

MSLA FORUM APRIL 2015

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PRESIDENT'S UPDATE BY JUDI PARADIS

APRIL 12, 2015

There is a poem that I keep on my desk that says in part:

"...This is what we are about:

We plant seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.

~ Bishop Ken Untener

We cannot do everything

and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something,

and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way..."

This resonates with me a lot this spring, as I prepare to step down as MSLA president in May. Lots of seeds have been planted lately, and I have great hope that those that follow will reap a good harvest. So, in my last official column as MSLA President, I'd like to share some things that give me great hope for school libraries:

Our library commission: For years we've been trying to get some standards for school library programs in Massachusetts—some sense that we're recognized by educational decision makers who value what we do and support our work. The passage of our bill creating a commission to evaluate the status of school library programs in 2014 gives me great hope that we will finally be able to gather the data and stories we need to make our case that equitable access to school libraries matters, and to see that steps are taken to make this a reality for all the students in our Commonwealth. Our commission formally met for the first time in March, and we are in the process of setting up a comprehensive survey in concert with Dr. Carol Gordon and Dr. Robin Cicchetti. Legislative co-chair Kendall Boninti is also setting up a series of school visits and hearings to gather some "on the ground" reports from across Massachusetts. We are counting on MSLA members to ensure that surveys are completed accurately and that we hear from the right people at our hearings and site visits. Please keep an eye on the MSLA listserv in the coming months to see how you can help.

Our renewed look at professional development: In the past few years, MSLA has been increasing its professional development offerings beyond our annual conference. A recent survey of members indicates support for alternating an annual conference with one-day events targeting a particular topic of interest. We're excited to be working on events for the coming academic year that range from a conference day with MassCUE and the Museum of Science to an EdCamp day in the fall and a one-day event to tie-in with the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Boston next January. We are also going to continue to work with Karen Sekiguchi and EDCO to offer ELL PDPs for librarians, and we are hoping to plan similar classes to provide SPED PDPs for school librarians. Finally, we've identified a program at Old Dominion University in Virginia that is planning to offer "fast track" training for teachers in Massachusetts hoping to become school librarians. Our hope is that this will start to produce the professionals we know we are going to need to provide strong school library programs in coming years. As our professional development offerings expand, we have appointed Laura D'Elia to lead a newly formed Professional Development Committee to keep all this up and running. We are fortunate to have Laura's expertise and intelligence, and she'll be looking for help as this goes forward. Stay tuned!

Our ability to network: A survey of membership last spring indicated that MSLA members value the listserv, and we know it's well used. Now we've added Facebook and Twitter to our network, and you're using them often and well. While the listserv remains the place to go for specific information and advice, lots of great sharing happens daily on the Facebook page, which provides a way to inform friends and acquaintances by sharing outside our own library world. Our Twitter nights, organized by Amy Short, continue to provide some terrific professional conversations every month. If you've not participated, give it a try.

Our energized and engaged membership: MSLA values the contributions of its members, and thanks to our ability to network, lots of great ideas and initiatives are being identified and carried out. We are incredibly fortunate to have several long-term Executive Board

members with amazing contacts both at the state and national level. We also have a group of excited new practitioners who are bringing lots of new ideas and questions about how we might do things even better. I'm delighted that Anita Cellucci is coming on as president. The more time I spend with her, the more I realize that she has the highest standards for students, and a great sense of priorities. She also asks good questions. We're going to be in good shape.

Judi Paradis is the President of MSLA and the librarian at the Plympton Elementary School in Waltham

ACADEMIC COLUMN: THE REWARDS OF RESEARCH BY ROBIN CICCHETTI

APRIL 12, 2015

Thank you to the MSLA Awards Committee for recognizing with a research grant the work done in the course of writing my dissertation, *Transitioning a high school library to a learning commons: Avoiding the tragedy of the commons*. The ongoing support of MSLA colleagues has been deeply appreciated.

RESEARCH: A QUEST AND A QUESTION

In July of 2012 I began a doctoral program with [Northeastern University](#). If I had known how difficult it was going to be I never would have started, and now that I am finished I encourage everyone to consider pursuing a doctorate. If I can do it, so can you. It is a three-year quest that consumes all free time, forces the brain to work harder and establish new pathways of learning, and most valuable for me, renewed my appreciation of how demanding it is to be a student. This quest experience has directly impacted how I teach my high school students, how I organize online materials, how I conduct both formative and summative assessments, and the value of clear communication on everything from rubrics to due dates.

The Doctor of Education process consists of course work designed to teach research skills as well as critical content on topics ranging from educational pedagogy to organizational structures. Throughout the process the researcher is building a literature review, and iterating the research question(s) that will ultimately determine the topic of the dissertation and the direction of the research. Each course requires research and writing that informs the research question with a new lens.

The research conducted for the dissertation focused on the process of transitioning a traditional high school library to the learning commons service model, identified the requirements of the model, and the factors that either promoted or undermined the success of the transition.

A general inductive approach based on a qualitative methodology was used to collect and analyze data obtained from three Massachusetts high school librarians who self-identified as having successfully transitioned a high school library to a learning commons, were all members of the MSLA, and worked in public high schools. The two research questions for the study were:

- (1) What factors determine a successful transition?
- (2) What factors undermine or threaten the transition?

Data was collected through multiple methods including: field notes from site visits, review of participant created websites, as well as interviews conducted in person, by telephone, and by video conference. Coding was used to sort and evaluate data that identified categories and themes that influenced the success of the transition.

The transition to a learning commons was analyzed in the context of the *tragedy of the commons scenario* (Hardin, 1968). The tragedy scenario has its roots in pre-Roman England when farmers grazed their livestock in communally held fields. The growth in demand for the common fields led to increasing herd sizes with no corresponding incentive to maintain the shared resource, leading ultimately to overuse, depletion, herd starvation, and collapse. The tragedy scenario has been applied to analogous issues such as over-fishing, deforestation, and in this study, the highly demanded resources of a modern learning commons.

Through analysis of the transition experiences of the three participants, the trust of the building principal was identified as the primary hallmark of success. The attributes of the school librarian that positively influence the trust of principals are identified as vision and an implementation plan, data-driven practice, communication, and consensus building skills.

Based on research relating to the learning commons service model, a successful transition includes a reduction and reorganization of the book collection to increase space for collaborative activities. An integral part of the shift in the mission of the library collection is a de-emphasis on print reference and a transition to e-books to replace print reference, with priority placed on purchasing high interest young adult fiction and narrative nonfiction to promote curriculum and pleasure reading for students.

The revitalization of the former school library to a learning commons requires diverse seating, working, and production options for students, as well as access to technology for equity, learning, creation, and sharing. The virtual learning commons is a space that promotes curated access to curriculum content as well as communication and scheduling for students and faculty.

In conclusion, the learning commons is a model designed to support student learning and achievement in a period of evolving and

dynamic change in curriculum and digital information and presentation technologies. This study situates the learning commons as central to school change, and identifies the factors that promote a successful transition. The *tragedy of the commons* scenario represents a transition process that is undermined by lack of support in key domains. Without the trust of the building principal, the school librarian faces challenges in implementing the model, and positioning the learning commons at the heart of student and faculty work within the school. With trust, the learning commons can play a central role in school goals, school change, and student achievement.

The experience of conducting authentic research on school librarianship was both challenging and invigorating. I am filled with gratitude for the generosity of the three participants in sharing their time, work, and expertise. My third reader, Dr. Mary Frances Zilonis, was extraordinary in identifying gaps in the research, as well as highlighting the opportunities for advocacy for the profession. Dr. Zilonis was truly a transformational partner, and immeasurably improved the caliber of the research and findings. Deeply engaging in various aspects and domains of school librarianship through research has been deeply rewarding. I look forward to future opportunities to work with data from our profession in order to continue advocating and contributing towards greater understanding and appreciation for the substantial benefits school librarians bring to student learning.

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

COMICS CORNER COLUMN BY EMILY TERSOFF

APRIL 12, 2015

Last issue I wrote about working with students on reading political cartoons as primary sources, but you may have noticed that both of the political cartoons I chose were recent ones, drawn in the last few years and focused on issues that current students would recognize. I chose them because they'd be "easy," which is to say, enough students would get them quickly enough that we could focus on the mechanics of reading and interpreting work in a medium (comics/cartoons) that most students have never studied. That's kind of a stretch for talking about primary sources, though, isn't it? Usually when we talk about primary and secondary sources we're learning (or teaching) about history, some event or time period from long ago. I can ask my students to think about what people in the future might learn from our contemporary comics — how, for those future people, they could be primary sources — but that's a pretty big imaginative leap, especially considering how much we take our own time and culture for granted.



That's where the second lesson in this mini unit comes in: we start off once again with a modern comic, Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*, but then we use it to help us consider a primary source political cartoon from the era of World War II and the internment camps for Japanese Americans. And while the first lesson had two key points, this lesson really boils down to one: how we draw (or otherwise represent) people matters.

We start by reading through several pages from *American Born Chinese* as a class: I project them on the board, one spread at a time, and ask the students what they notice. For some pages I'll specifically ask them what's different from the previous spread we looked at, or focus on some aspect of how Yang conveys information (for example, putting brackets around dialogue that characters would actually be saying in Chinese). The main thing I want them to notice, though, is how the characters are drawn. I'm going to quote a couple of pages so you can see what I mean.

(Yang 26)

I start with this page because I want students to see how different these characters look from each other. In each panel we have four boys, all Chinese American and all about the same age, and they are easy to tell apart. They have different faces, different hairstyles, different outfits — they are drawn as four distinct individuals.



After we've read through several more spreads, though, I show them part of another storyline in the book, including this page:

(Yang 48)

For those of you who haven't read *American Born Chinese* yet, this is Chin-Kee, an embarrassing, larger-than-life racist caricature who is meant to make readers as uncomfortable as he makes his cousin Danny. Unlike the boys in the first image I quoted, who are drawn with tan skin, Chin-Kee's skin is distinctly yellow. His eyes are squinted shut. He has huge front teeth. More than one student has suggested he looks like a chipmunk. He speaks with a stereotyped rather than a realistic accent. And of course, his name is a variation on a racial slur.

Because students have already seen other Asian characters (both Chinese American and Japanese American) from the same comic, they know that Chin-Kee does not need to be drawn this way. We discuss the fact that he's an exaggeration, a caricature: not only is he literally larger than other characters, but of the three storylines that come together at the end of the book, this is the only one presented as a sitcom, complete with laugh track and applause written across the bottoms of the panels. Unlike the caricature of the young woman in

our first lesson, though, this caricature is hurtful.



Then I show students the following political cartoon: (Seuss)

One of the first things I tell students about this political cartoon is that it's from 1942, and one of the first questions I ask them is: who do these people look like? Do they look like Jin and his friends in the first page I quoted above? Or do they look like Chin-Kee? From there we can also discuss setting (west coast of the United States), what the characters are doing (handing out/receiving explosives), and what they think the caption at the top means, particularly the implication that these caricatured Asian Americans do not consider the United States their home.

After that the conversation depends in part on how much students already know about Japanese American internment during World War II, though often I'll have at least one or two students who can offer an initial overview. Mostly I try to help students make the connection between how Dr. Seuss chose to represent a group of people (Japanese Americans) and how our country collectively chose to treat that same group of people, and to think

about how this political cartoon can help us understand the social atmosphere that would lead people to believe that the internment camps were a good idea.

There's one other reason I like to use this particular political cartoon, and that's the artist. Often I don't even have to bring this up because a student will notice it first, but this was drawn by the beloved Dr. Seuss. I find it heartening how disappointed students are when they realize this, but I think it's a great opportunity to discuss the fact that even people we admire and who make good points in some situations can be wrong in other situations.

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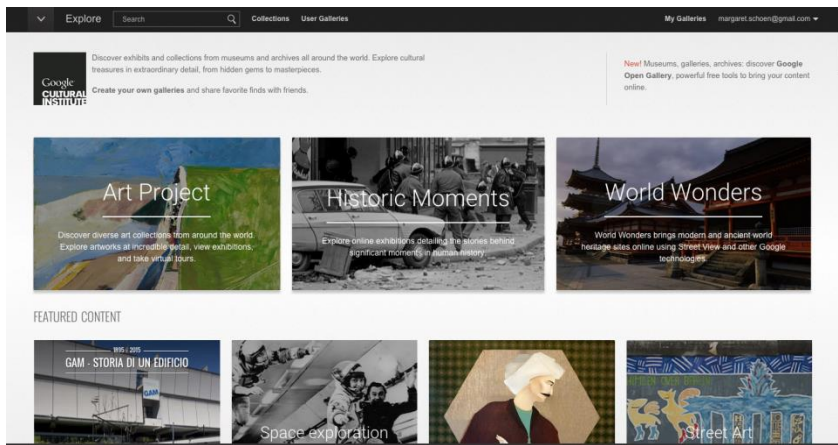
Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese*. New York: First Second, 2006. Print.

