoling, and putting on the most interesting show you can imagine, still... nothing.

Do you ever have days like this? You are a dedicated, hard-working teacher / educator, with an excitement for your topic that you want to share with the learners sitting in front of you. You care about them, and your subject, and you know that if only they will be moved out of their stupor, they too will get excited! But the dog and pony show just isn't working. They have tuned out. You have lost them. It is now a long spiral down into the pit of oblivion and apathy.

Well, this scenario may be an exaggeration (or...not), but all educators have days like this, where you just have to work extra hard to move the students in front of you. Let's face it. You are selling something, and you need to figure out how to get them to buy it. What did you do wrong? According to Dan Pink, *you failed to make the sale.*

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This means that when you stand in front of a classroom of students -- whether they be young children, teenagers, or adults -- your job is to get them to part with resources that are important to them -- their time, attention, and effort -- in return for something that you can offer to make their lives better. This is what you are selling.

In his book, *To Sell is Human: The Surprising Truth about Moving Others*, Dan Pink calls this "non-sales selling", or moving people. Everyone is involved in non-sales selling at least to some extent. Some people do it all the time -- like teachers, for instance, and people in the medical field who want their patients to buy into treatment plans -- and some people do it less frequently. But we all need to know how to convince someone to buy something, even if it is just an idea; their currency is their time.

The key to moving people is to challenge them to do something THEY want to do. Teachers (and by that term, I am not restricting this conversation to teachers in a public school classroom; I mean anyone who has to teach someone to do something!) need to help their students learn new information and also help them find the self-motivation to want to learn it for themselves. Telling your students to learn something "because you have to know this" just doesn't cut it. At least not anymore (if it ever worked). Students need to be self-motivated. That is where non-sales selling comes in.

Make the sale

So what are some of the keys to making the sale? Pink says that instead of the old sales quip, "Always Be Closing", we should work with a new A-B-C:

- Attunement
- Buoyancy
- Clarity

These are attributes for how to be. In addition, there are three ideas for *what to do*:

- Pitch
- Improvise
- Serve

(To learn more about each of these topics in the context of your classroom, check out my website www.EinsteinsSecret.net where you can download an ebook discussing them.)

Words from Dan himself

I had the great fortune to have an email exchange with Daniel Pink earlier this year. (I signed up on his website to receive his periodic emails, and he offered to answer questions about the book for people's newsletters.) One of the questions I asked was about motivation, since he also wrote the equally terrific book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*. I asked, "What advice do you have for students who may be feeling unmotivated by what they are learning in school, to help them find that inner drive?" Dan's reply:

I don't think this is only the responsibility of the students. There's a reason they're often disengaged in the classroom. So I'd look for lessons from the places where they are engaged -- sports teams, theatre, music, and so on. Why are they motivated in these realms? They choose them. These ventures are collaborative. It has a

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connection to the real world -- that is, someone besides the teacher watches the game, the play, the concert. There are clear ways to find out how you're doing -- and path to get better. If the classroom were more like this, students would be more motivated. I'd also recommend that any interested in this question read Carol Dweck's work, which I write about in DRIVE. She and others have drawn the difference between learning goals ("learn to speak French") and performance goals ("Get an A on the French exam"). Learning goals by their nature focus on mastery, which is an important intrinsic motivator. There's a pile of evidence showing that pursuing learning goals can often lead to reaching performance goals -- but the same isn't necessarily true of the reverse.

I also asked Dan, "Of the three qualities of 'being' and the three actions of 'doing' in *To Sell is Human*, which do you think are most applicable to teachers who are trying to move students toward success, not just for today's assignment, but for the long haul? Why do you think teachers should focus on these in particular?" Dan's reply:

Attunement. That's the ability to get out of your own head and see the world from someone else's perspective. It's essential in education for a host of reasons. But the most important reason is that it allows teachers to surface a student's own reasons for doing something. The evidence is clear: When people have their own reasons for doing something or agreeing with you, they believe them more deeply and adhere to them more strongly. The social science research on perspective-taking that I cover in the chapter on Attunement also yields some important lessons for teachers. But the most important is this: Reducing your feelings of power can sharpen your perspective-taking skills and thereby increase your effectiveness. The research shows an inverse relationship between power and accurate perspective-taking. The more power someone feels, the worse his or her perspective-taking skills become. So teachers can draw on the inverse of that lesson. By consciously reducing your feelings of power, you can become more acute at taking the perspective of those you're trying to persuade.

