



MSLA FORUM

WINTER 2010

FORUM CO-EDITORS: Patsy Divver & Jan Koleszar
TECHNICAL EDITOR: Ann Perham

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Consider the Coalition (Part II): How Are We Doing?

Gerri Fegan, MSLA President
School Librarian at High Plain Elementary School, Andover

In my August 2009 President's Message for *MSLA Forum*, I discussed the need for meaningful coalitions with our educational partners in Massachusetts. I had no idea that controversies would arise within only a month of that printing that would rock the foundation of our profession and require us to rely on these partners almost immediately. For almost six months, newspapers and other media have asked the question, "Why not have school libraries without books?"

The responses have been logical and passionate, angry and resigned, deliberate and off-the-cuff, but the one thing they all had in common: the role of the school librarian is still essential to instruct students on whatever informational tools they choose. Teachers, parents, administrators, legislators, and the students themselves have declared that school librarians are the keys to understanding how the tools are used successfully. This controversy just might help school librarians more than hurt us. We have always wanted someone *outside* the profession to speak out about the need for vibrant school library programs and now we have it in mass media format.



How has MSLA responded to all the attention? I refer you to Ann Marie Speicher's letter to MSLA Executive Director to Kathy Lowe for MSLA's advocacy activities (pages 4-5).

More examples of MSLA's roadmap of advocacy and collaboration:

- ✚ Christine Steinhauser is creating an advocacy tool that portrays the "day in the life" of the school librarian that will be presented at MLA/MSLA Joint Legislative Day at the State House on March 9th.
- ✚ Kathy Lowe will speak to a group of Massachusetts Superintendents who are members of a committee, Global Studies for the 21st Century. She will explain how AASL Standards benefits students and 21st Century learning.
- ✚ Judi Paradis will once again supervise the Legislative Day events with MLA to address the funding issues surrounding the new Massachusetts budget. We will be targeting the legislative library caucus.
- ✚ The Massachusetts Reading Association will be attending the spring MSLA board meeting to collaborative.
- ✚ I will be attending the Mass. PTA Conference to discuss the parent volunteer situation within our schools.

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- ✚ At my request, Governor Patrick will write an article for the *MSLA Forum* to be “the Champion for Massachusetts School Libraries.”
- ✚ The MSLA Board is analyzing the state of school libraries in Massachusetts using statistics that have been generously provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This is the beginning of a significant coalition with the Department that will open up several possibilities in advocacy.
- ✚ Valerie Diggs and her committee will be working to align the MSLA rubrics for evaluating school library programs with the AASL Standards.
- ✚ I will be attending the Massachusetts Reading Association’s conference to promote the collaborative efforts.
- ✚ MSLA Board members will attend a regional summit on June 5th with the New England School Library Association that will explore each state’s board members’ roles in an effort to share successful programs and to work on solutions to common problems.
- ✚ Sandy Kelly will be organizing a database of coalition partners and contacts so that we can have liaisons on other organizations’ committees.
- ✚ Christine Steinhauser will work with a to-be-named chairperson to develop a database of authors/illustrators who live or perform in Massachusetts. This resource will double as a list of authors/illustrators who advocate for Massachusetts school librarians. MSLA members who seek a performance, lesson, or Skype visit by our supporting authors/illustrators will be able to use this database.

It appears that, with the board hard at work and the membership discussing school libraries in a variety of media, the “wheel of influence” is off to a great start. We have collaboratively worked with no less than nine organizations in only six months that serve as partners in our children’s education. I had hoped that the wheel would meet the road, and that school libraries would be recognized as the thrust behind student success, and I am delighted with the results so far.

We still have a few hurdles to overcome, however. We were all disheartened when President Obama’s FY 2011 Budget Proposal to Congress this month eliminated specific funds for school libraries. In response to this setback for our children’s education, I sent the following response to the President, Senators, Kerry and Brown, and to the Boston Globe urging all stakeholders to remember school libraries in this budget and to protect the “Improving Literacy through School Libraries Program”:

To the Editor:

The President’s FY2011 Budget Proposal to Congress, released on February 1, 2010 includes a \$400 billion investment in education, but eliminates specific funds for school libraries. This contradicts many of the President’s statements issued during his campaign, his State of the Union Address, and especially his proclamation making October 2009 National Information Literacy Month. School librarians in Massachusetts, who have already borne the brunt of fiscal cuts, are wondering why we are hearing a contradictory message when it comes to the President’s goals for education.

In an interview published in the August 2005 issue of *American Libraries*, then Presidential candidate Obama commented:

“That’s what libraries are about. At the moment that we persuade a child, any child, to cross that threshold, that magic threshold into a library, we change their lives forever, for the better. It’s an enormous force for good. . . More than a building that houses books and data, the library represents a window to a larger world, the place where we’ve always come to discover big ideas and profound

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concepts that help move the American story forward and the human story forward. That's the reason why, since ancient antiquity, whenever those who seek power would want to control the human spirit, they have gone after libraries and books."

Does the President's budget proposal continue the former administration's tradition of controlling America's schools and the spirit of its school children? This policy would weaken our nation's schools in ways that are indeterminable. School librarians teach children how to become informed adults, prepare them for careers that haven't been invented yet, instruct them in the process of being able to read, appreciate, evaluate, and utilize everything in print and online. We serve as their mentors when they need to evaluate news that has been filtered through a variety of media. We guide them through the democratic process to become global citizens.

Dr. Beth Fitzsimmons, Chairman of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, revealed findings of a nationwide study in *School Libraries Work* (Scholastic Library Publishing, 2008) that "a critical part of the comprehensive and renewed strategy to ensure that students learn to read and are effective users of information and ideas is the requirement that every school have a school library and that school libraries be staffed by highly qualified, state certified school library media specialists." How can the removal of funding for school libraries be a responsible solution for American education?

Now, more than ever, students across this country deserve school library programs that are vibrant and enduring. The role of the school librarian is even more critical today. Without the expertise of a professional school librarian, there is a danger that students may receive their information isolated, unquestioned and unexamined. School administrators, teachers, parents and students have not supported any efforts to remove school librarians because they appreciate the role of the certified school librarian. When these positions have had to be cut due to fiscal constraints, it has been with regret and a promise to reinstate the programs when funds become available.

The President proclaimed in October, 2009 that:

"In addition to the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, it is equally important that our students are given the tools required to take advantage of the information available to them. The ability to seek, find, and decipher information can be applied to countless life decisions, whether financial, medical, educational, or technical. This month, we dedicate ourselves to increasing information literacy awareness so that all citizens understand its vital importance. An informed and educated citizenry is essential to the functioning of our modern democratic society, and I encourage educational and community institutions across the country to help Americans find and evaluate the information they seek, in all its forms."

How can American schools possibly align themselves with this ideology while being deprived of the funds that will help them accomplish these skills? If school libraries are the hearts of their schools, appreciated by community leaders and families, and the conduits for preparing students for increasing literacy awareness, why is the President considering these budget cuts?

It appears that the President's budget proposal, which will put federal funds out of the reach of the children who need them the most, will also give school administrators carte blanche to eliminate school library programs. Those of us who heard President Obama speak at the America Library Association's Annual Conference in Chicago in 2005 and dared to be "hopefully audacious" are in despair today. Typically, education policy announcements are set in school libraries where legislators poignantly surround themselves with youngsters and library books. If these proposals go through, it will be interesting to see where these "feel good" messages will come from.