Emily Tersoff is the librarian at the Norwell Middle School

COLUMN: TALKING TECH BY MARGARET KANE SCHOEN

APRIL 12, 2015

Previously, we've looked at ways to use technology to help students and librarians create content and display their learning. In this column, we'll examine a new tool that helps students conduct research and develop their visual literacy skills, using artworks, photographs, artifacts and more to learn.



Google Cultural Institute

Google Cultural Institute includes art and artifacts from all over the world

Google Cultural Institute sprang from the Google Art Project – a proposal to digitize the world's art collections by allowing online visitors to stroll through a virtual museum the same way you use Street View to visualize a journey. Since then, the project has expanded to include Historic Moments and World Wonders projects, using maps, photographs and more to explain and instruct.

Art Project

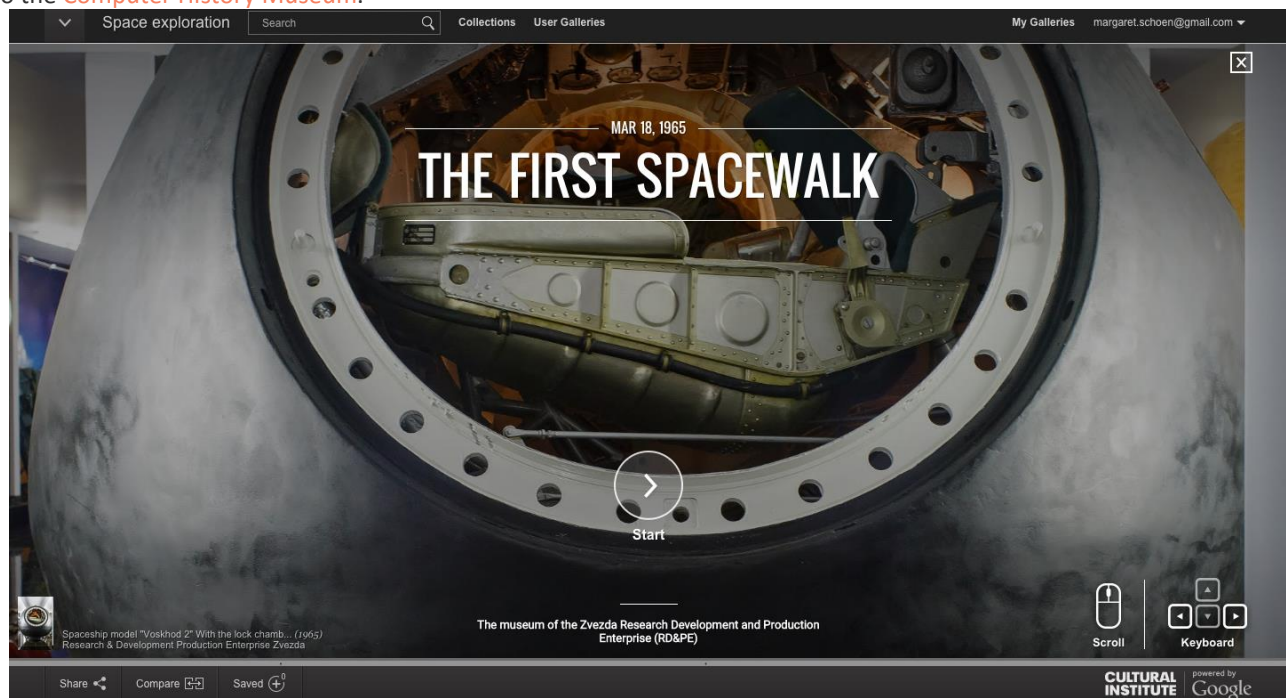
You can still take a virtual stroll through the Louvre, but Google has worked with museums to sort and

categorize their collections, creating a searchable database where students and teachers can view artworks in high-resolution. Works are accompanied details and descriptions to explain their meaning and history (as I tell my students, just like those little plaques that hang next to the paintings in the museum) as well as give information for citations. Links take students back to the original source where they can find more details and download images if they want to make copies.

The technology allows students to zoom in for a closer look, examining the brushstrokes on a Van Gogh, or to find each dot on Seurat's "A Sunday on La Grande Jatte." If you got this close in real life, the alarms would go off.

Historic Moments

In this section Google and its partners have created online exhibits about "significant moments in human history...using documents, photos videos and in some cases personal accounts of events." The project includes digital versions of existing exhibits as well as ones created and developed especially for the site, with partners ranging from the [George C. Marshall Organization](#), to the [Anne Frank House](#) to the [Computer History Museum](#).



The Historic Moments section includes exhibits curated by museums

World Wonders

This project teams Google with UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, bringing Google's Street View technology to UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites. Visit a world heritage site, and you can take a virtual tour of the site, read an article describing its importance, and view related artworks and artifacts, collected from museums around the world. For example, the

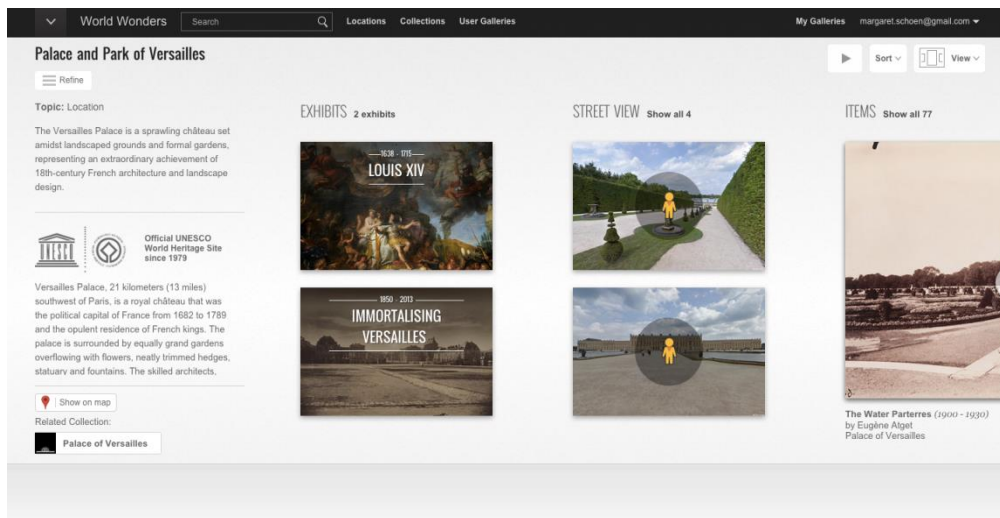


exhibit devoted to the Giza Necropolis will let you take a tour around the Sphinx, and then look at photographs of archeological digs in the LIFE Photo Collection.

The Versailles entry lets you read about the palace and look at some of its art before taking a virtual walk through the gardens

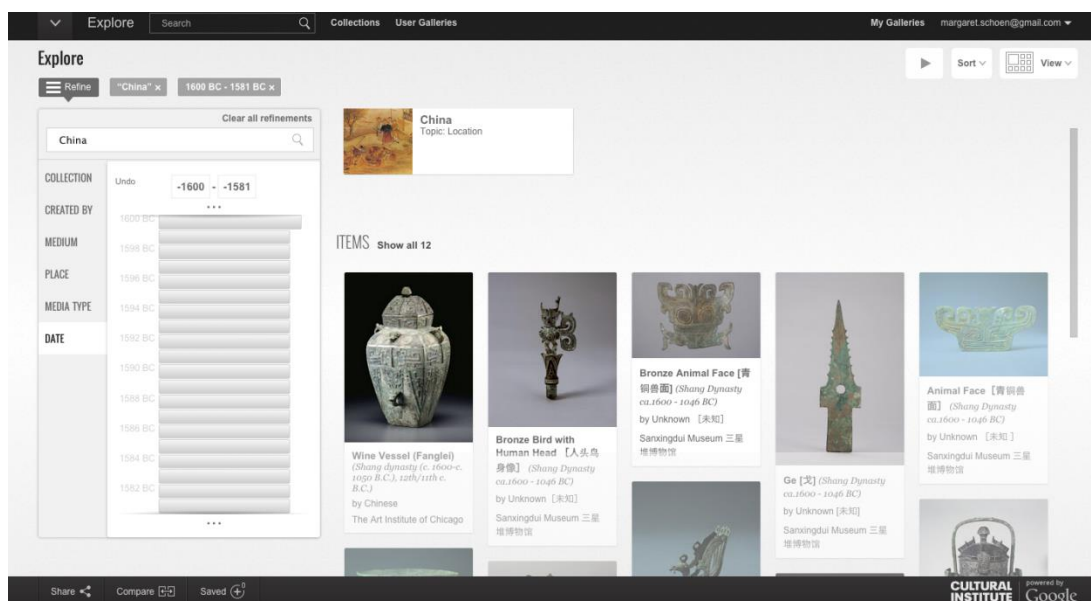
How would you use it in class?
The original Google Art Project was clearly a boon to art educators. But by expanding beyond traditional art works, the Google Cultural Institute can be a valuable resource for a variety

of teachers and subjects.

History teachers should find the site especially useful. Students can locate images and primary sources for research on the **fall of the Berlin Wall** or learn about the **codebreakers at Bletchley Park**.

The search functions can get even more specific: a student studying scientific innovations in Ancient China can comb the entire database, narrowing the search to items from China in 1600 BCE to find an example of **Bronze metalwork from the Sanxingdui Museum**.

Use the search tools to help students find artifacts from a particular time and place they are studying.



And it's not just for upper level research. Younger students researching volcanoes might browse through UNESCO's Pompeii exhibit and look at relics from the ancient city while American History researchers take a virtual tour of the Liberty Bell.

Sixth grade students at H.C. Crittenden Middle School in Byram Hills have used the site for their year-long nation research, said librarian Barbara Bathelemes. While not all her students used the tool, those who did "loved it."

Margaret Kane Schoen is a librarian at Newton South High School

SECONDARY SCHOOL COLUMN: THE MAKERSPACE PHENOMENON BY CATHY COLLINS

APRIL 12, 2015

The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones. ~ John Maynard Keynes

Makerspaces are all the rage these days, and a hot professional development topic. I had the opportunity this past month to immerse myself in the world of makerspaces on two occasions: through attendance at Eric Sheninger's "Makerspace" workshop at the "Leading Future Learning" Conference sponsored by EdTechTeacher and MassCUE on March 6th, and through hosting of a "Makerspace" workshop sponsored through MSLA's southeast region at my own Sharon High School Library.

Our library is currently undergoing a renovation process toward a "Learning Commons" model. I am excited about creating a makerspace, and was anxious to learn more about what's happening around the country.

I am a big fan of Eric Sheninger, former principal of New Milford HS and current K-12 Director of Technology & Innovation in Spotswood, NJ. His Makerspace presentation did not disappoint. Sheninger kicked off his presentation by highlighting the ways in which the maker movement is driving innovation in manufacturing, engineering, industrial design, hardware technology and education.

For those who may have missed this important new trend in the ed tech world, a makerspace is defined as a physical place where students can create real-world products/projects using real-world tools. It is meant to be a shared workspace featuring innovative tools that are not typically available outside of school. Makerspaces at their ideal are inhabited by a community of student tinkerers, inventors, creators and “Do it Yourself-ers.”

These student tinkerers, at their best, are guided by natural inquiry and self-directed learning. Making can be tied to different content areas, though makerspaces themselves are informal in nature. Students use problem-solving and diagnostic skills to come up with creative solutions. Educators involved guide from the sidelines, encouraging independent learning and creativity.

Sheninger’s presentation included a solid list of helpful resources ranging from suggested makerspace items, to articles, books and website links to further knowledge.

On March 26th, Laura Gardner, the Southeast Director of MSLA, and I welcomed 28 fellow librarians to participate in a Makerspace workshop at Sharon High School. After introducing the topic and talking about what a makerspace looks and sounds like, we had an informative and lively Skype session with Diana Rendina, a middle school librarian in Tampa, Florida, who has created an amazing makerspace in her school library. After plenty of Q&A, we enjoyed a round table sharing session about what we were doing or planning to do in the makerspace realm. Paul Shiff, from Hub Technical, also shared about upcoming presentation possibilities at the Fall Conference, as well as grant opportunities.

Cathy Collins is the librarian at Sharon High School

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: FLIPPING THE HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY – MARY ELDRINGHOFF

APRIL 12, 2015



Use of the term “21st century” has become pervasive in today’s society. Whether describing technologies, economies or social media, the term is inescapable. When that particular phrase is used to describe school libraries, most discussions center on the newest machines we provide rather than the

people who need to use our facilities. As I prepare to enter my eighth year as a high school librarian I am certain of one particular reality, the people who need to use the Larrabee Library at Tewksbury Memorial High School are in fact, 21st century teenagers.

In order to truly be effective educators, our students ought to be the starting point for any service the library offers. Years of observation and interaction with the “next” generation have led me to the following conclusion: 21st century American teens have been handed a difficult world. Within that world they face a series of challenges: financial, academic, social, emotional and highly under-reported, physical. Most teens deal with at least one of these issues. Many experience some combination of the five.