To summarize a bit, motivating students requires that the teacher become attuned to the students' personal interests, and take their perspective. The teacher also needs to provide the kinds of real-world learning experiences that seem relevant to students' lives. This relevancy helps them make personal connections, and increases their intrinsic motivation.

Dan's reference to Dweck's book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* is also important. I read *Mindset* this summer and was blown away by how she describes what is going on in our schools with regard to attitudes about learning. Taken together, the works of these two authors will go a long way toward helping teachers find ways to sell personal motivation to their students.

Finally, I asked Dan if he had any suggestions for us -- students and staff -- to run some trials of our own, to see which work best. His reply:

Throughout the book (*To Sell*) I've included "sample cases" of techniques for improving your ability to move others. I'd page through those and find ones you like. But my guess is that students might really dig the material on pitching -- since they're going to be pitching their ideas, their products, and themselves. I discuss 6 alternatives to the elevator pitch: The one-word pitch, the rhyming pitch, the question pitch, the Twitter pitch, the email subject line pitch, and the Pixar pitch. You can find more information -- and a worksheet -- [here](#).

Works Cited

Dweck, Carol. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Ballantine Books, New York, 2006.

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Pink, Daniel. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. Riverhead Books, New York: 2009.

Pink, Daniel. *To Sell Is Human: The Surprising Truth About Moving Others*. Riverhead Books, New York: 2012.

Deborah Owen is the school librarian at Hudson High School in Hudson, MA. The first part of this article is the opening for an ebook that you can find on her website, www.EinsteinsSecret.net. You can join the ESecret community by signing up for updates at the site, or you can follow Deborah on Twitter: @DeborahCOwen.

Introducing the new column:

Mystery Mentor

In this column we give pairs of librarians--one with many years of experience and one just starting out--an opportunity to compare notes and to ask and answer questions anonymously.



For this first round we've paired two middle school librarians to talk about how they organize and keep track of their collections.

Question Background: My middle school library is currently arranged by Dewey with the fiction filed alphabetically by author and genre spine labels to help kids find specific genres such as historical fiction, mystery, sports, multicultural, etc.

Question: Do you do anything to identify GBLTQ fiction in your library? I am wondering if some type of designation might increase circulation or stifle it? I couldn't find any commercially available labels, but thought of creating some kind rainbow symbol or dot code. Thoughts?

Answer: My middle school is Grades 5-8. The fiction collection is filed the same way as yours is, with spine labels to assist in finding genres. There is no designation for the few LGBTQ titles that there are in our collection. I have found it difficult to find appropriate titles for the age group in our school. Most are geared to high school students. My thought would be to, as you suggest, add a rainbow genre spine label.

Question: Have you genrified your fiction or considered it? Many kids ask for fiction by genre and ELA teachers have genre themed reading units. For now I have made lots of displays, genre book lists and If you liked this, try that... posters, but am wondering if organizing by genre would be the way to go.

Answer: I have considered organizing our fiction collection by genre, which would be a huge undertaking. I also have questions about these blurred lines in genre that are cropping up more and more. [Here is a great article](#) that discusses the whys and hows of genre-fying collections. This is something that we will be discussing this coming school year.

Currently, when we know that students are coming to look for a specific genre, we put those titles on the tops of our bookshelves. I also use our front window to promote specific themes and genres, and have created booklists in our

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Destiny catalog to assist students looking for specific genres.

Question: What types of displays, windows or bulletin boards do you do in your library? Do you have a calendar you follow for setting them up, or just keep something up until the spirit moves you to change it? I feel like sometimes I get too caught up in the "teaching" part of the job and lose track of the "library" part and wonder if some type of master schedule would help keep the library looking fresh and being better run.

Answer: It is difficult to manage all of the aspects of our jobs. I think it does help to have some sort of plan outlined. What I try to do is create a library calendar for special book displays, front window displays and bulletin boards. That way we can keep things fresh, and promote events in a timely manner. We also create book displays that correspond to curriculum that is being taught at a specific time. For example, our 5th graders study the Mayan, Aztec and Incan empires in October, so we highlight those materials we have in the library.