It is essential that our nation's lawmakers reject these proposals by the Administration, include school libraries in the education budget, and protect the Improving Literacy through School Libraries Program.

Respectfully,
Geraldine J. Fegan
President, Massachusetts School Library Association

From the Editors: "Now More than EVER – Schools Need SCHOOL LIBRARIANS!"

by Patsy Divver and Jan Koleszar, MSLA Forum Editors

Such was the theme for MSLA Conference 2009 – and so we follow it with the MSLA Forum focus through 2010. The evidence is there – from Ross Todd to Donald Leu, the 21st Century learner needs certified school librarians.

Thus, our Winter issue offers articles about perseverance, prominence, and promise. Change, as in the "Learning Commons" prototype, is the pathway to successful growth. Collaboration, with fellow professional groups and leadership programs, secures our role in education. Continuity of our programs, as demonstrated in the bookmark submissions, proves that we are an integral part of lifelong learning. .



Writing for the Forum....Join the Forum Staff, Earn PDPs

YOU are the way to promote the effectiveness of our school libraries. Share your stories. Tell your tales. Be part of your school and MSLA. Do you enjoy writing? Are you collecting PDPs for the next round of Teacher Licensure? Here is an opportunity for you. MSLA offers PDPs for all articles published in the MSLA Forum. For each published article of 800-1000 words, MSLA awards 2.5 PDPs.

We consider any article that is of interest to MSLA members and that supports our mission. Tell us about your library program, best practices, special projects, etc. Most of us are the only School Librarian at our school; by writing an article, you can share your successes with colleagues who understand and support the profession.

If you find you'd be interested in writing an article or a column, please get in touch. **The deadline to submit articles for the Summer Forum 2010 is Friday, May 7.**

"I feel I am alone in my advocacy"....What is MSLA Doing for Me?

In early February, Ann Marie Speicher (Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School) contacted MSLA Executive Director, Kathy Lowe with a plea for increased advocacy by MSLA. Ann Marie's letter and Kathy's response are reprinted with permission and reflect the continuing concerns we are facing in school libraries today.

2/3/2010

Dear Kathy,

I participated in the Westborough, librarian group workshop in January, where you presented the Standards for the 21st century learner. I enjoyed your presentation and discussion.

I had already downloaded the standards when they came out in the fall. I gave copies to all my supervisors, academic dean, principle and superintendent with a note to please talk with me about them once they had been reviewed. I was also in a meeting with the principle where I referred to them in a discussion about my school librarian role and our school needing to integrate these standards. I don't think he had read them since I got no immediate call for action or change.

I know MSLA and AASL have put together excellent tool kits for advocacy. But these are print materials and I don't think they get read by many administrators. I was wondering if it would be possible for either or both organizations to put together a slide show showcasing the best of our state libraries, i.e. those libraries with learning commons. Perhaps a list with annotations could also be compiled of best practices that librarians teach/do according to grade levels. (elementary/middle/high school) I feel I am alone in my advocacy.

With the recent stimulus money, my administrators purchased computers for two new computer labs. (I was out of that loop) They are talking about putting one of the proposed new labs in the library where there is already one lab. This will take away a space which has been used for small classes, tutoring, individual reading and virtual high school because it is the quietest part of the library. Books also line the walls of this space and will have to somehow

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be squeezed into other bookcases. I have suggested buying more laptops instead of stand alone computers or grouping computers around the library in smaller configurations. (the problem is these computers have already been bought so they have to find a place to put them!)

Since my administrators have not seen other school libraries and libraries that have been turned into learning commons or any updated transformations, they have nothing to compare this library with.

Also, since this is a high school, I have repeatedly discussed the need to prepare out students for college with adequate library/research skills. Do you know if there has ever been a study done, a survey or article written by academic librarians on what prior knowledge or prior library skills a high school graduate should have to be successful in an academic library setting? What skills do the academic librarians wish high school students came in with when they use an academic library? This data might support our cause for exemplary library programs in high schools.

I know middle school librarians and high school librarians always notice the difference between library prepared students and those students whose school did not have a librarian. Since many of use fear for our jobs when schools look for areas to cut, perhaps we need more visual show and tell aides to support what we say and that we can present to administrators and school committees.

I welcome your comments and ideas. Thank you for hearing me out.

Ann Marie Speicher,

School Librarian @Assabet Valley Regional Tech. H.S.

P.S. I was told in the first week in January last year that my library position would be cut 25% due to financial issues in the school. Last October I was told that my position might possibly be reinstated to full time for the following year if there was money. As of this date, I have not been told there would be any change in my position next year and I know they have worked on the budget.



Kathy Lowe's email response to Ann Marie:

Hi Ann Marie,

Thanks for your letter. I shared it with Gerri Fegan, MSLA president. To answer your question about what MSLA is doing/has done regarding getting the word out about what we do - we're currently collecting photos from members that portray "a day in the life" of a school library program that will become a slide show to use for PR purposes. We're also revising the MSLA model school library program rubrics to align with Empowering Learners, the new AASL school library program guidelines. We've had members, including myself, present at the joint MassCUE/MA Superintendent's conference and some presentations about school libraries are being planned for the MTA convention this summer. We've made contact with the MA PTA and shared our "What Parents Should Know About School Libraries" brochure with them. We plan to exhibit at their conference in April. We're meeting this month with members of the executive board of the MA Reading Association to discuss ways of working together more effectively, and plan to exhibit at their conference too. We've met with the Commissioner of Education about the new AASL Standards and the lack of leadership for school libraries in the DESE, resulting in the DESE sharing data with us about school library staffing that is the first step in determining the status of school libraries in the state and hopefully developing a long-range plan for improvement. And of course, we have an ongoing partnership with MLA, most notably our annual joint Legislation Day, where we demonstrate the value of school libraries through our bookmark awards and display and our in-person meetings with legislators.

So, we're doing or very best on many fronts to get our message across and to form coalitions with other organizations. I hope this answers your questions. Please let me know if you'd like more information about any of these initiatives.

Kathy Lowe

MSLA Executive Director

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2009 Conference Wrap-up and Raffle Winners

by Jan Koleszar, Retired School Librarian

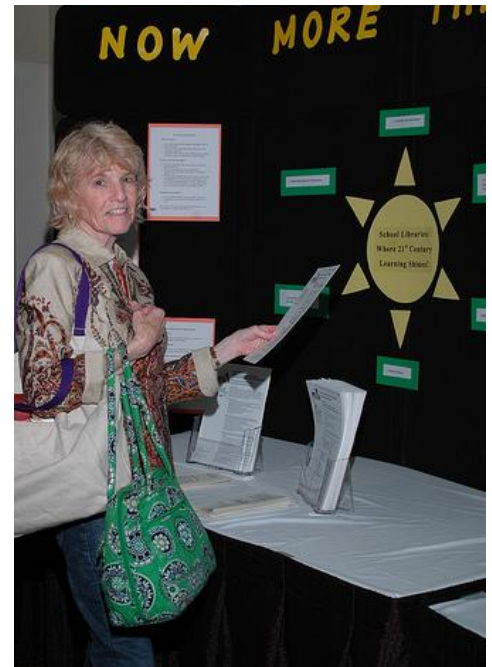
Our conference theme, "Now More Than Ever" continues to be pertinent for 2010. There is no better way to connect and network with colleagues, exhibitors, and presenters, learn new ideas, and obtain PDPs for recertification than going to our MSLA conference. Also, one gets a chance to participate in the raffle drawings which include prizes for schools as well as personal prizes for librarians.