So how can librarians position themselves to support these students as they attempt to acquire knowledge while dealing with those potentially consuming issues? My answer to that question is basic: “Let’s listen to our students.” Students do communicate what they need; we must develop the ability to hear them. By listening to our students and with strong backing from administration and faculty, one librarian’s idea to offer academic support became a reality at TMHS.

Educators have the opportunity to embrace the “Land of the Great What If?” Is it time to think outside the box? Is it time to flip the high school library into the 21st century? What if ...we open the Larrabee Library at 6pm during finals week, and offer our students an academic setting that fits into their complicated lives? The mission of our high school library has always been: **to support teaching and learning**. By paying attention to our students and adhering to that mission, FINALS STUDY NIGHT at TMHS came to life.

Beyond some serious organizational planning, the successful formula included:

- 80 high school students
- 32 college student tutors
- An area for quiet study
- An area for small group study
- An area for interactive student mentoring
- Review sheets and textbooks provided by faculty
- A support team of current library interns
- Cocoa and cookies provided

The opportunity to study quietly and to study with friends was well received, but by far the most powerful aspect of the evening was watching TMHS alums share their collegiate expertise with our current students. Support was available in Algebra, American History, Anatomy, AP Calculus, American Literature, AP Economics and many other subject areas.



Colleges represented included: Lesley University, UMass Lowell, Worcester State, Harvard University, Endicott College, UMass Amherst, UCONN, Bridgewater State, Rensselaer Polytechnic, Worcester Polytechnic, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Salem State, Suffolk University, Merrimack College, College of the Holy Cross, Framingham State, Anna Maria College, UMass Dartmouth.

The success of this event dictated that we host a Finals Study Night in the spring. Most sincere appreciation goes to all who supported this idea from its inception: Principal Kristen Vogel, Assistant Principals Eileen Osborne and Jason Stamp, the entire TMHS faculty, both the custodial and cafeteria staff. This was unmistakably the most collaborative experience of my professional career.

Mary Eldringhoff, M.Ed., M.S., is the librarian at the Larrabee Library at Tewksbury Memorial High School

PTA AND MSLA RALLY FOR READING IN SWAMPSCOTT BY MEGHAN O'NEILL

APRIL 12, 2015

A prompt response by parents to proposed library budget cuts last year in the Swampscott School District led to a recent Grand Opening Celebration at the Hadley Elementary School.

"We have come a long way!" says Melissa DeFilippi, PTA co-president and a leading voice for reinstating library services. Today they have 7,000 books logged in a new e-catalog at Hadley, all done by hand by parent volunteers. The e-catalog is installed at all schools in the district. There are drop-in hours and after-school hours at Hadley, a high school librarian this year, and a promise on one at the middle school next year and elementary the year after.

Sharon Hamer and Judi Paradis, MSLA Executive Board members and library advocates, presented at Swampscott School Committee following the budget cut announcement to convince them of the vital importance of a strong school library program. According to DeFilippi, MSLA was "a big part of our success. We could not have lit the fire without your support. There is library buzz at Hadley. The parents are excited, the teachers are excited, and best of all, the children are excited."



Read more in a recent SLJ article by Lauren Barack:
<http://www.slj.com/2014/12/schools/school-library-renaissance-in-ma-school-district/>



Nonfiction BEFORE



Nonfiction AFTER



Donation Bin & More



Celebration Activity

Meg O'Neill is the Learning Commons Director at the Pingree school in South Hamilton

2015 MSLA CONFERENCE SESSION AH-HAH'S

APRIL 12, 2015

Did you miss this year's conference, or were there sessions you would like to have attended but you couldn't be in two places at the same time? Well here's some good news for you: a few generous members of the MSLA Board agreed to write up short blurbs on the real "ah hah!" moments from sessions they attended. This is by no means an exhaustive list — just enough to give you a flavor for a few of the sessions. For more detailed information on each session you can check out the [conference program](#) and [handouts](#) on the MSLA website.

Education by Design: Connecting With the Mobile Generation with BiblioBoard

Presented by Carolyn Morris, BiblioBoard, Emily Tordo, Phillips Academy, and Tricia London, Avon Middle/High School

Ah-Hah's contributed by Laura Gardner

- You can catalog and include all your school's yearbooks on BiblioBoard!
- It's possible to customize eBook holdings on BiblioBoard to restrict to elementary or elementary/middle school content
- There are lots of primary sources already on BiblioBoard — even music!
- The more teachers/librarians add content to BiblioBoard, the richer the content becomes
- Some schools are using primary source materials from BiblioBoard instead of textbooks

Great Books for Teens

Presented by Terri Grief, McCracken County High School, Paducah, KY and President, AASL

Ah-Hah's contributed by Anita Cellucci

Staying current with the latest teen books can be a challenge for us all and so anytime I can hear about best new books, I'm there! *Great Books for Teens* took the edge off of the fact that I can't read every book that is published, even if I would like to. Terri gave recommendations for several genres. Look for her [handout](#) of the complete list on the MSLA website.

Fill your Students' Toolboxes Using Creative Technology Applications and 20% time.

Presented by Christine Steinhauser Coolidge Middle School, Reading, MA

Ah-Hah's contributed by Ellen Brandt

What if you gave students time during the school day to pursue their *own* interests, with mentoring and support from the librarian and technology specialist, and access to a variety of technologies and materials?

You end up with students who:

- Discover new passions
- Have pride of accomplishment
- Become mentors for peers
- Develop leadership skills
- Practice conflict resolution
- Learn to take risks

Chris and the ITS at Coolidge Middle School developed a new elective course for 8th graders: 20% time. The class meets every other day throughout the year. Students work on a project of their choice*. They research, learn, experiment, create, share..and blog about their progress. Not all students reach the goals they set out to meet, but what is important is the skills, passions and confidence they gain along the way.

*Students fill out a **proposal** at the beginning of the year where they list their goals, resources and milestones. The teachers have project ideas and templates for those who are not yet ready to be completely independent.

EASY DOES IT! TECH TIPS FOR ORGANIZING YOUR WEB SITE BY GERRI O'REILLY

APRIL 12, 2015

"Organization is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up." ~ A.A. Milne

Organizing information is one of the things librarians do best. And where is it more needed than when designing a webpage? When I first began creating our school's webpage, my attention was drawn to how I wanted it to look. Visions of colors and fonts and graphics danced in my head. I soon found that while those design elements are important, first I needed to think about making the website easy to navigate, informative and useful. The following organizational tools are easy and free and will give your website the structure it needs to be a successful educational resource.

Symbaloo



As my webpage is the launching pad for most of the projects that my students are working on in the library, it is critical that students are able to easily locate the necessary resources. Instead of an endless series of links, the graphical interface of Symbaloo organizes information and makes it easy for students to click and be taken to the source they need. With Symbaloo students do not need to type in web addresses. You can create color-coded blocks and add graphics to organize the information for easy access. As my students would say – “it is easy peasy, lemon squeezy.” There is a free version of Symbaloo. You can sign up for your account at <http://www.symbalooedu.com/>

Thinglink



Another way to visually organize information in an interesting way is by using Thinglink. You simply select a central topic then choose an image that represents this subject. For example, I used a bookshelf for my Thinglink on “How to Find a Just Right Book.” Next you add links – the links can be to webpages, videos, images or an interactive page like your library catalog. Once you’ve completed the Thinglink, you can embed it on your webpage. Users then click on the links to go to the different resources on the topic. There is a free version of Thinglink. You can sign up for your account at <https://www.thinglink.com/edu>

Organizing to Keep Students Safe Online

Filters can never be 100% effective so I am always concerned about how to keep students safe when they are online. I use the following two tools to increase control over student access.

Safe Search Kids

Safe Search Kids is a custom search engine created by Google. It uses their SafeSearch features but takes it a step further by including additional strict filtering to search more safely. The link to use is

<http://www.safesearchkids.com/> You can also add a link to safely search images at <http://www.safeimages.safesearchkids.com/>





SafeShare TV

Although video is a powerful tool to use with students, too often the YouTube videos I want to use start and finish with an ad or links that are seldom what I want students to focus on. SafeShare TV is amazingly easy to use. It strips out these ads and links and leaves only the content you wish to share. Simply go to SafeShare.TV. Paste the link to the YouTube video you want to use and magically you receive a SafeSearch link.

The link to this tool is at <http://safeshare.tv/>

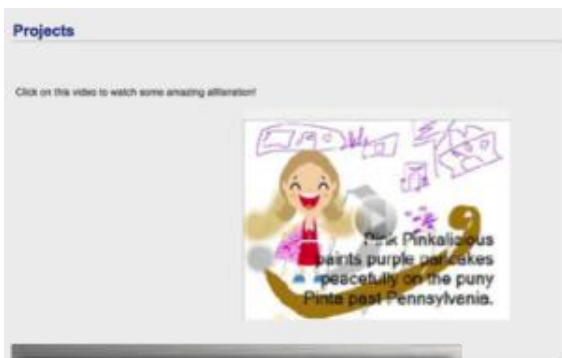


Posting Projects

We tell students all the time to “show, don’t tell.” Here are some ways to show student work not just describe it. Not only is it motivating for students to see their projects online, it is a wonderful opportunity to showcase their great work to their parents, the community and the world!

Flowplayer

Create videos of student work and share them using Flowplayer. This video player allows you to embed student videos on your website. The free version is available at <https://flowplayer.org/pricing/> – click the button “Sign up for FREE account.”



Youblisher

Another way to show off original student work is by creating a flipbook. It is super simple to do but looks really impressive. First, save your student’s work as a pdf file then upload the file to Youblisher. In a very short time, you will receive a link to the book that you can post or incorporate into your Symbaloo page. Go to <http://www.youblisher.com/register> for a free account.

Hit Counter

Now that you’ve loaded projects, added links and created videos, how do you know if anyone is using your site? One way to tell is to embed a hit counter. There are many different hit counters you can use. I incorporated the free hit counter from <http://www.hit-counts.com/> on my page. So far, we’ve recorded over 150,000 views

of the page. A lot of hits for a small town! Using this counter is easy, simply sign up (your email address and URL are required), choose a style and click generate code. You will quickly and easily receive a counter code to use on your site.



Just the beginning

"The Internet is becoming the town square for the global village of tomorrow." – Bill Gates

Today having a web page is essential. Our site is often the first stop students make when they want to view content. We need to ensure that users don't get lost as they navigate to and through our sites. Symbaloo, ThingLink, SafeShare TV, Flowplayer and Youblisher are powerful ways to structure web site content. Are there any changes you can make so that users can easily find the information they need?

Gerri O'Reilly is the Library Media Specialist at the Dennett Elementary School in Plympton

ARRANGING A SCHOOL LIBRARY HOME PAGE BY MICHAEL CALIGUIRI

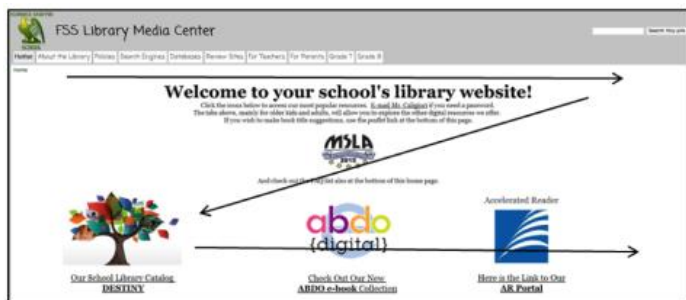
APRIL 12, 2015

As a school librarian, I'm interested in the way things are organized. Organizing is a big part of the job and I'm proud of the way I've shaped our library's physical space. I've found myself reorganizing this space to allow form to follow function. When I tackled the job of creating a digital space for my library, I relied on what I've learned from arranging and rearranging the physical space. With both, I've found success in keeping things very simple and uncluttered. For our school library, physical and digital space alike, I place importance on an open, uncluttered, and inviting space.

A few years ago, our school moved to an all-Google platform for uniformity among our three-town district. This meant that all teachers were required to use Google Sites as their host. For me, this meant changing my K-8 *TeacherWeb* site to Goggle. I looked forward to the change since starting from scratch gave me the opportunity to weed and rethink its purpose. It wasn't an entirely new start. I knew I needed a catalog link, links to databases and student search engines, as well as curriculum resources. The challenge was how and where to arrange these things. And Google Sites, especially in the basic form we adopted, is not very easy to work with. I sought out the help of experts for technical stuff, but for the look of my homepage, I turned to some tricks I've learned from reading comic books.

DESIGN

Comic book page layout, as well as magazine advertisements, have much in common with website homepage layout. Our eyes first scan rather than read these media. In *Comics and Sequential Art*, Will Eisner (the guy for whom the graphic novel award is named) explains that in western culture our eyes are trained to move across a page in a left to right direction. We start with a sweep across the top, then diagonally through the center, and left to right again across the bottom in a "Z" shaped pattern. Our eyes are most comfortable scanning this path across a page. When I designed my website, I chose a Google template that fit this model. I put the bold "welcome" message across the top of my page. The middle has a centered short paragraph explaining basic navigation with white space on the left and right. Across the bottom, there are just three bold graphics connecting patrons to the sites most used by elementary kids. When it was time for me to add my Web Seal of Excellence, I decided on the very center widening the "Z" and providing more white space on the sides.