This is a guideline, and by no means written in stone. If we plan a special event with a teacher, we will then use space in the library to promote that event. For example, we have a Mandarin teacher here from China, so we held a Chinese new year event, and highlighted materials we have on the Chinese culture, and decorated our front window to look like a Chinese storefront during the New Year.

Louder Than a Bomb



Original piece from Anita:

<http://anita-emerginghslibrarian.blogspot.com/2013/08/the-power-of-performance-poetry.html>

The Power of Performance Poetry

by Anita Cellucci

Performance poetry provides a way for students to communicate and feel connected to their peers, community, and larger world. It's an art specifically geared towards an audience. The term became popular in the 1980's to describe poetry composed for performance, not print. Teens need to explore areas of creativity in which their voices are validated and celebrated. Poetry Slams offer this opportunity.

My first exposure to a poetry slam happened at my district middle school. The librarian, Linda Kimball, collaborated with English teachers to bring a Poet in Residence to the school during National Poetry Month. It was my first year in the district and I was invited to see the Slam on the last day of the residence week. Students were totally engaged in the performance. I immediately started thinking about how to bring this to my high school students. After speaking with Alex Charalambides, the Poet in Residence, I realized that performance poetry would empower my high school students to find their voices.

My research continued with the resources provided from The Massachusetts Literary Education and Performance Collective (also known as Mass LEAP). MassLEAP brought Louder than a Bomb (LTAB) Teen Poetry Slam Festival to Massachusetts for the first time in 2012. I started tossing the idea around with English teachers and realized that an entire experience would be most beneficial to our high school students. The teacher guides and coach information

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gave me a good idea of how to put this all together. Alex Charalambides from MassLEAP met with us and described what our program could look like. He was willing to be our Poet in Residence in the Spring. All of our planning for the program happened the year before implementation. Now we needed to find funding.

In our district, the Westborough Education Foundation (WEF) offers grants to educators. The Westborough Education Foundation (WEF) is a nonprofit organization of citizens committed to the support of innovative educational programs within the Westborough Public Schools. WEF grants provide initial funding for projects, with the idea that successful programs might later be integrated into the regular school curriculum.

We wrote the grant in March of the previous school year and included the following:

This initiative will be accomplished through bringing the transformative power of the spoken word to students in grades 9-12 through innovative workshops and interdisciplinary activities supported by MassLEAP (Literary Education & Performance) a collaborative with MassPoetry. Students will participate in a series of interactive and performance based seminars and workshops throughout the school year that will culminate in a statewide Teen Poetry Slam Festival at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston.

In school events provided in collaboration with MassLEAP:

- *Poetry Slam 101 session*
- *Poet in Residence intensive workshop*
- *Louder Than a Bomb film screening and discussion*

Eight after-school seminars facilitated by Kathleen Stoker, English teacher and Anita Cellucci, Library Teacher, focusing on the following:

- *Team building*
- *Poetry writing*
- *Performance*

The Grant was approved for \$2680.00 for the 2012-2013 school year--and the 2012-13 program was a resounding success! We promoted the program with posters, website, school, and newspaper announcements and interviews.

Here is our program timeline:

October: The Demonstration Poetry Slam Assembly created an opportunity for conversation about the program and excitement about the poets who shared their creativity. Several students spoke with the poets after the assembly.

October: The after-school event, *Poetry Slam 101*, gave students insight into poetry slam history and the chance to work independently with a slam poet.

February: Approximately 35 students enjoyed *The Louder than A Bomb* film screening. Post-screening conversation revealed that students were eager to share their own thoughts through the creative art of performance poetry. These students worked hard on their poems in afterschool workshops led by me and English teacher Kathy Stoker.



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March: The *Poet in Residence Program* built up excitement. Several English teachers brought their classes into the library during the week-long program to work with Alex Charalambides, our poet-in-residence, in dynamic interactive lessons. Alex was in the library for four full days, seeing classes every period of the day and also for four drop-in sessions after school. Many students sought out Alex for advice about their poetry. Alex gave insightful, positive feedback to each student individually in the after school sessions. Students were engaged, amazed and connected.

May: The Louder Than a Bomb Massachusetts Youth Poetry Slam Festival was held the weekend of May 18 and 19 at the Massachusetts College of Art. We brought a group of 4 students to LTAB held at MassArt. Our team competed individually and as a group. It was a joy to watch the other teams welcome and encourage our newbie students. It was truly a day of community. We all left incredibly lifted by the spirit of the poetry slam experience.