Thank you to all our vendors who participated in our 2009 Conference Raffle, and congratulations to our winners:

Author Fest Book Bag	Leigh Barnes
Barnes and Noble	Karen Miller
Barnes and Noble	Margy O'Donnell
Bound to Stay Books	Kathy Arsenault
Bound to Stay Books	Rachel Keegan-McGlenn
Davidson Titles	Lynda Shoup
Elise Hendrickson	Delaney Ed
Illustrator/Author Signed Tablecloth	Geri Fegan
Ingram	Cynthia Smith
Ingram	Diane McKamy
Magazine Subscription Service	Linda Shea
MSLA Goody Bag	Donna Guerin
MSLA Goody Bag	Jane Urban
MSLA Goody Bag	Katherine May
MSLA Goody bag	Lori Jewett
MSLA Goody Bag	Patricia London
National Archives	Jeanne Marie McCan
National Archives	Martha Paine
Permabound	Laura Woodfin
Purple Umbrella	Leigh Barnes
Scholastic	Sue McHugh
Sebeco Books	Laurie Lingham
Sebeco Books	Margaret Twiss
Silly Willy	Bridget Buckless
World Book	Roberta Barrichelli



AASL President Elect, Nancy Everhart and MSLA President, Gerri Fegan



Debbie Michaud of Fitchburg checks out the MSLA Display

Top Five Reasons to go to a National Conference

by Christine Steinhauser
School Librarian, Coolidge Middle School in Reading

Every year in January I receive my ALA membership renewal notice. I am a procrastinator, so I usually wait until the last minute to renew it, but I always do. Some years I have been tempted to let it slide, but in the end, I do the right thing and send it out. This year I was surprised to discover that I have been a member for 10 years!

This fall I attended my first national conference, AASL in Charlotte, NC. Like most librarians, I am a fan of professional development and I love a good conference. We have heard enough from Jay, Dave and Conan lately, and I thought I would create my own 'Top Five' list of reasons to attend a National conference. So, here it is:



Reason #5: Authors- I had a conversation with Richard Peck about why he seems to have an outhouse in most of his books; it was Most Memorable! There were so many authors to meet at AASL. I was able to collect lots of books for my signed collection, but even more important, was able to connect with Kathleen Brenner Duble, the author who will visit my school later this spring. We chatted and planned a little. Now when she comes, it will feel like we are already colleagues.

Reason #4: Building relationships with your vendors - Budgets are never big enough, so who couldn't use a little help making sure that they are spent wisely. Having a good relationship with a vendor can help with that. They will be sure to give you the best service and products you need. At AASL I was able to chat with several vendors I use, and it has already made a difference! I also was able to give them feedback on their products. How many times have you used an online database and thought that you would like to change it? Well, I was able to sit down with a representative from Gale and preview changes that were being considered for their online databases. I gave them input, and may get a chance to be a test school for the new design

Reason #3: Professional Development – As the MSLA conference has proven, there is nothing quite like a Librarian conference for great professional development for librarians! Well, imagine the same thing on a national level, with speakers like James Patterson, Joyce Valenza, Marco Torres, and Dana Boyd. Authors like Richard Peck, Laurie Halse-Anderson, Charles R. Smith Jr. and Gloria Whelan. Then add in all of the great presentations done by librarians across the country, it was PD heaven.

Reason #2: Free stuff from the Vendor Hall- I brought one small suitcase to Charlotte, NC. I carried it onto the plane. On my way home, I carried my clothes in a canvas bag (which I received for free from a vendor) and checked my suitcase, which weighed just a fraction of an ounce less than the airline's weight limit. The suitcase was filled with books, posters, more books, and other fun things, all received for free. My students now think they are the coolest kids ever, because they are walking around reading books that won't even be published until spring. Can you think of a better way to get fourteen-year-old boys to come and ask you for another book, to read for fun?

Reason #1: Good friends and good fun, along with good ideas. Imagine this- it is 7:30 in the morning and one of your four hotel roommates has just come back into the room with four cups of coffee. You sit around sipping, chatting, and you have found people who get it; they really know what you are trying to do with your program, and they can help you by giving you suggestions that only other librarians can offer. They can help you think through a problem or idea.

ALA Council 101—What It Is and What It Does

By Linda Friel, MSLA Treasurer and ALA Councilor-at-Large

AASL is the third largest division of ALA, with 8,818 members as of November, 2009, while ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) has 12,285, and PLA (Public Library Association) numbers 10,424. Unfortunately, however, AASL is seriously under-represented on the ALA Council; this was one of the reasons I decided to run for a Councilor-at-Large position. I was elected in 2008 and will serve until 2011.



The Council is the governing body of ALA, sets policy for the Association, and allows the Association's divisions to plan and carry out programs within the policy set by Council. There are two meetings of Council each year, one at the Annual Conference in June or July and the second one is at the Midwinter Conference in January

ALA's officers and the Executive Board are Council members, including the immediate past president and treasurer. Council officers are the president, the president-elect, and the executive director. There are 100 councilors at large, elected by the Association membership for three-year terms, and each division of the Association has one councilor who is elected by members of the division. Each state, provincial, and territorial chapter is entitled to one councilor, who is elected by members of the chapter. Round tables with personal membership equal to or greater than 1% of ALA's total personal membership elect one councilor each, and the remaining round tables jointly elect one councilor for a three-year term.



There are three sessions of Council during Midwinter and the Annual Conference: one session each on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. There are also several candidates' forums, where candidates for ALA offices and executive board positions can present themselves and their qualifications, as well as answer questions; at Midwinter one forum hosted candidates for ALA President and Treasurer, and the second one was for candidates running for Executive Board. Twice the Council sponsors Council Forums, informal meetings where Councilors can meet, discuss, and clarify items that will come before Council sessions. These are excellent opportunities to further understand the workings of ALA governance and to meet other Councilors in a relaxed atmosphere outside of the Council floor.

Council receives reports and resolutions from many sources, including from the Executive Director, the Executive Board, ALA Treasurer, ALA President, ALA President-Elect, and all manner of committees, task forces, and the like. There is an implementation report presented that reports on the status of motions and resolutions passed by ALA Council during the preceding year; this report is entered in Council minutes. ALA Council minutes from its previous meetings are provided. Some of Council's other duties include updating ALA policy on continuous and as-per-need bases, electing a Council Committee on Committees (COC) to appoint members to Council and ALA committees, reviewing Executive Board actions, acting on all submitted resolutions, and establishing dues for chapter, organization, and corporate ALA members.