Your eye first follows the path that welcomes you to the site. Once you move across the center, you find yourself at the most popular link, the library's digital catalog. Your last quick movement is across the bottom where you find the most used links by early elementary kids. If at this point you haven't found what you are looking for, you can start again. This time you might read the message in the middle directing you to the tabs at the top or the links at the very bottom. Those links that require some hunting are designed for older kids and adults. Again, just as the library is designed for easy movement and access through the stacks of books, our eyes need the same

comfort as they travel across the homepage.

OMNE TRIUM PERFECTUM

As for space, it's important to stay uncluttered. I decided to use graphics sparingly, following the rule of three. Working in a Pre-K through 8 school posed the added challenge of where to place content for very different age groups. I chose colorful graphics for those links most frequently accessed by our younger patrons. For older kids, parents, and teachers, I put their links on the smaller tabs at the top. These links are more text-heavy but each annotation within is still kept short. The *Policies and Procedures* tab does contain long paragraphs, but each annotated link for teachers, parents, and middle school kids is kept under three sentences long.

I grouped the vertical areas on the homepage in threes as well. The banner with tabbed links on the top, a short paragraph explaining how to use the site in the middle, and the three bold graphics anchoring the bottom. Depending on screen size, most of the homepage fits on one screen cutting down on the amount of scrolling and searching to find links.

The arrangement of library website links, like the physical arrangement of the library's collection, should welcome visitors. Both need to be easy to navigate. Both need uncluttered access to the most popular resources first, and both need a design that brings people back.

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Michael Caligiuri is the school librarian at the Florence Sawyer School in Bolton

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: LISA PAPADEMETRIOU – ELLEN BRANDT

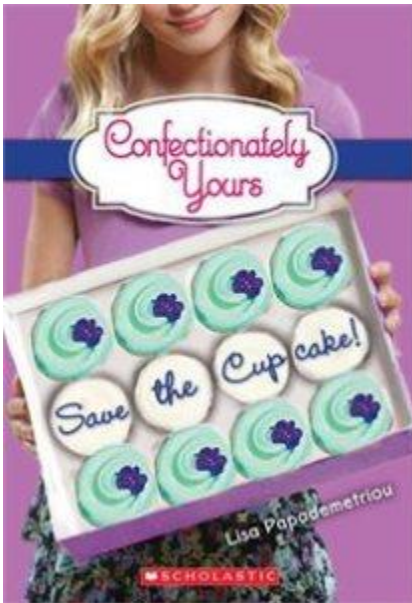
APRIL 12, 2015



Author Lisa Papademetriou (Photo courtesy of Random House)

"I was always a writer and I knew I wanted to write for children, but people said it was impossible, that I'd never make a living doing that, so I went into 'editorial' instead". While working at Alloy, editing mass market paperbacks for younger audience (e.g. Sweet Valley High), Lisa Papademetriou noticed that SOME people DO make a living writing for children and she dropped out of business school to pursue her real passion and become a *New York Times* bestselling author. Her original intention was to be a fantasy writer, but people asked her to "write those funny stories you tell about when you were in high school", so she ended up writing contemporary, middle grade realistic fiction. Her most recent series, *Confectionately Yours*, has a substantial fan base at my middle school as does *Middle School: My Brother is a Big Fat Liar*, which she co-wrote with James Patterson.

Her new book *A Tale of Highly Unusual Magic* will be released in October 2015. Two middle school aged girls, one in Texas and one in Pakistan, each find a blank book. They do not know each other, but what they write in their book gets seen by the other girl on the other side of the world...AND the book itself has a story to tell too! The idea was inspired by her MFA Thesis on the 'concept of destiny' which she says is the story we tell ourselves that makes our lives have meaning.



In addition to writing books, poems and short stories, Lisa has a hilarious website for teaching grammar: *Ivana Correctya* <http://www.ivanacorrectya.com/> and an app, *Grammarous*.

Ellen Brandt is the school librarian at Blanchard Middle School in Westford

NEWY NEIGHBORHOODS, OR HOW I REINVENTED THE DEWEY DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM TO MEET THE NEEDS OF MY ELEMENTARY LIBRARY

BY NANCY KELLNER

APRIL 12, 2015

NOTE: This article is reprinted with permission from the author. The original article appeared on the author's [The "In" Librarian](#) blog. "Dewey was so 1800's."

No, this is not a comment overheard at a librarians' forum dedicated to the implementation of the [bookstore model](#) in libraries. These are the words of a 4th grader upon completion of our Dewey Decimal study unit.

In November of 2012, I began my annual exploration of the breadth and depth of topics housed in the (primarily) nonfiction section of the library we all know as the Dewey Decimal section. In fact, "[Melvil](#)" himself guest lectured to introduce his classification system to the students.

Melvil Dewey, Guest Lecturer

Early on, there were rumblings about some of Dewey's designations and decisions. "Hey, we should make up our own system, the Newey Decimal System," quipped one student.

Now here's where the lesson could have gone in two directions. "Oh, what a cute idea," I could have thought, diminishing the creativity and critical thinking of said student and sticking with the almighty planbook. Or, I could have been blown away by the thought of a NEW Dewey, one created by the kids themselves. The fastidious Dewey-obsessed librarian would have opted for the former. (I used to be that librarian). But the Librarian 2.0 said to herself, let's get messy and give this a try.

And so, the day arrived after we had journeyed through all ten categories to take that giant leap forward. I started with a class assessment. To create something new, we needed to understand the old first. So, I challenged the students to recall the ten Dewey classes, which we recorded on the left hand side of the whiteboard. Surprisingly this was much easier for them than I had thought it would be. Future librarians all? Then we started brainstorming how we could make the classification system more child-friendly.

The ideas began to flow. Every single child contributed. Ideas coincided, collided and overlapped:

- "There should be a separate category just for nature. Animals and plants together. Pets, gardening, wild animals and trees."
- "Geography and languages and cultures and cookbooks should go together."
- "You know how the ghost books are in one section (100's) and the alien and mysterious creatures are in another (000's)? They should be together."
- "There should be a 'How-To' section. It could have the drawing books, origami books, how to put on your own play..." "Maybe we should call it the 'Boredom Busters' section."
- "We need to have more than just ten sections."

Newey brainstorm

And then this one, which really surprised me—a suggestion to put the biographies, history and the historical fiction together, by topic. "They're all about history" was the (obvious) explanation. Interestingly enough, this idea is not new and has been adapted (loosely) in at least one [school library](#).

The Newey concept remained theoretical—a great culminating lesson, a summative assessment designed by the students themselves. But, the following year I thought. Why not get messy? Why not empower these children to ring out the old and ring in the Newey? And so, the Newey Neighborhood was born. Twenty-odd sections, a new alpha-numeric classification system, a boon to shelvees and searchers alike. It took braun-power and brain-power and months of chaos, but it was worth it.

Nancy Kellner is the librarian at the Peaslee School in Northborough



LANGUAGE LACED IN BIAS: CLASSIFYING KNOWLEDGE (MORE) EQUALLY WITH A DEWEY-HYBRID MODEL BY HALEY ZANCONATO

APRIL 12, 2015



I firmly believe that any worthwhile project should begin with a decent dose of naïve optimism.

It all started on a quiet April afternoon in the Dartmouth High School Library. I had just finished reading an article about a school library that had converted their nonfiction collection to a Dewey-Free model. *What an awesome idea!* I thought. *And besides, how difficult could it possibly be?* (Very difficult, I would later learn. At one point that summer when someone asked how the project was progressing, I actually said—almost crying—“I never want to see another book again!” ...But don’t let that scare you.) While our classification project of creating a Dewey-Hybrid model took us eight months and 13,000 books from initial idea to full implementation, it has been a groundbreaking change that has positively impacted student engagement, learning, browsing, and research.

Powerful Words

“Going Dewey-Free” is currently a hot topic in the library world. Some librarians like to say, “Why fix what’s not broken?” but I would argue that the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) has been broken since its creation—we just didn’t know it at the time. No amount of detailed signage will fix the fact that the DDC reflects one man’s white, Christian, American, nineteenth-century worldview. The DDC marginalizes minority discourses into classifications labeled “other”: *290 Other and comparative religions*, *490 Other languages*, and *990 General history of other areas*. This distinguishes those that have been named (*460 Spanish and Portuguese Languages*) as normative and socially acceptable. How do our students feel who practice “other religions” or whose families are from “other areas”? And how do students from “named” backgrounds learn to view people from “other” backgrounds? Language is a form of power. When we classify books, we’re really classifying knowledge. And when we arrange knowledge in a hierarchy, we privilege certain lived experiences over others. People cannot be equal until all forms of knowledge are equal.

Dismal Decimals

The DDC was created with an ever-expanding decimal structure, an innovative feature for its time. This structure enables newly created categories to be incorporated into the existing framework. Over the years, though, categories have become fragmented to the point where *computers* are separate from *technology*, and *sewing* and *crocheting* are split across classes. In a genre-based system, spontaneous browsing has become a challenge.

This is the point where I find myself questioning the true purpose of libraries. When Dewey created the DDC, libraries contained closed stacks, only accessible by librarians (Gibson 48). As a profession, we have worked so hard over the years to encourage our students to take responsibility for their learning and to teach them the tools and components of research. Until we change the classification system, librarians will always serve as the intermediary. The key question is: should students have to be taught how to use a library? If a librarian’s primary responsibility is to serve as every student’s first point of contact in locating a book, we are losing time that could be spent on more creative, innovative, and collaborative work.

Unconvinced Librarians

Over the past two years, I have been contacted by many librarians about the concept of a Dewey-Hybrid model, from schools as near as my own district, to schools as far as the United Kingdom. While many librarians are convinced of the value of converting their systems, they struggle with the time and planning required to complete the project. There are other librarians, though, who are not convinced of the value of a Dewey-Free or Dewey-Hybrid model. They sometimes say things like, “Why overhaul the system when it just needs clarification?” (Hopefully that question has already been addressed.) Librarians also mention a concern with switching to a model that has not been officially established and accepted as a universal system. As a result, the ability to copy-catalogue becomes limited, and cataloging new items takes additional time. However, librarians may find themselves with additional time if they are no longer retrieving books for students. (Disclaimer: By no means am I advocating for a library experience where librarians no longer help students find materials. There is a stark difference, however, between those students who simply need to locate the biographies on Nelson Mandela or the books about Shakespeare, vs. those students who need help formulating a research question or finding books to spark some topic selection ideas.)

Systems, Frameworks, Models, Oh My!

Another objection that some librarians raise when considering a system conversion is the importance of students knowing how to use the public library. They worry that if the DDC isn’t taught in schools, students will grow up not knowing how to use other libraries. My answer starts like this: If students go to college, they will likely encounter Library of Congress. When they go to a bookstore, they browse by genre and author. On Amazon.com and other online booksellers, they search by keyword. All of these are just systems, but

they're *different* systems. We should keep in mind that Dewey-Free and Dewey-Hybrid models are also systems, not the absence of a system.

Furthermore, most public libraries still use the DDC, but how many adults voluntarily visit a public library if they don't like reading, research, or discovering new things? Fostering a love of learning in children is a crucial step in creating adults who choose to visit the public library. And children who find (school) libraries frustrating, confusing, and intimidating will be at risk for not developing that passion for reading. If library patrons (of all ages) sense that libraries were designed for librarians, they will feel more like intruders in someone else's space with less ownership of their right to a library's collection of knowledge.

It has now been two years since that April afternoon when I stood in front of the nonfiction stacks and frowned for a while...and then envisioned the possibility of a different classification structure. It has been a process and a journey full of research, ideas, mistakes, and successes. While I do not claim that the Dartmouth High School library has created the perfect model, I am proud to say that it now features a system in which knowledge is more equal and students are more autonomous in their learning.

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In 2013, Halley Zanconato and Pamela King, the Library Assistant, converted the nonfiction collection of the Dartmouth High School to a Dewey-Hybrid model. Eight months, 13,000 books, and countless cups of coffee later, the library features a more intuitive, less biased collection that is structured to directly support the school's curriculum. Halley will graduate next year with a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from UMass Dartmouth.

Halley Zanconato is the Library Media Specialist at Dartmouth High School.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: SARAH ALBEE BY SAMANTHA KANE

APRIL 12, 2015

Did you know that a certain sea snail which "secretes a snot-like substance that turns different colors when exposed to sunlight" was used to dye the Phoenicians' fabric? That corsets in the late 1800's could exert 88 pounds of force on the internal organs?

Have you heard of a crossing sweeper? Not a crossing guard, a crossing sweeper. A crossing sweeper who swept muck and the thirty pounds of daily horse manure out of the way when a fine lady or gentleman crossed the street in the early nineteenth century.

Have you heard of Venus Cloacina? Not the goddess of love but the Roman goddess of sewers.

Can you explain how the mosquito contributed to the Louisiana Purchase? Or why the first early European settlers of Florida slept buried in sand?

If you've read any of Sarah Albee's browsable non-fiction you could probably answer yes.