Some of the positive outcomes of the residency:

- Students willingly performed their original poetry during classes and after school.
- One student performed from our new "stage" area in the library allowing her classmates to see another side of her personality.
- Several students stopped our poet in the hallway to show him their latest poems.
- A diverse group of teens came to the after-school sessions.
- We built a solid team to go the the Slam in May

Looking ahead

We were awarded a grant to continue the program in 2013-2014. We plan to do much of the same with more attention at the beginning of the year to building our team. Three of our members from last year will rejoin and promised to bring friends. With the connections we made through the experience, we hope to host our own Poetry Slams and open them up for friendly competition with nearby schools. I hope to see you and your students at a Poetry Slam soon.

Anita Cellucci is the Library teacher at Westborough High School.

Newsflash: Special Exhibit at the New York Public Library!

The ABC of It: Why Children's Books Matter by Laura Larsson

For those of us who love children's literature, there is a special exhibit on display at the New York Public Library now until March 23, 2014.

The New York Public Library describes the show as "an examination of why children's books are important: what and how they teach children, and what they reveal about the societies that produced them. Through a dynamic array of objects and activities, the exhibition celebrates the extraordinary richness, artistry, and diversity of children's literature across cultures and time."

A library colleague and I took the BOLT bus to NYC in July for just \$17 each way and spent 2 hours at the exhibit. We could have stayed much longer!

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Please watch my [Prezi](#) for a peek into the exhibit. What you will see is just a fraction of what is on display. I hope that you make it there--it is an absolutely amazing exhibit!

Works Cited

"The ABC of It: Why Children's Books Matter." *Nypl.org*. The New York Public Library, n.d. Web. 02 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.nypl.org/events/exhibitions/abc-it>>.

Laura Larsson is the Library Teacher at William F. Stanley Elementary School in Waltham, MA

Books That Work

When we find a book that causes excitement, activity, and real change in our communities, we want to tell everyone about it. This new column highlights the special books we love and the work we've done with them.

One Hen, One World

by Laura Larsson

Now and then the events in our lives pull together like the pieces of a puzzle. This is exactly what happened to me recently. This is the story of how one book called *One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference* by Katie Smith Milway united children and adults from different cultures, countries and continents over course of two short weeks.

As a member of the Advisory Panel for the Foundation for Children's Books, I volunteered to introduce one of the guest speakers at our bi-annual *What's New in Children's Literature* workshop last April. Running short on time, I asked the grandmother of one of the students at my school to read through the book *One Hen* and then tell me about it so that I could prepare to introduce the author, Katie Smith Milway at the upcoming workshop. When the grandparent summarized the story for me she told it like a folktale. She was so engaging that I asked her to tell the story to her grandson's class. She became a school celebrity overnight.



The book *One Hen* is a true story about young "[...]Kojo, a poor boy in Ghana, [who] finds a way out of poverty and helps others do the same after he is given a small loan and buys a hen. [The story ...] shows what happens when a little help [small loan] makes a big difference. The final pages of *One Hen* explain the microloan system and include a list of relevant organizations for children to explore. *One Hen* is part of CitizenKid: A collection of books that inform children about the world and inspire them to be better global citizens" (Kids Can Press).

When I introduced Katie Smith Milway, the author of *One Hen*, to the audience at the workshop I presented her with a life-size hen made out of painted resin. It looked so real that the audience feared that it would take flight -- especially since I gave Katie the hen in a box with air holes in it! The author and I became friends and I was invited to meet the real Kojo from the story *One Hen* the next week.

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Kojo had made the long trip from the country of Ghana in Western Africa to speak about *One Hen* at the new, state-of-the-art [Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center](#) in Dorchester, MA. He is in his eighties now and is the much-loved minister of a church with a large following in Ghana. He has successful adult children. He inspired the audience in his gentle, joyful way as he told how one hen made it possible for him to pull his family and eventually his community out of poverty.

The grandmother from my school accompanied me to meet Kojo. In speaking with Kojo she found out that they shared ancestors. She is from Jamaica and the Jamaican people and the people from Ghana are both descended from the Ashanti people.