Council has a year-round listserv for information and discussion, and the Councilors receive materials for upcoming Council sessions via the listserv and e-mail. During Council sessions, Eli Mina serves as Council's parliamentarian. He sits with the presiding officers and is available to provide advice, direction, and clarification, when necessary. Council uses Sturgis' *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*, rather than *Robert's Rules of Order*, for running its sessions; apparently Sturgis is a bit more modernized and less cumbersome than *Robert's Rules*. After Midwinter and the annual conference, Eli submits a report to Council with his observations about the meeting; it consists of commendations, as well as recommendations that will help enhance the quality of Council's future meetings.

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For additional information on Council and actions that it took at Midwinter, 2010, in Boston, see <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/governance/council/index.cfm>

Much information concerning ALA's history, governance, and strategic planning is now readily-available online. For access, go to <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/governance/alagoverning.cfm>

It is important that AASL members vote in the upcoming annual election and be involved in association activities. Please take a few minutes to visit the ALA website and check-out the information that is available for viewing. Well-informed voters are key to ALA's work and success. If you are not a member of ALA and AASL, please seriously consider joining, as membership and professional support is vital to our chosen profession, especially during these tough economic times. If you have concerns that are of interest to Council, please contact me.

Be an active and informed ALA and AASL member, and remember to vote online in the ALA election, coming in March.

AASL Resolution: We are SCHOOL LIBRARIANS!

By Ann Perham
AASL Region 1 Director
MSLA Executive Board and School Librarian at Needham High School



RESOLUTION to standardize the use of the job title, "School Librarian"

Approved January 15, 2010 by the AASL Board of Directors

Whereas, the overarching strategic goal of the American Association of School Librarians is to achieve universal recognition of school librarians as indispensable educational leaders; and

Whereas, the AASL Affiliate Assembly requested that the AASL Board of Directors choose a title for its professionals that is clear to other educators, administrators, and the public; and

Whereas, a recent AASL survey indicated confusion, misperceptions, and inconsistencies about various job titles in our profession; and

Whereas, AASL needed to agree on a common nomenclature for all publications and advocacy efforts; and

Whereas, the AASL's leadership reviewed the data, identified the advantages and disadvantages of the various titles, and held a focused and extensive discussion.

Therefore be it resolved, AASL officially adopts "school librarian" as the title which reflects the roles of the 21st century school library professional as leader, instructional partner, information specialist, teacher, and program administrator; be it further resolved that AASL will advance and promote the title "school librarian" to ensure universal recognition of school librarians as indispensable educational leaders.

The following guiding principles govern these actions: Open dialog concerning knowledge of our stakeholders' needs, wants, and preferences; the current realities and evolving dynamics of our environment; the capacity and strategic position of our organization; and the ethical implications relevant to this decision.

AASL Resolution: We are SCHOOL LIBRARIANS! (continued)

HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT? Here is “The Rest of the Story...”

AASL President’s Experience “We were lobbying on Capitol Hill, and the legislator asked me what a Media Specialist did.” This revelation by Ann Martin, then-President of AASL, assured me that that I was right; the title of “Library Media Specialist” was a self-imposed handicap.



Denver: January 2009 Hesitantly, I raised my hand to speak...it was the strategic planning meeting for the AASL Board and I was a Director-elect. Normally, as a Director-elect, I would be expected to observe and learn (without speaking), but this strategic planning meeting was a unique opportunity for me to actually speak...and speak I did. “We need to move away from using the term ‘media’ in our job description. We’ve become 21st century, and this is the time to think about at least putting a ‘teacher-librarian’ in our description. We are teachers with a specialized degree and with today’s budget crunch, a lot of people do not understand that we are teachers; that’s what we do.” I felt like a skunk at a picnic, but I was not apologizing; I had said it and I was glad. In the end, the AASL strategic plan still used “school library media specialist”, but I knew that I had made a start. It was reported in *Cognotes*, the ALA daily conference newspaper. I was not identified by name, but the discussion of our job title was on the record.

Chicago: July 2009 It had been a long day of meetings for the first day of the ALA Annual conference. I was questioning my sanity as I explained to the Affiliate Assembly Executive committee the Region I concern, “What’s in a Name?”:

We are both teachers and librarians, and our job title must be clear and up-to-date. Neither administrators, educators nor the public understands the term "media specialist"; it does not say what we do. In some states, it puts us in the same category as guidance counselors and literacy coaches. "Media" is an antiquated term dating back 30+ years and causes misperceptions by many. Many states have taken "media" out of their association's name, using the model of AASL and also in an effort to look to the 21st Century. Let us celebrate our expertise in curriculum frameworks and instructional design with a title that is clear and indicative of our role in promoting student achievement.

When I had brought the issue up at the May meeting of the New England Association of School Librarians (NESLA), I got many nods of approval from representatives of other New England states. The advice of NESLA President Sue Ballard echoed in my head, “You can bring this to the board...it’s an important issue and I support it. But, you need to present it and RUN, because it’s going to stir up a hornet’s nest of trouble.”

As I prepared to submit the concerns and commendation from Region I, I came very close to not submitting the name issue; who would know? Did I really want the spotlight as an instigator? Then, I remembered the strategic planning session of the previous January when I had asked the question that seemed so basic to me: “Why are we using the term ‘media’?” At that point, I had vowed that the issue was a muddy one that needed to be resolved. To me, “media” was such a confusing term that was detrimental to our profession.



As it turned out, it was fortunate that I had the courage of my convictions. The concern struck a chord with directors from other regions and I began to breathe more easily. When AASL President Ann Martin related her experience lobbying in Washington and then announced that the “name question” would be the Mega Issue for our January 2010 Midwinter meeting in Boston, I was dumfounded.

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Boston: January 15, 2010 How can 23 AASL Board members discuss a single question for 4.5 hours? Perhaps the better question is, "How can 23 diverse individuals debate an issue that has haunted our profession for over 30 years, arrive at consensus, and not spill any blood?"

The month before the conference, we downloaded our board documents in preparation for the meetings. The Mega Issue file jumped out at me; it was 37 pages long! We Librarians are thorough in our work, but this was over the top.



The Mega Question:

What name should we use to help us achieve universal recognition and be considered indispensable?

Sub questions:

1. *What do we know about members' and stakeholders' wants, needs and preferences related to this issue?* The AASL survey of November and December 2009 yielded 882 responses about present and preferred job titles.

<i>What is your Official Job Title?</i>		<i>What title do you think most clearly describes your job to stakeholders?</i>
Library Media Specialist	32%	13%
Librarian	15%	13%
Media Specialist	13%	2%
School Library Media Specialist	10%	19%
Teacher-Librarian	5%	21%
Information Specialist	1%	6%
Other	20% [Media coordinator, Library Specialist, Professor, Library Teacher]	7%

2. *What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of our environment that is relevant to this decision?* The history of our professional title within AASL revealed some interesting changes.
 - In 1969, the *Standards for School Media Programs* were developed by AASL and the Department of Audiovisual Instruction of the National Education Association. The terms "media program," "media specialist," and "media center" were used.
 - In 1975, *Standards for Media Programs and Schools* was developed by AASL and AECT. They used the same terminology as the 1969 standards, but left out a statement that the standards did not intend to mandate any particular title or terminology.
 - The 1988 *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* jointly developed again by AASL and AECT first used the terms, "library media specialist," "library media program," and "library media center."
 - Our 2009 *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action and Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* uses the terms, "school library media programs," and "school library media specialists."
3. *What do we know about the "capacity" and "strategic position" of our organization relevant to this decision?*
 - AASL is the only national membership association focused solely on school librarianship
 - After 8 years of consistent growth, AASL membership is trending down
 - Participation for non-members in open surveys consistently exceeds 50%
 - There is competition for membership dollars: NEA, AFT, ISTE, IRA etc
 - School library media specialists have many non-association options for information and community (blogs, discussion lists, trade magazines, social networking).
 - Vendors are competing in "association space" for time, attention, revenue, scholarship dollars

- The implementation of the *Standards for 21st-Century Learner* and *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* is a vehicle to stress the critical role SLMS play in teaching 21st –century skills
- AASL belongs to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a coalition that has developed a framework for 21st century learning.
- As a member of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, AASL has the means to bring SLM organizations in to the state leadership application process.