But to read *Why'd They Wear That?*, *Bugged*, and *Poop Happened* is more than snacking on fascinating friend-stumping trivia. It is to feast on fabulously original takes on history.

Why'd They Wear That?: Fashion as the Mirror of History gives the readers a glimpse into the moral, social and political climates of the time.

Poop Happened: A History of the World from the Bottom Up examines the public health consequences of sanitation choices as societies navigate waste disposal.

Bugged: How Insects Changed History combines history, microbiology, epidemiology and conservation to explain the impact of living with ten quintillion insects.

Sarah Albee's high appeal books with comprehensive content are no accident. Albee says she thinks like a twelve year old. All her books are structured chronologically because it is important to her to help kids make connections.

So the next time you don your fleece made from recycled plastic bottles, or you drink your milk that has been produced by a cow not stressed by too many flies, or you use toilet paper invented by the Chinese for emperor use only, you can remember Sarah Albee's sideways takes on the world.

Samantha Kane is the Library Teacher at The Chestnut Hill School

JANE YOLEN AND HEIDI STEMPEL SAVE THE DAY: A BEDTIME STORY BY STACY KITSIS

APRIL 12, 2015

Once upon a time, the school librarians of Massachusetts gathered in a great hall, all waiting to meet the legendary Book Whisperer. Unfortunately, it came to pass that the Book Whisperer was trapped in the far-off land of the Philadelphia International Airport (“At least there’s a bookstore and a Legal Seafood,” came word from Twitter). With that, the wise MSLA Executive Board sprang into action and worked their magic to conjure mother-and-daughter giants of children’s literature, Jane Yolen and Heidi Stemple. (This was not even the day’s first miracle, Heidi having already pulled off the trick of being in two places at one time with a surprise appearance at the at the lower grades author showcase while on the panel for the upper grades.) Despite having been with the librarians since early afternoon, our story’s heroines were undaunted, staying on through dinner, the annual meeting, and awards presentation, to save the day with an inspired and entirely extemporaneous keynote address.

That’s how it happened that, while we missed Donalyn Miller, those who attended the MSLA 2015 Conference dinner had the best consolation prize a roomful of school librarians could wish for. For those of you who couldn’t be there, snuggle up now and enjoy a few of the stories Jane and Heidi shared with us.

The Family Business

And so. Once upon a time, there was a mother and daughter, and they wrote many beautiful books for children and young adults and grownups to enjoy together. But this story really begins even earlier, as Jane and Heidi explained how each came to join what is truly a family business.

Jane’s grandfather was a natural storyteller, sitting by the fire in his inn in the old country and regaling audiences in Yiddish with the most amazing stories, cribbed from Shakespeare and the Bible (of course, the Bard was himself a consummate thief, and as we were reminded, the best storytellers are terrific liars). Her father was a journalist, publishing executive, and the self-proclaimed kite-flying champion of the Western Hemisphere, whose adventures included being a police reporter and spinning misinformation for the secret radio in London during World War II. Her mother was the author of published crossword puzzles and unpublished short stories. Jane’s older son writes books of music; the younger is a photographer.

Parent-child collaboration is itself part of the family tradition. Her father, Will Yolen, “loved to sign contracts and checks and books ... but didn’t like to write.” So it came to pass that the first book of the hundreds Jane has published was *The Young Sportsman’s Guide to Kite Flying*, ghost-written for her dad for \$250 and no royalties.

Still, her firstborn daughter had to be “hailed kicking and screaming into the family business.”

The Kid in Owl Moon

“I am completely the opposite of my mom in the way I came into this,” explained Heidi. Though written into her mother’s books as the daughter in *Owl Moon* and other characters, Heidi took a more circuitous route to becoming an author. Though an avid reader and writer (with great models at home, of course!), she was too shy as a child to get up and speak in front of an audience. Her early career as a professional writer began in college when (in a story she promised she does not tell in school visits), she set up a cottage industry writing papers for other students. “I was good enough I could charge by the letter grade,” she explained with all due modesty. Still, Heidi was a parole officer, a private investigator, and a bartender, apparently exhausting all options before joining her mother to write a story for the collection *Great Writers & Kids Write Spooky Stories*. Since then they have collaborated on on more than 20 books together, with more on the way.

For those who are wondering, “the kid in *Owl Moon*,” as she put it, still goes owling annually, and even uses some of her late father David Stemple’s recordings. One year she called 66 owls.

What a Writer Needs

Our next story is a kind of list: the things a writer needs.

Jane began: “First, an idea. It helps.” But, she clarified, you don’t have to be an expert. It can be something you’re interested in, something “so familiar to you you’ve never explored it before, [or] something so important to you you’ve never dared crack it open before.”

You’ll also need patience. Ideas have to “roast, bubble, cook ... to get to the point they are palatable.”

Then there’s the all-important BIC. That’s “bottom in chair,” of course.

Next, a question: you have to ask, “What if?” It’s the question “all storytellers ask,” Jane explained. “What if a father and a daughter go out owling on a moonlit night? What if a girl goes back in time to ... the Holocaust?”

A writer also needs a sense of self (“that no one else is going to tell the story the way you will”) and a love of story (“or what are you doing writing it?”). And finally, writers need readers, to make their stories live. The reader may even find a different story than the one the writer thought she put down.

What’s missing from the list? Talent. Talent is cheap, Jane explained. Everyone has some. It’s the rest of it that takes the hard work. Heidi added three things: passion, perseverance, and patience. To which her mother responded, “I said patience!” Clearly, however, it was worth repeating, as the next and last story they told was 12 years in the making.

Good Night, Nestlings!

Then it was time to read the librarians their final bedtime story, the just-released *You Nest Here With Me*, an ornithological lullaby about pigeons, catbirds, wrens, and grackles. This book, Jane and Heidi explained, went through editors, publishers, and rewrites to the point of being unrecognizable to its authors and back again, then waited three more years for the perfect illustrator in Melissa Sweet.

Jane and Heidi read, as the sleepy, grateful librarians listened on:

*Swallows nest above barn doors,
Plovers nest on sandy shores,
Eagles nest upon high tors,
But you nest here with me*

In a metaphor that seemed apt not just for a child’s bedtime routine but (since, as we know, the reader will find her own meaning) maybe even the role of literature and libraries in the lives of young people:

*Like baby bird, your nest can be
Anywhere there’s you and me*

And in parting, mother and daughter concluded, “Good night, nestlings!”

Stacy Kitsis is the librarian at Arlington High School

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: M.T. ANDERSON BY ALANA STERN

APRIL 12, 2015



Author M.T. Anderson shows off the MSLA chocolates given to him at the 2015 MSLA conference at UMASS Amherst. “I wish I hadn’t been,” author M.T. Anderson admits to the crowd of librarians, “So prescient, I mean.” Anderson grinned as he responded to a member of the audience who complimented his 2002 novel, *Feed*, a science fiction title for young adults that imagines a not-so-distant future in which most people have Internet-like feeds implanted directly into their brains. M.T. Anderson (“Also known as ‘Tobin!’” moderator Sandy Kelly informed session-attendees) a last-minute addition to the conference, enthusiastically sat in as a panel member on the Upper Grades Author Showcase Sunday afternoon. Afterward, he spoke with librarians at the Author Meet & Greet.

Feed, like all of Anderson’s novels, challenges readers to look at the world differently, or to think critically about humans’ interactions with and within society. The text satirically addresses consumerism, reliance on technology, factory farming, and other ills of the modern age. “I loved *The Martian Chronicles* when I was growing up,” Anderson explained, referring to the Ray Bradbury work. “I think [Bradbury’s] influence is evident in my writing. Yes, it’s science fiction, but it’s symbolically about America.” When I explained

that I usually pitch *Feed* to teachers as “Kurt Vonnegut for iPhone-addicted teenagers,” he smirked. “Absolutely! Bradbury. Vonnegut, too. You can say a lot with satire.”

Anderson grew up in Stow, Massachusetts, and admits that being raised in bucolic New England greatly influences his writing style. “You see that in *Octavian Nothing*,” he explained. “I don’t know if I would have found that piece of history if I hadn’t grown up here.” His National Book Award-winning *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Traitor to the Nation* tells the story of Octavian, the son of a slave, growing up as an experiment of rational philosophers in Revolutionary War-period Massachusetts. “I saw battle reenactments at the 225th anniversary of the Battle of Old North Bridge, and thought, if I were alive when this happened, it would be my dad fighting. My family. We wouldn’t know who would be victorious. What would that be like? To grow up in that time of uncertainty?”

From science fiction, to historical fiction, Anderson is known for jumping genres. *Feed* is dystopian sci-fi; *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Traitor to the Nation* duo is historical fiction; and his first novel, *Thirsty*, is a coming-of-age vampiric horror story. For his next title, Anderson is jumping again—to non-fiction. “This one took years to research. I’m really excited about it,” Anderson explained.

This new book, *Symphony for the City of the Dead: Dmitri Shostakovich and the Siege of Leningrad*, tells the story of what life was like in Leningrad once it was cut-off from the rest of the world during one of the longest and most brutal military sieges in Western history. “There were roving bands of cannibals. No, really. It was horrific,” Anderson said. The book details how the composer Dmitri Shostakovich endured the siege while composing his *Leningrad* Symphony, a musical work which became prominent in the eventual Allied victory. He continued, saying “Shostakovich was evacuated. They smuggled his symphony out. It conveyed the horror of Leningrad to detached New Yorkers.”

So why jump to non-fiction rather than write a novel? “This is a case of the true story already being so strange and interesting,” Anderson explained. “It’s full of despair and hope. Why would I fictionalize it?” *Symphony for the City of the Dead: Dmitri Shostakovich and the Siege of Leningrad* will be published by Random House September 22nd, 2015.

Alana Stern is a Teacher Librarian at Wachusett Regional High School

WHY #MEMBERSHIP MATTERS: ONE LIBRARIAN’S TAKE BY MAYA BERY

APRIL 12, 2015

Last fall, I attended the AASL conference in Hartford, CT (membership in a national organization is just as important as in a local one). One of the many excellent sessions I attended came from our very own Newton Public School librarians on the topic of elementary learning commons. Though I’d only been working in Carlisle for about ten weeks, I returned to Massachusetts brimming with ideas, new perspectives, and a mission: somehow, I would transform my library into a genuine learning commons.

The first step was to begin gathering information on the rare elementary learning commons out there. I downloaded the Newton presentation from AASL’s eCOLLAB platform (another membership benefit), and put out a query to the MSLA listserv (again, a membership benefit) asking for resources. Within 24 hours, I had a wealth of information from librarians around the state: bibliographies, links, suggestions and more. Over the summer, I began to formulate my proposal, and in the fall, I presented it to my superintendent, who in turn shared it with our parent-led education foundation. They jumped at the chance to get involved, a return to their origins (they were founded to save the library during budget cuts), and I was asked to start thinking about this project in earnest.

Now I had to start thinking more carefully about *what* I would include on my wishlist. This seems like an easy, fun activity – scouring websites, blogs, and Pinterest for inspiration – but the reality is that it’s more than a little overwhelming. So once again, I turned to the listserv to crowdsource suggestions, and just as before, the suggestions came pouring in: a TV to show digital work, a media lab, makerspaces, a spot for reader’s theater, and more. Some were ideas I’d come up with on my own, but others made me go “what a WONDERFUL idea! I can’t believe I hadn’t thought of that before!” Especially as someone who is the sole librarian in my district, I value having a virtual “team” more than I can say.

Flash forward to March and the MSLA unconference and conference in Amherst. Sunday morning dawned, and the fantastic Laura D’Elia and Dan Callahan kicked off the Unconference. The morning session I attended focused on makerspaces, and I loved hearing about technology-centric makerspaces (video production/green screens/stop-motion apps) as well as the more practical ones, like knitting or sewing. My afternoon session of choice focused on learning commons – about 20 of us, representing a variety of schools and different stages of the process. Ellen Brandt from Westford shared her experiences (which she’s also been documenting on the listserv), but it was also great to hear from others who have started to make small changes, or who are trying to figure out where to begin. The beauty of an unconference is that each of us had a voice instead of one presenter who answered a handful of questions at the end of a session. I am looking forward to participating in a more general unconference at some point in the future, but only MSLA can provide a library-specific unconference where we can share experiences and topics that are directly relevant to our work.

I also attended a fabulous Monday session by Jessica Lodge, where she shared how she’s incorporated learning centers into her library. A learning center is a dedicated activity students can do after they’ve checked out books, and Jess has managed to incorporate fun and learning into her stations. As someone who’s followed her blog for years, it was great to see some of her learning center materials in person and to have the opportunity to ask her questions. It was great to get inspired with simple, easy ideas, like the genius thought of putting straws and tape in a bin and having kids create original structures. Makerspace, engineering, and fun all in one! I also loved Zoinks the Robot, a small creation who asks students a weekly question that they must use a library resource (PebbleGo, BrainPop, Britannica, etc.) to answer.