Author Katie Smith Milway talked about her engaging, interactive website www.onehen.org. It contains flexible curriculum resources for teachers, web-based activities for students, and hands-on projects for two compelling social issues: microfinance and food security.

Library teacher, grandparent, student, school community, author, and book character: we were all pieces of a puzzle pulled together by the magic of the one book *One Hen*.

Works Cited

Kids Can Press. "One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference." *Follett Titlewave*. Follett, n.d. Web. 19 Aug. 2013.

Laura Larsson is the Library Teacher at William F. Stanley Elementary School in Waltham, MA.

At the end of the day, aren't most (if not all) of us librarians because we love books?. Please consider sharing your "books that work" with the rest of us so we can share their power with our communities. Contact [Alida Hanson](#) and she'll share article guidelines with you. We need your participation!

Comics Corner

Emily Tersoff knows comics and kids, and will be generously sharing her expertise with us in every issue of the Forum.

Engaging With Comics

by Emily Tersoff

I love comics. I know not everyone does, and that's fine because different people like different things. I'll bet at least some of your students love comics, though, and we're all familiar with the arguments in favor of comics, whether it's that they appeal to reluctant readers or that the images help support readers in understanding more complex vocabulary.

The question then is: how can we use comics to connect with students and get them actively involved in what they're reading? I hope that by sharing some of my own experiences getting into comics and exploring them with students I can give you a place to start or spark some ideas for new things to try.



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First, I want to talk about getting started with comics. There were two main factors that helped me start to really appreciate comics and get a sense of what I enjoyed as a reader. The first thing that helped me was finding friends who were really into comics: people who read broadly within the medium and who thought about what makes a comic work, but who also knew *me* well enough to suggest which of the "good stuff" I personally would enjoy. Now that I know more I find browsing and reading "Best Comics" lists to be a lot more helpful, but the comics I end up loving are often still the ones I first hear about from friends.

The second factor that helped me get more out of my comics reading was an article I read for my Young Adult Literature class at Simmons. The article is "Graphic Novels 101: Reading Lesson" by Hollis Margaret Rudiger and it was published in *The Horn Book Magazine* in their March-April 2006 issue. (As of my writing it is available through the Gale General OneFile database provided by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and the Massachusetts Library System.)

This article was helpful for me because I'm very much a reader but I'm not much of a visual arts person; I'm not an expert at "reading" pictures the way I am at reading words, but that's exactly what this article teaches. Rudiger actually walks you through how to read two pages of a graphic novel -- pages that have no dialogue or other text except for things like sound effects. Reading the article helped me to think differently about the art in the graphic novels I read and gave me a vocabulary for talking about that art; this in turn led to further insights because I was able to discuss the graphic novels we were reading with my classmates and learn from the things they had noticed that I had missed.

This brings me back to my original question: how do we use comics to engage with students? My answer turned out to be surprisingly simple: start an after-school Comic Book Club.

Norwell Middle School, where I teach, offers faculty members the opportunity to propose and lead after-school clubs and activities, either for six-week periods or for the whole school year. I had led a couple of different activities before, but only small groups of students had signed up; even having discussed the possibility of a Comic Book Club with individual students, I was not prepared for just how many students would be interested.

And when I say "interested," I mean that my main role in running the group seemed to be crowd control, gently reminding students to please use their indoor voices and moderating debates about the relative merits of western comics vs. manga or D.C. vs. Marvel. I mean that students would sometimes bring their homework to Comic Book Club and work on it there rather than have to miss it. I mean that meeting as a group once a week meant that I had even more one-on-one conversations about comics with students than I'd had before.

And I mean that I got an e-mail from one student thanking me for starting the club because she'd always wanted to write comics but hadn't felt like she knew where to start. Having the encouragement of a teacher and other students, and an opportunity to try, made a huge difference for her.

I had to apologize to the students who signed up this past year for the fact that it was only a six-week activity; I hadn't thought of it earlier in the year, I explained, nor had I realized how popular it would be. I promised them that it would be a full-year activity this year, though, and I'm looking forward to seeing how the club grows. As it is we already have boys and girls from all grades. We have students who've read both broadly and deeply in a range of comics styles and we have students who have only read a handful of comics but are interested in finding more.