4. *What are the ethical implications?*

- As decisions are made about allocation of resources, who will be left out?
- AASL is in a unique position to advocate for members in the library profession
- With such diverse references to the title of a school library media specialist and variations from state to state should AASL put resources towards this effort?

Discussion, Debate and Decision: Boston ALA Midwinter, January 15, 2010

This Mega Issue discussion and debate would have had a much different tone and outcome if it had not been for the strategic planner who facilitated the discussion. Paul Meyer may have missed his calling as a marriage counselor or diplomatic guru; he may be nominated for the Noel Peace Prize for his masterful guidance of the planning and execution of this discussion.

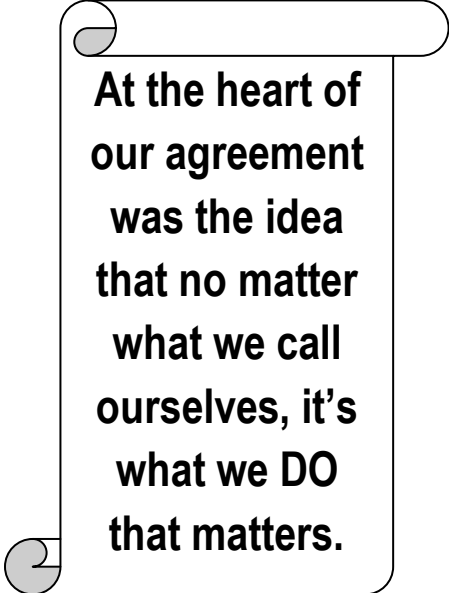
I went into the session with a firm belief that we needed the word, “teacher” in our job title. In Massachusetts, I have pushed the use of the term “Library Teacher” to underline our integral role in the curriculum and student achievement. It was a momentous decision for MSLA to drop “media” from our name in 2005. Other New England state associations followed our lead: Vermont, Maine, Connecticut and New England School Library Association. For sure, I was determined that at the very least, the word “media” should be dropped from our job title on the national level. As a member of the American

Association of School Librarians, I believed that it was time to align our job title with the association’s name. Although we have media literacy as a strand of our Massachusetts ELA frameworks, the use of “media” in our name has masked our role as librarians. I am proud to be a librarian and do not identify myself as a media specialist. Somewhere back in the Seventies, we started to think that school libraries needed to be made modern by using “media”. Have the lawyers and doctors changed their professional title with changes in their jobs?

Paul Meyer was masterful as he lead us through the process of looking at all sides of the issue, examining the questions, and listening to options. **At the heart of our agreement was the idea that no matter what we call ourselves, it’s what we DO that matters.**

It came down to three options: 1) Use of the term “media” – all varieties, such as School Library Media Specialist, Library Media Specialist, Media Specialist 2) Teacher-Librarian 3) School Librarian. When we considered all the angles from the different states, “School Librarian” was an overwhelming favorite. It was not a unanimous vote, but we were harmonious in the agreement to stand together. The Board of Directors agreed that AASL would promote the job title, “School Librarian” in future PR and publications.

It took another 3 hours for a small group of us to hammer out the resolution which was approved by the AASL Board of Directors in our formal meeting the next day. I’m very proud to have been a part of this seemingly simple decision that will **set the stage for positive growth of our profession and gives us an image that is clear to all our stakeholders.**



**At the heart of
our agreement
was the idea
that no matter
what we call
ourselves, it’s
what we DO
that matters.**

Here Come the Judges: 2010 Bookmark Contest

by Linda Picceri
School Librarian, Watertown Middle School
MSLA Publicity co-Chair

The winners for MSLA's Annual Bookmark Contest have been selected, thanks to an amazing lineup of authors, illustrators and commissioners from the MBLC. This year's theme was "My School Librarian Teaches It All."

The team of distinguished judges included author/illustrator, Stephen Krensky, author/illustrator, Mary Newell DePalma, author/illustrator Ralph Masiello, author/illustrator David Biedrzycki, author Tui Sutherland, author Mitali Perkins, illustrator, Vicky Enright, illustrator Kati Wish, Mary McDonough from the Child at Heart Gallery, and Em Claire Knowles, Vicki Kaufman and Carol Caro from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. They had their work cut out for them because there were so many wonderful drawings to choose from this year.



Students created designs illustrating the exciting experiences and challenging projects that take place in the school library as well as the lessons and skills that school librarians teach.

VIEW all the winners, honorable mentions, and the winning bookmarks on the [MSLA website](http://maschoollibraries.org/content/view/745/361/):
<http://maschoollibraries.org/content/view/745/361/>

Judging took place at the Plympton Elementary School in Waltham on January 28th.

Thanks go to Judi Paradis for hosting the afternoon's festivities, to Gerri Fegan for running a smooth show, and to the rest of the committee, Nancy Kellner, Ann Perham, Laura Harrington, and Nancy Snow, who worked hard to make this year's Bookmark Contest a success. Winning students will be awarded 500 copies of their design, an enlargement of their bookmark, a gift certificate to a local bookstore, a framed award certificate, and a commendation from their legislator. Prizes will be awarded to honorable mentions as well. Winners and honorable mentions, along with their families, collaborating teachers, and administrators, will attend a ceremony at the State House on March 9th which is also Library Legislative Day. Students will receive their awards and be given a special tour of the State House.

We can always use more school librarians to help with the Bookmark Contest. If you would like to lend a hand, simply complete the MSLA volunteer application located on the MSLA website, or contact Kathy Lowe, MSLA Executive Director.



Mitali Perkins studies the entries

Governor Deval Patrick visits the Harrington Elementary School in Chelmsford

by Valerie Diggs, Director of Libraries
Chelmsford High School Learning Commons



The announcement came late on Friday afternoon. Governor Deval Patrick was coming to visit the Harrington Elementary School in Chelmsford on Monday! Monday at 12 noon? That was just 60 hours away!! Not only was his visit fast-approaching, but slated to begin in the school library during one of our grade three class visits.

The Harrington Elementary School Library staff swung into action. Barbara DeFreitas, the library assistant, donned her "Heloise" hat and began feverishly dusting and polishing. Displays were shined and bulletin boards checked for items left hanging by one staple, not two! The space was made as ready as possible for the big day. The weekend was all that lay between the governor's visit becoming a reality.