When my superintendent offered specialists the chance to visit other schools during parent-teacher conferences this past week, I knew exactly what I was going to do. Using the MSLA directory (you guessed it, another membership goodie), I reached out to Jess, Jennifer Reed, and Sheila Packard, all of whom work in Newton and have made changes to their spaces that I wanted to see in person. They graciously welcomed me into their schools, answered my questions, and let me take as many photographs as I wanted. I saw how Jess has used the side of a shelf to mount a Lego board, and how she uses a flat space under her circulation desk for a Boggle board. I saw how Jen has implemented great signage and made good use of limited display space, and got to test out collaboration-friendly tables in Sheila's space.

Being a librarian is not always easy. We're usually the only one in our building who does what we do, and some of us don't even have a team. MSLA has allowed me to build a professional network of librarians across the state who I can turn to for advice (my superintendent, who attended the conference with me, came away highly impressed by just how many people I know from across the state). MSLA provides me with relevant professional development that directly benefits my students (I walked away from this summer's Better Together conference with at least two projects that are now in development). Most of all, it has allowed me to make friends with colleagues whose names I recognize from the listserv when I take a class or go to a workshop, colleagues who are funny, wise, helpful, encouraging and just generally fabulous company whenever we meet. I couldn't be doing what I'm doing without the support I've gained from being an MSLA member, and I'll be sure to keep you all posted as my library begins its transition in the hopes that my experience can help others. #membershpmatters

Maya Bery is the librarian at The Carlisle School in Carlisle

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: BURLEIGH MUTÉN BY KELLY MCMANUS

APRIL 12, 2015

Burleigh Mutén <http://www.burleighmuten.com/> is the author of a middle grade verse novel, *Miss Emily*, which is about Emily Dickinson and the children she loved. The mischievous, playful Miss Emily invites her young friends to greet the circus train as it arrives in town, and a fresh image of Dickinson as an approachable, fun companion is offered to the reader.

Mutén has authored four other books for children, two about goddesses throughout the world and two collections of retold folktales. She has twice been included on the Children's Book Council Notable Social Studies Book for Young Children. She teaches creative writing to young authors and enjoys being a visiting author at elementary schools and teaching about Emily Dickinson as well as mythology.

This year at the MSLA conference in Amherst I had the pleasure of meeting and interviewing author Burleigh Mutén.

According to Ms. Mutén, contrary to what many think, Emily Dickinson never retreated from the children in her life. When asked how she came up with the idea of writing a children's book about Emily Dickinson, Ms. Mutén told me it all began as she investigated curriculum for her kindergarten class and discovered MacGregor Jenkins' book, *Emily Dickinson: Friend and Neighbor* at the Jones Library in Amherst. Jenkins grew up across the street from the Dickinsons and was a close friend with her niece and nephew.

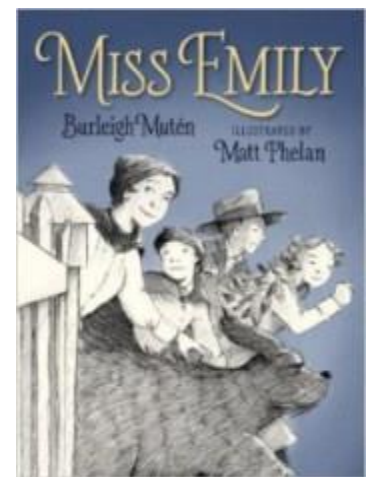
"Most people don't know that Emily was a devoted friend to the children in her neighborhood. She always made time for them and made them feel important. When Emily saw children playing outside, she often joined their fantasies by providing sweet treats for the "pirates" and "gypsies" she found in her yard. Miss Emily had a lot in common with the young children," said Mutén, "such as the fun of word play and a love for nature." As educators, we discussed how empowering it is for a child to have an adult really care and want to know who they are.

Ms. Mutén found the more she read about Dickinson, the more she wanted to know. She said she'd been a private poet since high school, but felt emboldened to use her poet voice to tell this story. Through the book, *Miss Emily*, Mutén hopes the playful spirit of Emily Dickinson will interest and inspire young readers and writers.

Mutén said that "writing is a great way to process and organize your thoughts" and is a great activity to boost a child's self-esteem. Children like Emily Dickinson's writing because they relate to her interest in nature, and when they know it, her love of children. Dickinson's use of seemingly random punctuation for example can give some children freedom to say what they want to say without worrying about rules.

When asked what is next for her, Mutén told me that she will be retiring from classroom teaching at the end of this year. While she will miss her students and teaching, she is looking forward to staying connected to children and the writing of children by teaching more creative writing workshops and author visits at elementary schools. She's also excited about learning more about Emily and sharing her knowledge as a guide at the Emily Dickinson Museum in Amherst.

Kelly McManus is the Media Specialist at Groton Dunstable Regional High School



SCHOOL LIBRARIANS = SELF-DIRECTED LEARNERS: RESOURCES FOR ONLINE LEARNING & PD BY AMY SHORT

APRIL 12, 2015

In times of change learners inherit the earth; while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists. ~ Eric Hoffer

Keeping up with the continuous changes within our profession is a challenging yet vital task. As this quote from Eric Hoffer indicates, school librarians must find ways to continue to develop professionally not only to remain relevant, but also to ensure their role as educational leaders within their school communities. To do so, school librarians must be the models of what we encourage and hope our students develop into: independent, self-directed, lifelong learners. While traditional professional development models can be limiting because of scheduling conflicts, topics that are not of interest, distance or cost, any self-directed learner with access to the Internet has many options for relevant, worthwhile free or inexpensive professional development as well as the opportunity to connect and collaborate with and learn from peers and thought leaders in the field. The opportunity to pursue your own learning on your own time is more accessible than ever!

Twitter

Twitter has revolutionized professional development. At any time, Twitter offers access to the knowledge, advice and resources being shared by colleagues around the world. While Twitter is an amazing place to learn about new resources and professional information and articles, one of the best uses of Twitter for professional development is Twitter chats. Twitter chats offer the opportunity to connect with peers in real time to participate in online, focused discussions with school librarians and other educators. Twitter chats are a perfect vehicle for developing an online Professional Learning Network with innovative and inspiring colleagues from across the country and beyond. There are educational Twitter chats happening every day. Use this handy [Twitter chat calendar](#) created by Richard Byrne or this [Education Chats on Twitter](#) list to see when different educational chats take place. The Massachusetts School Library Association's #MSLA Twitter chat takes place from 8-9pm on the second Tuesday of each month. Check out the schedule of upcoming [#MSLA chats](#) as well as the archives of past chats to see what colleagues have been discussing and sharing. New to Twitter? Find information about [how to get started here](#). To get the most out of Twitter, consider using a tool such as Tweetdeck or Hootsuite to set up columns for following specific hashtags such as #MSLA #TLChat, #edtech, #tlelem, #edchat and others for a direct connection to many of the today's educational thought leaders.

edWeb

[edWeb](#) is a professional social and learning network that offers educators the opportunity to not only connect with colleagues with similar professional interests, but also to participate in free professional development webinars. edWeb is organized by communities of interest. Once a member joins a community they will receive notice of upcoming related webinars. One community of interest to librarians is [LMC @ The Forefront](#): A Collaborative Community for Library Professionals. Some of the webinars are vendor-sponsored, however all of the webinars are led by school library leaders and offer valuable information on school library topics. For example recent school library-related live webinars included Dynamic Databases: Revolutionizing Today's Research, Teaching, and Learning presented by Joyce Valenza, and Makerspaces: The Now Revolution in School Libraries presented by Leslie Preddy. Community members not able to participate in the live webinar are able to view these webinars at any time; and a list of archived webinars is also available.

eCOLLAB

Are you a member of AASL? If so you have access to a valuable professional development resource, [eCOLLAB](#). AASL members or eCOLLAB subscribers have access to upcoming and archived webinars on a variety of school library topics presented by leaders in the school library profession. There are a number of upcoming webinars scheduled through June including Transforming Teaching and Learning With Digital Tools by Melissa Jacobs Israel and School Library Collaborations: Making Them Work to Improve Student Achievement with Charles Hockersmith.

TL Virtual Cafe, #TLChat and TL News Night

Connect and collaborate with some of the most innovative thought leaders in the school library profession! [TL Virtual Cafe](#) hosts "conversations about teacher-librarians, educational technology, and collaborative connections to facilitate meaningful and lifelong learning skills." Upcoming events include Makerspaces with Shannon Miller & Diana Maliszewski, Telling Your Story with Elissa Malespina, and Classroom Cribs with Erin Klein & Al Juliani. Join #TLChat on Twitter on the 2nd Monday of the each month at 8pm. Also, check out [TL News Night](#) on the 3rd Monday of each month with archives available.

WebJunction

[OCLC's WebJunction](#) features free webinars on a variety of library-related topics presented by leaders in the field. Certificates of completion are available upon completion of the webinar.

Booklist Online and SLJ Webcasts

Booklist Online and **SLJ Webcasts** offer a variety of webinars (including archives of past webinars) on new and subject specific book titles, literacy topics, digital resources and more, usually sponsored by publishers. Some of the free webinar offerings are often sponsored by or underwritten by publishers or other vendors so keep that in mind when viewing the content.

Want to take an education course or learn something new just for fun? There are many opportunities to do so online. Try an online course or MOOC through what I think are some of the best quality online learning sites (listed below). Happy Learning!

Annenberg Learner seeks to advance the art of teaching through more than 100 multimedia courses and workshops. Graduate credit is available for a fee.

EdX connects learners to interactive online classes and MOOCs from the world's best universities, colleges and organizations. **Canvas Network** offers free, online courses taught by educators.

Coursera is an education platform that offers free online courses from top universities and organizations from around the world.

MIT OpenCourseWare is a web-based publication of virtually all MIT course content.

Open Culture provides access to online courses, MOOCs, content and more.

Open Yale Courses includes lectures and other materials from selected Yale courses.

Udacity provides mostly free technology courses developed in collaboration with industry experts such as Google and Facebook. Fee-based courses for credit are also available.

WebCast.Berkeley provides online video and audio content from UC Berkeley courses.

And don't forget **Google Video**, iTunesU, **SchoolTube**, and YouTube or **YouTubeEdu** for online courses or quick instructional videos.

Amy Short is the Assistant Director of Library Media for the Cambridge Public Schools

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: LAURA HARRINGTON BY LAURA GARDNER

APRIL 12, 2015



Author Laura Harrington (right) and Interviewer Laura Gardner Meeting Laura Harrington was such a treat! Laura is a playwright who took a risk and published her first novel, *Alice Bliss*, to great acclaim. It was chosen as one of the Best Books of the Year by School Library Journal in 2011. *Alice* is the story of a small town girl who is forced to grow up fast when her father joins the armed forces and is deployed to Iraq. Laura calls *Alice Bliss* a "classic coming of age story" with deeper layers about the sacrifices people make around war time. The fact that such a small percentage of our population truly endures these wars has "haunted [her] writing" Laura did extensive research on teens whose parents are in the military for the book and found that "they feel they are invisible." She shared that the theme that drives most of her work are "parts of culture that are hidden." The biggest inspiration for her book was *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder because she was interested in how a community comes together, but she

was also inspired by the recent passing of her father and says "love and grief for my dad are all over this book." She was pleased to write a father/daughter story because she thinks they are too rare.

Interestingly, although the novel is told in third person, the book is also written in present tense so "you're in every point of view in the book." Laura shared that "as a playwright who has been writing monologues and dialogues that was comfortable" for her. She also shared that she thinks this "gives a point of entry for readers to understand experiences of others." For example, she went on, "a fifteen year old might see what her mother is going through." When I asked about my favorite character in the book, Alice's best friend (and possible romantic interest) Henry, Laura said that "Henry showed up unexpectedly" and her daughter had a friend like Henry.

Laura experienced quick success with *Alice*. Laura related, "the book took a year to write, sold quickly and did well." She is working to create a musical on the book and has the first major workshop coming up this month in April.

When I asked Laura what it was like to try writing something new after a long career as a playwright, she said it was "scary and exciting," but that having family and friends cheering her on was helpful and the response was "amazing." Her work habits as an

author have remained the same as her playwriting days – “word counts don’t help” and she had actually never heard of that method until talking to other authors. If she’s working on a project then she goes to the gym first thing and then works from 9 am until she makes dinner at the end of the day. She takes breaks, but says “you have to stick around and fight distractions.”

Laura is hard at work on her next book, *A Catalogue of Birds*, which Laura describes as a book about a brother and sister who experience “the damage that comes from war and PTSD and how we try to save the ones we love.”

Laura has been volunteering at a middle and high school for a few years and is interested in school visits related to her book. She believes *Alice* “cries out to be paired with other books” and suggests *The Kite Runner* to explore the impact of war on teens and families and *Catcher in the Rye* to compare coming of age stories. I highly recommend *Alice Bliss* and think Laura would be an excellent author to invite to high schools to talk about her work.

Laura Gardner is the Teacher Librarian at Dartmouth Middle School

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: MORDICAI GERSTEIN BY DEETH ELLIS

APRIL 12, 2015

Mordicai Gerstein is the author/illustrator of dozens of books, and he has also written or illustrated more than a dozen others.