And while we started developing characters this past year, I'm hoping expanding it into a full-year activity will give us more time to experiment with writing our own comics and making use of some of the great comics-writing apps and

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programs out there. The kids all liked the idea of creating middle-school-aged superheroes (and supervillains) and exploring how being super and saving (or conquering) the world might not be so compatible with getting homework done or participating in extracurricular activities. I for one am looking forward to seeing how they take what they're reading and combine it with their own experiences to make something new.

Emily Tersoff is the librarian at Norwell Middle School.

eBooks eXplained

eXploring eBooks for School Libraries

MSLA Workshop on September 21, 2013 at Concord-Carlisle High School

by Ellen Brandt, Blanchard Middle School, Westford

I started the day confused about ebooks, I ended the day confused about ebooks BUT with a whole new understanding of the challenges and exciting opportunities they present. We're all in this together; vendors, publishers, librarians, educators, consumers. No one has all the answers and No one is getting it exactly right, but lots of people are trying. It's a good time for us to jump in and make sure the voice of K-12 education is well represented in the discussion.

My take-aways from the conference:

- Research is Online! (goodbye Informational Print, been nice to know you).
 - ...but many students still prefer print for fiction and pleasure reading.
- Tablets have taken over the eReader market
 - don't invest in Nooks, Kindles, etc - except maybe for classroom sets.
- Not every title is available in eBook format - and even titles that ARE available in eBook format might not be available in eBook format.
 - PUBLISHERS LIBRARIES in ebook format.
 - Publishers are still trying to figure out how to make a profit in the digital world.
 - Librarians are still trying to get a handle on ownership rights and fair costs in the digital world.
- Rights and rules vary widely depending on publisher, platform and vendor.
 - Vendor rules sometimes contradict the rules of the publishers they represent.
 - Regulations are targeted to individual consumers; library and school use is often unclear.
- Libraries have been demanding 'Ownership' of ebooks, but this is probably a mistake:
 - Leasing is actually a cost effective solution, when you do the math.
 - You can't OWN Digital content anyway (no right of first sale).
- Consortium, Consortium, Consortium
 - ebooks are much more cost effective when purchased by a consortium and shared across multiple libraries.
 - Consortium members contribute money and a wish list of titles. (Collection development by crowd sourcing?)
 - MASSACHUSETTS IS ALREADY PILOTING AN EBOOK CONSORTIUM which will support all types of Libraries!! NIPER project.
- School libraries have our own needs.
 - Unlimited, simultaneous access for curriculum based reference materials.
 - Downloadable books that students without Internet can access at home.
 - All the annual downloads of a single title may happen in a short period of time.
- Databases can be a better choice for informational resources because the content is kept up-to-date.
 - But: Database, pay subscription fee or lose access. eBook: pay once, keep the content.
 - Don't purchase an eBook if the content is available in a database for which you already pay.
- The eBook discussion has been focused on Licensing issues,

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- the next hot topic is "Discovery." (How a patron/consumer 'discovers' ebooks, print books and databases that
- Christopher Harris is very funny
 - and has helped make his school library consortia in rural western New York into a model system of ebook and elearn.

Next steps:

Keep an eye on the Massachusetts Ebook project! If we play this right, our whole state could become a role model for the next parts to succeed. We will need to contribute both money and collection development expertise. We will need to promote the use of school communities to assure that the transition from print to electronic goes smoothly.

Get the ebooks infrastructure in place at our schools. The challenges vary. Each school must determine its own priorities. An elementary school might choose to focus on ebooks that work well with Smart boards. (PebbleGo, TumbleBooks), while a high school's priority might be to supply students with access to download to their own devices. A middle school might choose to start with curriculum-related, simultaneous access nonfiction (especially for popular books with long hold lists).

Last year the librarians in my district successfully campaigned for individual patron accounts for our students. This is an important step. Our next challenge might be to revisit the ban of ereaders and tablets in school - or maybe we should focus first on increasing access to online reference books. Whatever priority we choose, we are moving our schools closer to the future, and that is a good thing.

Photo Credit: Robin Cicchetti

Tech Talk

Editors' Note: Jennifer Dimmick is a power technology user. We are lucky that she is writing a regular column for us. We promise that you will learn something useful from her in every issue of the Forum.