School Librarian Margaret Marshall was also involved in the preparations, while excitedly notifying me of the big event. My role was undefined at first, but as the weekend wore on, I just knew I had to ask the governor a question that he could answer. A question that not only he would want to answer, but one that he could answer. That took a weekend of pondering.

When the governor did arrive, state house staffers and all, he headed directly for the library, where a class of grade three students excitedly awaited his visit. Governor Patrick spoke with students, and helped some choose books to take home. The topic for the day was electricity, and our governor was no stranger to the Dewey Decimal System, asking Ms. DeFreitas where to find the 500's for books on electricity. Cameras were flashing, as the library was filled with reporters from a variety of media outlets, as well as with many town officials, including school committee representatives, our superintendent Donald Yeoman, teachers, and some of our curriculum coordinators.



The tour then took the governor to a first and second grade classroom, where he visited with students busy conducting the work of the day. Accompanying Governor Patrick was Secretary of Education, Paul Reville. On his tours of schools with the governor, he looks at the leadership of the school and whether students are engaged. Most important, he observes the school as a parent would, to determine if it is a happy place.

The last stop of the hour was in the lobby of the Harrington Elementary School, where a press conference was held. Again, cameras whirled as the governor spoke of his recently-announced Education Reform Bill. As stated in the bill itself, "This is a bold reform bill that provides turnaround strategies for underperforming schools, including increased access to proven charter providers. The bill also empowers districts and educators to innovate and expand best practices, and positions Massachusetts to qualify for \$100 million or more of Race to the Top funds."

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The 2009 Education Reform Bill, which Patrick signed Jan. 18, will allow superintendents in poorly performing schools to impose major policy changes. Under the bill, charter school operators can double the allowed number of seats in low-performing districts. The bill is aimed at closing the achievement gap among minorities and special education students. The bill also doubles the charter school spending cap in the state's 10 lowest performing school districts.



Also saying a few brief words were Sen. Susan Fargo, D-Lincoln; Rep. Jim Arciero, D-Westford and Rep. Tom Golden, D-Lowell, along with Superintendent Yeoman and Principal of the Harrington Elementary School, Colleen Beaudoin.

After the press conference, I had a chance to ask my question. However, I had not one, but two questions to ask. As I approached the governor with my questions, he looked me in the eye and said "Ah, the Director of Libraries, I suppose you want to ask me for more funding for school libraries". Having introduced myself to him in the library, he actually remembered who I was!

"Actually no..." was my answer. I saw the look of shock and surprise come over his face. I went on to say that in

these fiscally difficult times, while our school libraries are in dire need of support, I realize that monetary support and commitment to school libraries may be years away. However, I did want to be able to have a school librarian on the "teacher's advisory panel" to the BESE. His eyes brightened, and he enthusiastically brought an aide over to us and passed a business card to me. "Email this gentleman with your request, making sure you mention this conversation," said Governor Patrick. He then went on to say how committed he is to putting together this panel, as the BESE must not make decisions "in a vacuum". I was thrilled. [Type a quote from the document or the summary of an interesting point. You can position the text box anywhere in the document. Use the Text Box Tools tab to change the formatting of the pull quote text box.]

MSLA & MLA Legislation Day Tuesday, March 9

- 10:00 a.m. MSLA Bookmark Awards Ceremony at the Grand Staircase*
11:00 a.m. Rally for Massachusetts Libraries on the State House steps
12:00 p.m. Lunch, featuring author Moying Li, winner of the Massachusetts Center for the Book Nonfiction Award, and presentation of the MLA Advocacy Award to a legislator

And the Winners Are....2010 Youth Literature Awards

By Pat Keough, Retired School Librarian

The 2010 ALA Youth Awards offered few surprises and much delight. Massachusetts librarians should be very proud of creators and publishers with Massachusetts connections.

Grace Lin's novel, *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, received a well-deserved Newbery Honor. This beautiful book with full-color plates tells the story of Minli, a poor young girl, who goes on a quest to change her family's fortune. During her adventures Minli hears many stories inspired by Chinese folktales. A rich treat awaits readers of this novel.

Dedham's **Melanie Kroupa**, top-notch editor, helped **Philip Hoose** bring the memorable-but-unknown story of *Claudette Colvin: Twice toward Justice* to life. Hoose won the National Book Award, a Newbery Honor, and a Sibert Honor for this story of the 15 year old girl who was really the first person to integrate the buses of Montgomery. This is a must-read for all.

Jerry Pinkney, summer resident of Cape Cod, took the Caldecott for the sumptuous illustrations in his wordless book, *The Lion and the Mouse*. This is already a favorite in library story times.

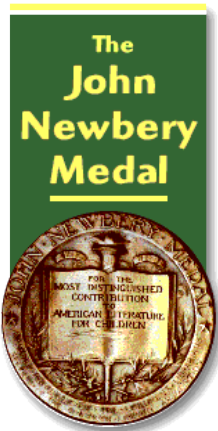
Boston publishers were well-represented as well. Houghton Mifflin published the Caldecott Honor, *Red Sings from Treetops: A Year in Colors* by **Joyce Sidman** and illustrated by **Pamela Zagarenski**. How nice to have poetry represented in the winners circle. Houghton also published a Geisel Honor, *Mouse and Mole: Fine Feathered Friends* by **Wong Herbert Yee**. This endearing series for early readers is a favorite of mine.

I look forward to reading *Punkzilla*, a Printz Honor, by **Adam Rapp** and published by Candlewick. How nice that **Tanya Lee Stone's** *Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared to Dream* published by Candlewick, won the Sibert Award for nonfiction. These highly-trained and qualified women were ahead of their time but paved the way for future women astronauts.

Also on my list of future reading is *Marcelo in the Real World* by **Francisco X. Stork**. I have heard raves about this story of a teen with Asperger's Syndrome.

For the most eye-popping book of the season turn to the Sibert Honor title, *The Day-Glo Brothers...* by **Chris Barton** and illustrated by **Tony Persiani** and published by Charlesbridge. And Lois Lowry will deliver the Arbuthnot Lecture at some date and place within this year.

Cheers from all the publishers and librarians rang out as the winners were announced at the ALA Midwinter Conference in Boston on January 18, 2010.



Student-Generated Questions for Research Projects

By Nancy J. Kane

School Librarian at Monument Valley Regional Middle School

Does this scenario sound familiar? Students arrive at the library, declaring that they are ready to research, armed only with a vague idea of their topic. Despite consulting a variety of resources, and being offered assistance, students leave at the end of the class with a few sketchy notes scrawled in their binders. Having witnessed this scenario, I was anxious to explore the use of student-generated questions as a focusing tool for research projects.

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES in READING

COMPREHENSION Self-questioning techniques have long been used as a reading-comprehension strategy, in which students read a given text, and then create their own questions for review. Students are familiar with responding to teacher-generated questions, but the skill of question generation must be taught explicitly. Both highly-competent readers and students who struggle with open-ended comprehension assignments benefit from a questioning structure which helps them make meaningful connections to a text (Rosenshine).



Procedural prompts using signal words or question stems have proven effective in jump-starting students' own questions about a reading selection or research topic. Questioning activities may be scaffolded by requiring students to first generate simple questions about a short text, then to create deeper, more involved questions about a longer text. Students can work in partners or teams to create, share and revise questions. In the TeachQuest model, teachers instruct students in questioning techniques, highlighting open-ended, divergent questions. In the ReQuest model, students work in groups and practice classifying sample questions, highlighting the signal words, before moving on to generate their own questions of different types (Ciardiello, "Did You Ask").