- **What are you working on now?**

I just began final illustrations on *The Sleeping Gypsy* about the painting with the same name by French painter Henri Rousseau. I’ve known the painting since I was a kid. My mother made a scrapbook for me, and one of the images she cut out and put in the book was *The Sleeping Gypsy*. I was fascinated with what was going on in the picture, such as What’s the lion eating? The book is about what I imagine is going on in that picture.

I am also working on a story about a whale and a graphic novel on the Greek God, Pan. Pan was big during the Victorian era. I remember reading about Pan in a work by Rudyard Kipling.

- **What influenced you when you were a child to lead to what you do today? (books, tv shows, movies, other media?)**

Everything. I was an avid reader. I loved *Alice in Wonderland* and *Mary Poppins* and reading natural history: about animals, whales, deep sea divers, African explorers. I think books generate books. I like to recycle old stories. I loved the *Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling, and my first book was about a wild child (*Arnold of the Ducks*), who was raised by ducks.

- **Do you do school visits? If so, what is your favorite part of visiting a school?**

Yes. I love the presentations and the connections with the kids. It’s amazing that I can do it because I was never a public speaker. I draw, and kids are always spellbound. I talk a lot these days about the power of imagination and getting in touch with what your stories are. Imagination is invisible until you write it down. When you hold a book in your hand you are holding the author’s imagination.

- **How did you start writing children’s books? How as an artist did you come to both illustrate and write the stories?**

I had no intention of becoming a writer but always drew and painted. In art school I took a cartooning class then landed a job at UPA, an animation studio specializing in flat, two-dimensional animation – not Disney like. They sent me to New York to work on commercials. In New York all of the abstract expressionists were there, and Elizabeth Levy, a mystery writer, asked me to illustrate her books. She showed publishers my sketches, and they asked me to illustrate her series (*Something Queer is Going On; Something Queer in the Library* etc.). I wanted to write my own book, but I had no confidence in my writing. It took me ten years until I wrote *Arnold of the Ducks*. After that the floodgates were open. Writing helped me find out what was lurking in my mind. I wrote another duck book, called *Follow Me*, set in China about lost ducks finding their way home. Then I did a book called *The Room* then *Prince Sparrow*, and they just kept coming.

- **Your art is different from book to book. Different styles. Can you talk about that?**

Each story is its own and I have to find the style that is best for the story. For *Mountains of Tibet* I wanted to do it in a style of mandalas (circular design). The colors and the shape all help tell the story.

I did a non-fiction picture book about a wild child raised by wolves found in France in the 1800’s. I approached this work and others first with pen and ink then I might use oil, mixed media, or acrylics.

- **What advice do you have for aspiring writers and artists?**

Write, write, write. Get your work out! Find other writers, a work group to share your writing, and get critiques. Get feedback and expose your work to as many people as you can. My advice is the same for illustrators. It important to be persistent.

- **What are your strategies for when you struggle with your writing or illustrating?**

Keep going at it. Try it from different angles until you find a solution. With writing sometimes a book can take years, some weeks, some months. Once at a conference I read a chapter of a new book, and after reading it MT Anderson came to me and asked me "What happens next?!" I said "I do not know because I haven't finished it." Some books take years. Sometimes you have to get out of the way of your mind. Let the story reveal itself.

Deeth Ellis is the Head Librarian at Boston Latin School

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: JEFF MACK BY REBA TIERNEY

APRIL 12, 2015



Author Jeff Mack and Interviewer Rebekah Tierney

I will do my best to make the rest of this article professional, but I have to digress to fangirl mode for a moment. I've totally developed a literary crush on Jeff Mack. Now that's out of the way, we can move on...

I work as a high school librarian, so prior to choosing Jeff Mack as an interview subject, I wasn't very familiar with his work. I had seen some of his books before, mostly in passing, but I had never had the chance to really read any of his work or use his material with a class. I brushed up on my subject a bit; did some googling, Internet stalking, all the usual stuff and found out that this Jeff Mack guy seemed pretty interesting. Despite some nerves, I was definitely looking forward to interviewing him. After creeping about a bit (are you sensing a pattern here?), and waiting for a break in his signing, I approached Jeff. He was very affable and immediately put me at ease. I had a few questions prepared, but they didn't sound as clever out loud as they had in my head. Luckily, I was able to have a decent, unscripted conversation with Jeff and still manage to take some notes.

Apparently it all started with a snake and a hot dog bun. Yup, you heard that right. That was the first book illustration idea pitched to Jeff. Thankfully, it never came to fruition and Jeff has come a long way since that particular request. The first book Jeff illustrated was *The Icky, Sticky Chameleon* written by Dawn Bentley. Going back even farther than that, Jeff hails from Upstate New York and has been into robots and monsters for as long as he can remember. Of course, I pulled the Library card, forcing Jeff to plumb the depths of his memory for some early library recollections or stories. He came up with a great tale about his weekly trips to the library with his Grandmother, and the memory of a particular book. That book was *On Beyond Zebra* by Dr. Seuss. He recalls how Dr. Seuss created his own alphabet and bizarre creatures. Being very into monsters, young Jeff definitely identified with this book.

Another early influence was Mr. Cole, a middle school Art teacher. To this day, Jeff finds drawing a little easier than writing. Although drawing is a super-simplified term for the art that Jeff creates. One of his earliest books, *Hush Little Polar Bear* was done with acrylics, creating a lush texture and a dreamlike quality. *Look!* is an amazing book in which a gorilla and a boy battle old tech (books) with new tech (TV) and was illustrated using pencil and watercolors. The images were then scanned in along with book covers and interior pages to create a collage-style effect. In his newest book, *Who Wants a Hug?* the illustrations were created using digital artwork to create a silly, slapstick quality. Never one to be defined by a single art form, Jeff also writes and illustrates the Clueless McGee series for middle-grade readers. If you had not had the chance to examine the various art styles and forms employed by Jeff, I encourage you to take a visual tour through his works. You can't help but to be impressed.

Jeff currently lives in Western Massachusetts and in between his art and writing, he takes the time to conduct school visits. His favorite age groups to visit are 2nd and 3rd grades. They are a great sounding board, and give unvarnished critiques of his work and ideas. If the kids don't laugh at a story or idea, he knows not to use it. Sometimes, he even gets some ideas from the students. These visits are a great way to keep Jeff connected to his target audience, and get invaluable feedback. I love the idea that some of these students sitting there listening to Jeff could be inspired and grow up to illustrate and write books of their own. This may seem like a shameless plug, but if I were an elementary school librarian, I would love to have Jeff come and visit my students. I'm hoping he branches out soon into Young Adult and then I can justify a school visit of my own!

Any inconsistencies or errors in reporting are 100% my own fault. I interviewed Jeff casually in between signings, resulting in slightly haphazard notes. Speaking of notes, back to those clever interview questions I had prepared. I asked Jeff Mack what his favorite or most-used app was. Part of me was hoping that he would say *Trivia Crack* and we would immediately become opponents (and best friends). But alas, it was not to be. Jeff uses the *Notes* app the most; coincidence that I was using the *Notes* app as we spoke? There may be a chance for us to be best friends after all!

Rebekah Tierney is the librarian at Jeremiah E. Burke High School in Dorchester, Massachusetts.

HEIDI STEMPLE: CREATING MAGIC BY KAREN SEKIGUCHI

APRIL 12, 2015

Author Heidi Stemple (photo courtesy of A. DiTerlizzi)



If author Heidi Stemple ever wants to forge a new career outside of the “family business,” she would make a great school librarian, as she proved at the recent MSLA conference when she and her mom Jane Yolen stepped in for speaker Donalyn Miller. Like a skilled librarian, Heidi is a connector who loves and promotes children’s literature, and who willingly and enthusiastically shares her knowledge and resources with others.

Fortunately for Massachusetts school librarians in attendance, emails from Heidi helped to secure the dazzling line-up of authors who attended the conference. Also fun for attendees was the surprise treat of hearing the mother-daughter banter between Yolen and Stemple during their impromptu but excellent awards dinner speech. This unexpected opportunity to learn about the creative juggernaut that is the Yolen-Stemple clan was one of the highlights of the conference.

Heidi grew up in Western MA, in a home and school environment that valued and nurtured artistic expression through all sorts of creative pursuits. She and her brothers were encouraged to keep journals of their outdoor adventures, they wrote collections of poetry, and they composed “fantastical” field guides filled with imaginary animals. Heidi made pottery, sewed, and made use of the art room in her home.

Given her creative childhood, it is no surprise that today Heidi is an author and frequent collaborator with her mom, Jane Yolen, but she did not always want to be an author. She had a successful career in criminal justice before deciding to return to the writing fold in Massachusetts, where she now lives and works.

Perhaps her years doing a “regular” job prepared her for the more prosaic aspects of a writing career such as deadlines, bottom lines, branding, and print runs. As she noted in her MSLA keynote, having success as an author depends on three important qualities: passion, perseverance, and patience. She says, “In fact, most of us would prefer that lovely cottage in the woods with no one to bother us but our characters,” but the reality of the writing life is that it takes a lot of hard work to make the “magic” happen. As she readily admits, “The magic is hard work.”

Heidi’s collaborative writing process with her mom, Jane Yolen, involves a back-and-forth exchange of ideas and lots of discussion. As they explained during their conference speech, they are both good editors, and they are both good at taking criticism and direction. They have written 20 books together, including a new book, *Animal Stories*, for National Geographic, that was also written with Heidi’s two brothers. Describing the collaborative process, Heidi says, “Our voice together is a third voice that is similar to our separate voices in some aspects but [is] also new.”

Heidi has written for all ages, including adult readers, although she says her favorite genre to write is picture books. She calls herself “an equal opportunity writer” who lets the story dictate the form, so she follows wherever the story takes her. She is currently working on a solo manuscript, with a couple more projects in the works. Heidi says that she does not “make much distinction between working alone or with a collaborator.” It’s “all writing,” and she loves the process, either working alone, or working with others.

Heidi notes that in this current school climate of teaching to the test, and with parents worrying about “their offspring having ‘real’ jobs,” she is careful to convey during her school visits that “a creative job is a job,” and should be recognized as such. She also believes that whether a student becomes “a dentist, or a lawyer, or a construction worker,” people should “keep being creative” in whatever career they choose. Her sound advice is, “Find what you love and do it always.”

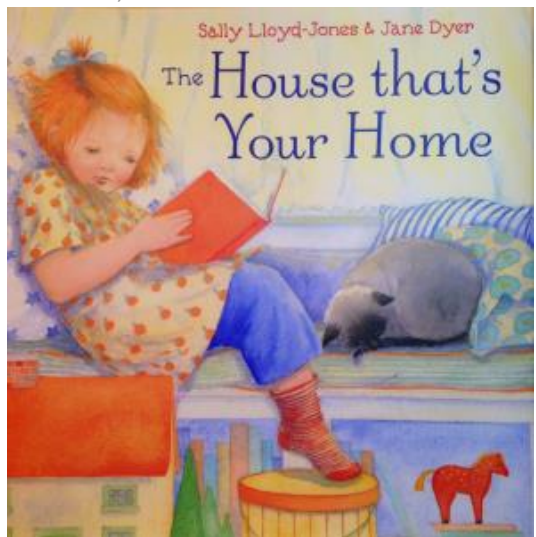
Heidi shares her knowledge and passion for writing and books through school visits that can be arranged through her website, HeidiEYStemple.com. She says, “My wish is, of course, for creativity to be fostered in all children. In school, but also at home.” Heidi speaks to students firsthand about the creative process and the sometimes circuitous path that an idea takes to become a book, and that a person sometimes takes to find their real passion in life—in her case, making the journey from corrections officer to private investigator to author.

Just as a private investigator follows clues and notices details, an author draws inspiration from a variety of sources. As Heidi notes, authors get their ideas from “everywhere—real life, research,” as well as from hints dropped by editors looking for certain types of books. Heidi’s latest book, *You Nest Here With Me*, a collaboration with Jane Yolen, reflects the connection of the Stemple family to birds and birding. Heidi Stemple, the little girl from *Owl Moon*, has grown up, has joined the family storytelling business, and is now building a creative legacy of her own.

Karen Sekiguchi is the K-5 librarian for the Danvers Public Schools.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: JANE DYER BY JORDANA SHAW

APRIL 12, 2015



When I met up with Jane Dyer in the MSLA author/illustrator meet and greet, she was celebrating the February 10th release of her book with Sally Lloyd-Jones *The House that's Your Home*. She brought the thumbnails of her initial sketches for the book. It was great fun to see her original concept in black and white next to the finished work, even including the X marks over many of the images indicating that the final artwork had been completed. Who doesn't like the feeling of accomplishment that crossing items off a list brings! It was also wonderful to see the hand lettering in those sketches which was then sent to a fontographer to create the font used in the book.