Creating Light-Hearted Signs and Posters For Your Library

by Jennifer Dimmick



I set out to share one fun, easy technology with you for creating colorful, playful signs and posters for your library. My goal was to communicate expectations to students without sounding unfriendly, bossy and hung up on lots of rules: the classic school librarian looking down her nose and over her half glasses while shushing a group of hapless students. Unfortunately, I was unable to accomplish this with just one technology, and frankly it's debatable as to whether I achieved it at all, but at least I learned a lot while trying! What more could a life-long learning librarian ask for? So here is my saga:

- I started by downloading *Comic Life*, a comic-strip maker. I used this tool while at Simmons and found it to be pretty intuitive. Although it's designed to create comic strips, it's also highly flexible for creating fliers, posters, etc.
 - Unfortunately, *Comic Life* is not web-based, nor is it free. You can, however, get a free trial, which I recommend before buying—if you only need to make a few posters, then the trial might be enough time for you.
 - It is compatible with both Macs and PCs, but you have to download the program to use it. Otherwise, for a single user the cost is \$20 for a year for educational accounts. They also have site license-based

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contracts for multiple users.

- I started to play around with *Comic Life* to create a poster and quickly realized that I would have to upload my own images/graphics into the software, as there are no built-in "assets" like clip art and characters to choose from. This got me to wondering how those really cool librarians like Gwyneth Jones ([The Daring Librarian](#)) make their posters, because they always have excellent graphics. A little searching revealed [ToonDoo](#), another comic maker, as the Daring Librarian's tool of choice. This tool is web-based, has a free version, and includes "assets" (i.e., clip art): hurray!
- ToonDoo has lots of built-in assets to choose from, with many ways to customize colors and even the postures and emotions on the characters' faces!
- The one bug I was unable to work around had to do with importing my own images. There is a camera icon that allows you to either select images from the web using a URL or upload them directly from your computer. Once uploaded, you can even edit the images before using them. (This is particularly helpful if you have clip art with a white background that you want to crop out.) Unfortunately, I was never able to find my uploaded and edited images in "my gallery" in order to use them on my created poster. A little searching on the web revealed some helpful videos, but even when I followed the recommended steps I was unable to find my images. Hopefully this issue was unique to me, and you won't find this problem.
- The good thing about using the built-in assets on ToonDoo instead of uploaded images is that you don't have to worry about copyright and attribution!
- To finalize and print my posters I was able to easily download them to my computer and make a few more edits using the Mac Preview application (e.g., removing the header and resizing the image to better fill the page).
- Rather than spending time writing out a ToonDoo tutorial, I've opted to share my created posters with you [here](#) to serve as inspiration. I also recommend YouTube screencast tutorials like [this one](#) to get you going.

Good luck creating your own posters, fliers and comic strips using ToonDoo or ComicLife. I think you'll find it fun!

Jennifer Dimmick is a librarian at Newton South High School.

Learned on Twitter



Do you use Twitter for professional development yet? Read these tweets to see the kinds of things you can learn--then sign up and start experimenting! Our hashtag is #msla. It is not active every day. Let's build it up together!

[[View the story "Learned on Twitter...." on Storify](#)]

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

Don't these jobs look fascinating? If one of them has your name on it, or if you have an idea for another job that taps into your passions, please contact Alida Hanson at alida.hanson@gmail.com. Thank you in advance for your commitment to professional development and to MSLA.

Column Core Column

- Are you actively integrating the Common Core in your work?
- Are you reading a lot about the Common Core?
- Do you believe that librarians have a significant role in bringing the Common Core into their schools?

If you can answer yes to one of these questions, would you consider being the writer or editor for a column about the Common Core? You can write each column yourself or invite colleagues (other librarians or even teachers and administrators in your school) to write articles.

Lesson Plans Column

- Do you use the AASL Lesson Plan Database
- Do you want to get to know the AASL Lesson Plan Database?

If you can answer yes to one of these questions, would you consider being the writer or editor of a column about the AASL Lesson Plan Database?

Primary Sources Column

Would you please help us identify classroom teachers who do outstanding work with primary sources as possible one-time article writers for this new column? We are compiling a list of teachers (or other experts) to invite and need more suggestions.

MSLA Forum Social Media Marketing Manager

We are looking for someone to spend an hour or two every week planning and executing an online marketing campaign for the Forum using Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, etc. A dream job for the right person.