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES for RESEARCH PROJECTS

If students have not generated meaningful questions about their research topic, they lack an effective starting point, whether they are looking up keywords in a book's index or performing Internet searches. The generation of essential questions is a higher-order thinking skill which is a challenge to middle-school students. However, if teachers are trained in generating the essential questions, the students can be taught to be successful in generating their own subsidiary questions (Glasson). Prompts and graphic organizers are invaluable aids in helping students generate their own questions.

GENERATING QUESTIONS with STUDENTS

I had my 6th graders choose an invention to research. I prepared a two-sided question generator with the simple cue words: **Who, What, When, Where, Why** and **How** on the front side, and more complex question stems on the backside: **How much, How many, How did, What if, What else happened because, What is the difference, Why did OR Why didn't.**

For a class example, students worked together at their tables to create questions about the invention of the toaster. Questions were discussed or clarified and written on the whiteboard grouped by cue words: **Where** was the toaster invented? **Who** were the first people to use a toaster? **What happens** if it breaks?

Students then generated their own questions about their own invention, using the question generator form. I collected the question forms and reviewed them, creating a master list of all questions. Finally, I created a two-sided

graphic organizer with basic fact-finding questions on the front side, and more thought-provoking, complex questions on the reverse side. I created meaningful questions from simple ones, for example, "Who invented the toaster?" became "Who invented the toaster and what kind of education, background and job did he or she have?" Reviewing the questions prevented a student from generating and trying to research questions which were not workable.

With my 5th graders who were studying ancient American cultures, I shared a PowerPoint presentation which showed questions I had created about the role of women in ancient cultures. Using a think-aloud process, I walked students through question generation using the cue words, turning simple questions such as "Who were the Inca women?" into more complex questions such as "Who were the women allowed to be friends with?" or "Who decided which man a girl would marry?" The students used a question generator worksheet to generate their own questions which were reviewed by their teachers.

The 6th grade language arts teacher approached me about collaborating on a research project based on the novel, *Out of the Dust*, by Karen Hesse. Here was the perfect opportunity to use the questioning techniques. Following a very successful lesson on narrowing or broadening their topics, the students briefly perused encyclopedias and books for background information.

The next day, the teacher and I picked a topic, "Music in the 1930's" and walked the students through a whole class question generation process, beginning with the cue words and using the white board as a graphic organizer. As students offered questions, we took time for the class to consider whether the question was workable or needed revision before writing it on the board. Walking the students through this collective revision process helped them understand how to write workable questions of their own.

Following the whole class example, students generated their own questions using the cue words and the question stems. The next day, the students reviewed their questions with me or their teacher. We starred the questions which were most workable and helped students revise others, making sure the students retained a few questions of great personal interest. This evaluation step was critical to check that students were on the right path to meaningful information. No student was allowed to begin researching until their questions had been evaluated and revised.

CONCLUSION

Requiring students to generate questions through a brain-storming process results in original, intriguing questions. Generating their own questions allows multiple students to research the same topic from different angles. The conferencing step between student and teacher to revise and focus the questions prevents the students wasting time researching non-viable questions and becoming discouraged. Through the question generation process, some students discovered they didn't like their topics and could switch before getting too involved. After the project was over, many students identified the questioning phase as the most useful step in the research process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Students who begin to research with only a broad topic, lacking an outline or graphic organizer, often sit in bewilderment, reading through source materials, wondering what information to record as notes. Students often do not understand what their topic is really about until they start to break down the topic into workable sections using questions. Teaching our students to ask meaningful questions focuses their research task and helps students identify which information is most important. I highly recommend a structured questioning process for any project. The art of questioning is a lifelong learning skill which can be applied to many decisions.

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Metrowest Region Provides Unique Continuing Education Opportunities Free to Regional and MSLA Members

By Sarah Sogigian

Trainer/Consultant for Youth Services, Metrowest MA Regional Library System

As part of our ongoing series of classes designed specifically for regional school librarians and MSLA members, the Metrowest Region is pleased to present "Book Group Brainstorming on a Budget" led by Patsy Divver and Maria Neville, school librarians at the Millis Middle/High School. Need some good ideas on how to start a book group? How can you get students "hooked on books"? We'll do some creative brainstorming as to ways to keep book groups going in this time of shrinking budgets. Patsy and Maria have been co-leading the Millis Middle School Book Group for over five years and will share their stories and tips. Be sure to register for this class, which will be held on Wednesday, March 31 from 4PM-6PM and will be held at the Millis Middle/High School Library.

Our fall "Tech Share" was a big success; we are planning another one for this spring. School librarians were invited to share a technology they use in their libraries. Presentations were short, but hands on, so everyone had an opportunity to get a feel for some great free resources. Go Animate, Wordle, and Google resources were just a few of the topics covered. Stay tuned for details on our spring class.

One of our most popular speakers, Pat Keogh, will also be presenting her spring 2010 edition of "Can't Miss Books." Pat, who is a retired school librarian, does all the hard work for us! She'll let us know some of the newest and best books of 2010 for students Pre-K to grade 5. This class is especially helpful for the last book order of the school year.

While most classes offered by the Metrowest Region are for members only, some of our school librarian designed classes are open to members of MSLA, regardless of regional membership. Participants who attend the above listed classes can receive certificates of attendance which can be used toward PDPs. For more information or to register for classes, please visit www.mmrls.org or contact Sarah Sogigian, Trainer/Consultant for Youth Services, Metrowest and Boston Regional Library Systems, sarah@mmrls.org, ph: 781-398-1819, AIM: sarahatmmrls



The True Story of a Library Decorating Adventure

By Barbara Lichtman, School Librarian at Melrose High School



Here is a true story of how one school librarian, new to her library, successfully “renovated”...without funds! Once upon a time, there was a school librarian. who had to start a new job .The funny thing was that this librarian did not see or get to tour her library space during her job interview. In fact, she did not see her library space until she started her new job. The first day she walked into her multi-room, open multi-level space, with six doors going into several different hallways, she felt like Jonah having been swallowed by the whale. How do you get comfortable in a new work environment that does not seem like home? How do you make the space your own? The little librarian thought of her favorite children’s book, *The Little Engine That Could*, and so she

started chugging uphill with the thoughts, “I think I can...I think I can...I think I can make this open space more cozy and comfy!” While thinking and chugging uphill, she devised a plan and began to implement it.

The Plan: Furniture/Plants/Artwork/Accessories

The first thing the little librarian did was contact all the local furniture stores and take pictures of the space she wanted to furnish. Her idea was to get some cozy chairs to create a comfy sitting area for pleasure reading. The only chairs in the library were oak, and not exactly the most comfortable. She took pictures of the areas she had in mind, marked off with masking tape to show the business owner. She then visited a local business owner who told her to check back in after the Columbus Day weekend sale. Sure enough, there were two chairs left of a special order that was canceled and never paid for. They were put in the Town and Country wagon, and away they went to the Library, happy to be off a loading dock and into a new home!