Jane confided that her intended model for the main character in the book was actually her older sister, but granddaughter Violet kept getting 'in the way' and so she became the model instead. Sally Lloyd-Jones was thrilled to see the red shoes on the little girl in the story since she had worn red shoes herself at that age. As a child Jane poured over illustrations by Maginel Wright Enright (younger sister to Frank Lloyd Wright and mother of Elizabeth Enright who wrote *Gone-Away Lake* and *The Saturdays*). The Maginel Wright endpapers that Jane so admired in

her childhood inspired the endpapers in *The House that's Your Home*, and are a work of art in and of themselves.

Despite or perhaps because of a childhood filled with inspiring artwork, Jane began her career as a Kindergarten teacher. It was during those three years that parents of her students saw her artwork and encouraged her to become an illustrator for children. She spent the next eight years illustrating reading stories for textbook publishers before she moved to western Massachusetts and met Jane Yolen who told her she "had to go to New York." The rest as they say is history.

Jane's artwork is warm and intimate and invites readers of all ages, but especially very young children into the scene over and over again. Jane Dyer's art has illustrated books by Jane Yolen: *Child of Faerie*, *Child of Earth*, and the Piggins books; she has collaborated with her neighbor and friend Jeanne Birdsall in *Lucky and Squash* (Jane and Jeanne's two dogs have a kinship much like the kinship of the dogs in the book). She has worked with authors from Kathi Appelt and Mary Ann Hoberman to Amy Krouse Rosenthal. Her book with Rose Lewis, *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*, tells a beautiful story of adoption. When Jane was mailing the finished artwork for *Time for Bed* written by Mem Fox, she witnessed a rainbow over the FedEx building in Hatfield, perhaps a sign that this would become one of her best-selling books.



Just like her artwork, Jane Dyer is a quiet lovely warm soul with a sparkle in her eye and a smile at the ready. It was a pleasure to meet up with her at the MSLA conference. A year ago Jane and her family adopted a lamb named Blossom. You can meet Blossom at <http://janedyerbooks.blogspot.com/> More of Jane's artwork can be viewed at http://www.rmichelson.com/Artist_Pages/DyerJane/Jane-Dyer.html

Jordana Shaw is the Library Director at the Groton School

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: ANGELA DITERLIZZI BY MELISSA LEGG

APRIL 12, 2015

Angela DiTerlizzi is a lot like her book *Some Bugs* – colorful, interesting and a whole lot of fun. And let's face it, you would have to be all of those things if your dream in high school was to become a makeup artist on Saturday Night Live.

Born in Chicago, Angela attended six schools by the time she was in sixth grade, making it difficult for her teachers to spot her difficulty with reading comprehension. A reluctant reader during a time when books like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* didn't exist, Angela would sneak Beatrix Potter's books out of the library because they were easy to read and because they were "beautiful little books." Without *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, Angela read Archie comics, but pointed out "You can't do a book report on Archie comics." She said that what she admires about books for today's young readers is that they have "characters that seem real and that have to struggle." Two current books that she is especially fond of are *Smile* by Raina Telgemeier and *El Deafo* by Cece Bell. When asked if she had any stories for young kids involving struggle she said yes, but that her writing depends heavily on rhyme and that she hasn't found a way to write them yet.



At the age of twelve, Angela moved to Jupiter, Florida, where she participated in high school, college and local theater and discovered that she loved being a make – up artist. After she met her future husband, Tony DiTerlizzi, in Jupiter, they decided to move to New York so that he could become a children’s author and illustrator, and that she could land a gig on Saturday Night Live. She was successful, doing makeup for SNL, and also for other famous clients including Will Ferrell, journalists on *The Today Show* and President Clinton. One not-so-famous client was an editor at Scholastic. One day she told the client that her husband was a children’s author and illustrator and the client gave her a business card, “probably just to get her to stop talking.” At the end of the first visit with the Scholastic editor, Tony had a book deal.



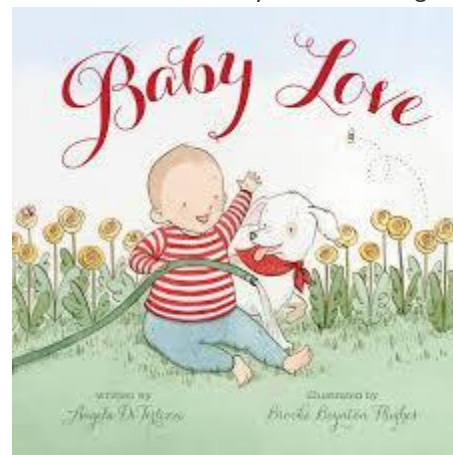
Author Angela DiTerlizzi (right) autographed a book for Jamie Kaplan’s students at West Elementary School in Andover MA

About 12 years ago they decided to move to Amherst where Tony could write and she could commute to the city for special makeup jobs. But, that plan was soon upended when Tony won a 2003 Caldecott Honor for *The Spider and the Fly*. Angela said that it was an exciting, busy time, and that she became Tony’s manager arranging interviews and travel schedules. She also said that western Massachusetts is a lot farther from New York than it looks on a map, and soon the trips tapered off.

The tapering off of her makeup artist career was a very fortunate turn of events for young readers since it gave Angela time to launch her own writing career. I asked if she had ever had writing in mind and she said that it was

after the birth of their daughter that she was able to take the time to hear the stories that she had within her and to listen to her daughter tell her own stories. We talked for a while about the ability of little children to live in the land of make-believe and that it still surprised me when a first grader would say, very seriously, that he saw a dragon emerge out of the sewer on the way to school. Angela said that she sees this with her own daughter who said that she wanted to be a unicorn trainer unless they went to England and then she would be a horse trainer. She went on to say that, “fantasy lets you believe that you can do what you want to do.”

One of the things that I noticed about Angela’s books is that the text is very simple, and that it was the combination of text and words that made the books so vibrant. I knew from children’s literature classes that often the author isn’t consulted about the illustrator, so I asked how much input she had on the illustrator. She said that she has been very fortunate in that she has been able to choose the illustrators and that she often has a specific illustrator in mind when she is writing. For instance, she chose Joey Chou for her story *Say What?*, because his illustrations reminded her of Mary Blair’s illustrations, especially in Ruth Krauss’ book *I Can Fly*. For Angela’s book, *Some Bugs*, she chose Brendan Wenzel because she had seen a piece of his artwork and loved it. Wenzel sent back three samples and Angela and her editor thought they were perfect. Her editor commented that the illustrations looked like “Eric Carle and Leo Lionni had a baby.” Angela chose illustrator Brooke Boynton Hughes’ sweet illustrations for her soon-to-be released book *Baby Love* which will be released on April 14. And I believe I heard her mention a follow – up book to *Say What?* so we have more to look forward to from Angela in the future.



And of course, the most important piece of information to a librarian is “what and when did she start reading to her daughter?” The answer, unsurprisingly, was *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* on the day she was born.

Melissa Legg is a school library teacher at Freedman Elementary School and Pottenger Elementary School in Springfield

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: JEANNE BIRDSALL BY HEATHER RICHARD

APRIL 12, 2015

“I think childhood happens when your parents aren’t watching,” Jeanne Birdsall told me when I interviewed her at the MSLA 2015 conference. Her observation is an excellent insight into what makes her books exceptionally charming and emotionally resonant. Ms. Birdsall won the National Book Award for *The Penderwicks*, the first book in what she plans to be a five-book series that follows the Penderwick siblings. These books are a wonderful example of the middle-grade genre, intended for those short but important years when most nine- to twelve-year-olds are reading fluently and eager for age-appropriate, hopeful stories.

The Penderwicks opens during a summer four years after Mrs. Penderwick has died. The four Penderwick girls are being raised by their father, who takes them to the country for the summer. Their adventures there are the kind of adventures children have when free to play and roam in the summer on a farm. The antithesis of a so-called “helicopter parent,” Mr. Penderwick loves his children dearly but

allows them to explore their environment. In this story, they rent a cottage on the grounds of a mansion, where they are free to wander and frequently visit with the wealthy child who lives in the main house. This mix of freedom and safety is important to the story, Birdsall notes, but it is also important to the needs of the middle-grade reader. “I did not want the children to be neglected. I want them to have enough safety but know that they can work things out for themselves.”

Birdsall deftly achieves the balance between freedom and security, and though she has only one sibling, she perfectly captures the dynamics of a large family. Growing up as an only child, I loved stories of large families, and if I think about it, I loved the stories of those families exploring the world together. I dreamed of being one of the *Little Women*, and sighed at the closeness between the Wallace siblings in *A Wrinkle in Time*. I devoured *To Kill a Mockingbird*, rereading the tender scenes between Jem and Scout, yearning for that kind of connection. Even Trixie Belden and her brothers made me wish for a larger brood. I had the same nostalgic, loving experience reading *The Penderwicks*, and coming to know Batty, Jane, Skye, and Rosalind made me eager to participate in such a joyful family.

The Penderwicks is equally as charming for me as an adult reader. However, I am not only an adult, but I am also a parent—a parent of five young children, all between the ages of six and ten. They are loud, they love the outdoors, and they are fiercely independent. In other words, I am now watching children having adventures all around me and watching the realities of the big brood dynamics at play in my life. As an adult reader, I feel an immediate connection to Birdsall’s writing because she so cleverly captures the chaos that can erupt when many children are gathered together, each with their own needs and desires.

Last summer we decided to give *The Penderwicks* a try in our family. I told Ms. Birdsall I wondered whether or not my children would enjoy it, particularly since I have four boys and one girl. Would they like a story about four sisters? Would they be interested in a story that was solidly realistic adventure rather than their standard fantasy or comedy genres? Would they feel too sad, since Mrs. Penderwick died of the same disease—cancer—that only recently took their grandmother?

The truth is, they’ve loved the books, and that’s why I was so eager to talk to Ms. Birdsall. The audio versions the family listened to during carpool are extraordinarily well done, and it was a joy to listen to them with my children all laughing at the same moments. The kids were excited when I told them I’d be interviewing the author.

My children, like many of Birdsall’s fans, are eager to find out how each of the Penderwick siblings turns out. They know that the answers are coming in *The Penderwicks in Spring* and in the fifth and last book that Birdsall is crafting right now. You see, as the books go along, Birdsall makes a unique choice by allowing the children to grow up. Rather than continue with episodic stories that keep the girls at the same age they were in *The Penderwicks* (a strategy which has been employed effectively in many series), or follow their stories into the young adult concerns as they age (think of the differences between Harry Potter books one and seven!), Birdsall keeps the focus on the Penderwick child who is the same age as the average child reader. Thus, in *The Penderwicks in Spring* she keeps the older Penderwick sisters in the story, but she explained that she deliberately “doesn’t get inside their heads.” In other words, their teenage concerns are not revealed directly, and we hear the story from Batty’s view. The Penderwicks are growing up, but Birdsall deliberately retains the voice, perspective, and tone meant for the middle-grade reader.

So, as the Penderwicks age, so will my children. They will grow, and they will remember when they listened to these stories together, in the van, on the way to school, and the way they felt when each book ended.

When we were talking about the difficulty of writing stories that provided enough adventure Birdsall remarked she is often trying “to find the spots between parenting.” Those are the places that offer adventure for children, as long as those opportunities for adventure are not caused by the lack of nurturing.

We are ready to start book four, *The Penderwicks in Spring*, to see how Batty’s dog-walking business turns out, and to get to know the newest Penderwick sibling. And I’ll be looking for tips on how to give my own children the space to have a rich childhood—one where they can have the kind of adventures they might only have when I am not looking.

We are giving away four ARCs of *The Penderwicks in Spring*! The drawing will close at midnight on Friday, April 18th and the winner will be announced on Tuesday, April 21st.

Heather Richard is a former high school English teacher, a new high school librarian, and a children’s book writer. She holds an MFA in Writing for Children from Simmons College.

LATEST TWITTER CHATS WITH MSLA

APRIL 12, 2015

MSLA continues to hold Twitter Chats on the second Tuesday of the month from 8 – 9 PM. There is a topic for discussion posted in advance and the chats are moderated by Amy Short, Director for Library Media for the Cambridge Public Schools. Recent topics include What's Your Purpose? (April), Makerspaces (March), ALA Youth Media Awards – a co-tweet up with the Virginia School Library Association (February) and MSLA Conference (January). These Twitter Chats offer a great opportunity to exchange ideas with colleagues without having to travel to a meeting. And if you can't make the Twitter Chat, you can still access all the great ideas through the Storify links provided by Amy Short shortly thereafter. The next Twitter Chat will be on April 14th, 8PM. Use #MSLA to join the chat that evening, or look for a link to the Twitter Chat Storify on the MSLA list serve. Use the links below to explore the winter Twitter Chats:

[APRIL 2015 TWITTER CHAT – WHAT'S YOUR PURPOSE?](#)

[MARCH 2015 TWITTER CHAT – MAKERSPACES](#)

[FEBRUARY 2015 TWITTER CHAT WITH VASL – ALA YOUTH MEDIA AWARDS](#)

[JANUARY 2015 TWITTER CHAT – ALL THINGS MSLA CONFERENCE 2015](#)

MSLA Forum Editors: Jennifer Dimmick (Newton South High School) and Katherine Steiger (Pollard Middle School, Needham).

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