It was wonderful seeing how magnetic two cozy reading chairs immediately became! The little librarian then did a “Donations Wanted” flyer to pass out at the October Parent’s Night for grades 9-12. One family responded with a loveseat -- another tax deductible donation, and now two new “cozy” areas.

The word soon spread to local business owners and the next thing we knew, we had a donation of silk ficus trees and some potted artificial mums. This donation made the loveseat cozier and created another magazine reading area. Teachers liked what they saw and began bringing in their plants from home! A teacher donated an aquarium and we made a terrarium. We were slowly but surely becoming a “learning space” instead of just a place. Another teacher donated her paintings. The little librarian quickly realized that, with more promotion, the space could be even better.



Be the Media! Be a Shameless Self-Promoter!

The little librarian talked to the PTO. The PTO contacted a local paper, and the next thing this little librarian knew, there was an interview and some pictures going to every home in Melrose. Soon, a donation of a lovely couch and lamp appeared, and someone called to donate an oversized leather reading chair. Now we have four cozy reading areas and the student traffic has increased in the library. Students are beginning to bring me donations of their own books to feel like they are contributing to the effort. Students are interested in buy-in and investment.

The moral of this little librarian tale: think positive, share your vision with others, and believe in the generosity of people who wish to help your cause (a Librarian Parable that’s incomparable). And if you can’t afford to renovate, you can always REDECORATE.

Lunch with an Author: Jean Craighead George

by Linda Redding
School Librarian at Silver Lake Regional High School

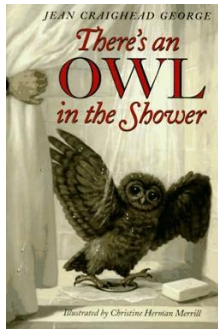
For a few summers, Halifax Elementary School utilized a "One School, One Author, One Grade, One Book" reading program for students in Kindergarten through grade six. The challenge in starting a program like this is finding an author with a range of books to cover each grade level. Nature author Jean Craighead George was an obvious first choice. She even took time from her busy schedule to do a Boston Globe Fun Pages with students, which was a great experience for the students. I recently contacted Jean via email to catch up.



Your early writing career included writing for the Washington Post and being a member of the White House Press Corp. What was that experience like?

I was thrilled with my life writing for the Washington Post, as I was covering Capitol Hill and FDR who was then in the White House. I got the assignments because the men reporters had been drafted and I had had a college degree. My first boss had tears in his eyes when he hired me. It was the end of journalism to him -- hiring a woman.

An Owl in the Shower is one of my favorite books to read to children. Do the animals in your life inspire the animal stories you write?



My kids and I had a screech owl, Yammer, from whom we learned owl behavior. He did take showers with us. We put him by the radiator to dry off. My son Luke, was teaching at Humboldt State University when I was writing that book -- (and still is.) The spotted owl is on the Endangered Species List and one lived near Luke at the time -- Enrique. We went to the forest where he lived and camped out with him. I learned what a beautiful life he lived, but also that he had been isolated too far away from a possible mate by the lumbering activities going on there. The lumberjacks had left several acres of untouched virgin forests for the owl, but the lots proved to be too far apart for the owls to hear each other call to mates. Enrique died alone with no offspring.

Children's author, Twig George is your daughter and your son Craig is featured in the new book *Whaling Season: A Year in the Life of an Aortic Whale Scientist*. What advice, if any, did you offer them on being involved in children's literature?

I never offered my children advice about children's literature, but they saw that the animals we raised had great stories and were heroes in my children's books. They brought wild-orphaned animals to me -- even bugs and spiders -- and began telling their stories. They loved our animal home and studied nature and biology in school.

What are you working on now?

I am working of a book entitled Ice Whale, a story of a bowhead whale, the whale of the Arctic Ocean and polar ice cap. It is the one that Craig, who lives in Barrow, Alaska at the top of the world, protects and studied for his Ph.D. It is also the one that the Yankee whalers nearly brought to extinction. It is on the Endangered Species List, too. I absolutely love writing about nature that my parents led me to, that I led my children to and that they have opened to my grandchildren. We can't learn too much about the natural world around us. It is our life.

Complete list of books by Jean Craighead and information on the author: <http://www.jeancraigheadgeorge.com/>

Boston Globe Fun Pages featuring Jean Craighead George: <http://www.slrds.org/slrhs/library/funpages.html>

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Websites Recommended and Used by MSLA Members

by Linda Friel, MSLA Treasurer and ALA Councilor

Linda is on the AASL Task Force for the 25 Best Websites for Teaching and Learning; this resource debuted in July 2009. She asked MSLA members to recommend websites that her Task Force should consider for inclusion in the 2010 list, due to be released at ALA Washington DC in June 2010. This is the MSLA members' recommendation list (February 2010)

Ace Pintura : Art Detective	http://www.eduweb.com/pintura/index.html
Counting on Art	http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/counting_on_art/act_shapes.htm
CryptoClub	http://cryptoclub.math.uic.edu/treasurehunt/treasure18f6.php
Dihydrogen Monoxide	http://www.dhmo.org/ a bogus Webpage great for teaching purposes
Edublogs Awards 2009	http://edublogawards.com/2009/best-student-edublog-2009/
Emints	http://www.emints.org/ethemes/
Free Technology for Teachers	http://www.freotech4teachers.com/
Glogster	http://edu.glogster.com/
Helping with math.com	http://www.helpingwithmath.com
History Is Elementary	http://historyiselementary.blogspot.com/
iEARN Collaboration Centre	https://media.iearn.org/
Inventions Canada	http://www.sciencetech.technomuses.ca/english/schoolzone/invention/gallery.cfm
KidsNumbers.com	http://www.kidnumbers.com
Magnet Lab FSU	http://www.magnet.fsu.edu/education/
Making Tracks	http://www.bbc.co.uk/orchestras/play/
Mass Moments	http://www.massmoments.org
Math Moves U	http://www.mathmovesu.com/
Mr. Steve Zanetti	http://sjzanetti.edublogs.org/ another Edublogs.org weblog
Multiplication.com	http://www.multiplication.com
National Geographic	http://www.nationalgeographic.com/
New York Philharmonic	http://www.nyphilkids.org/games/main.phtml
Open Educational Resources	http://www.oercommons.org/
OneWorld Classrooms	http://www.ccpb.com/index.html Formerly the creative connections project
Planet Science	http://www.scienceyear.com/home.html
Play Music	http://www.playmusic.org/
Powers of Persuasion	http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/powers_of_persuasionhome.html
Price of Freedom:Americans at War	http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/exhibition/flash.html
Road Trip to Savings	http://www.practicalmoneyskills.com/games/road_trip/road_trip.html
Slam Dunk Science	http://www.scire.com/sds/sdsmenu.html
Teachers Network	http://www.teachnet.org/
Teachers' Domain	http://www.teachersdomain.org/
Thesis Builder	http://www.tomarch.com/electraguide/
Thinkfinity	http://www.thinkfinity.org/home.aspx Included on last year's Landmark Websites list
Try Science	http://www.tryscience.org/tsadv/world/home.html
US Map	http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united_states/usa_blank.jpg
Virtual Body	http://www.ehc.com/vbody.asp
Virtual Knee Surgery	http://www.edheads.org/activities/knee/

