

# american libraries

MAY 2010

AN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Neil Gaiman,  
Honorary Chair,  
National Library Week

## Telling, Reading, Saving STORIES

Young Adult Lit, Romance to Realism  
Readers Theatre as Literacy Tool  
StoryCorps Founder Dave Isay on Listening

### PLUS

- Fixing the Federal Depository Program
- How to Manage Volunteers

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AMERICAN LIBRARIES | MAY 2010 | VOLUME 41 #5 | ISSN 0002-9769

Cover guy Neil Gaiman wowed librarians and the public alike as honorary chair of National Library Week 2010 in April. "Read. Read anything. Read the things they say are good for you, and the things they claim are junk. You'll find what you need to find. Just Read," the popular author advises on his ALA Graphics poster. Watch "An Evening with Neil Gaiman" video at [americanlibrariesmagazine.org](http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org).



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## Tell Us a Story by Leonard Kniffel

There's nothing quite so satisfying as a good story well told. We all tell stories, and libraries are the best places in the world to share them. With a growing national trend toward taking advantage of the cultural and literary programs, personalized professional learning assistance, and community social hub that good libraries offer their constituents, it's still all about stories.

In this issue of *American Libraries*, Dave Isay, founder of StoryCorps, explains why libraries have always been at the core of this extraordinary on-going oral history project. Previewing his AL-sponsored program at the American Library Association's Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., in June, Isay notes, "If we take the time to listen, we'll find wisdom, wonder, and poetry in the stories of the people all around us."

In "A Literature of Risk," young adult literature expert Michael Cart offers a preview of his forthcoming ALA Editions title, *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*, tying adolescent well-being to reading good stories that inspire empathy.

In "From Children's Literature to Readers Theatre," Elizabeth Poe explains how her forthcoming ALA Editions book of the same name fosters readers theater as a tool for librarians in teaching literacy skills and the importance and power of literature to help children develop an understanding of the world they live in.

Major studies and reports released in March and April and summarized in this issue support what we already know about the growing need for library services. *The State of America's Libraries*, published by the American Library Association during National Library Week, indicates that research suggests a "perfect storm" of growing community demand for library services and shrinking resources to meet that demand.

Jill Nishi of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation reports that a new survey conducted by the foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services indicates "unprecedented demand for free computer and internet access," a demand that the foundation foresaw over a dozen years ago when it began "to help transform the way patrons access information at the library." A survey of U.S. college and university faculty conducted by Ithaka S+R, however, suggests that libraries in these institutions of higher learning have some work to do before the library is perceived as the "electronic hub" of information services it needs to be.

Also in this issue, librarian Alan Jacobson explains how volunteers can help fill the gaping holes caused by funding reductions, staff cuts, and reduced hours. Jacobson does not maintain that professional staff can somehow be done away with and replaced by volunteers, but he does argue that a well-managed force of unpaid library lovers can help staff keep services flowing to an ever-more-eager public. And librarian Patrick Ragains looks at "Fixing the Federal Depository Library Program" and explains why new models for delivering government information must be developed. ■

We all tell stories, and libraries are the best places in the world to share them.

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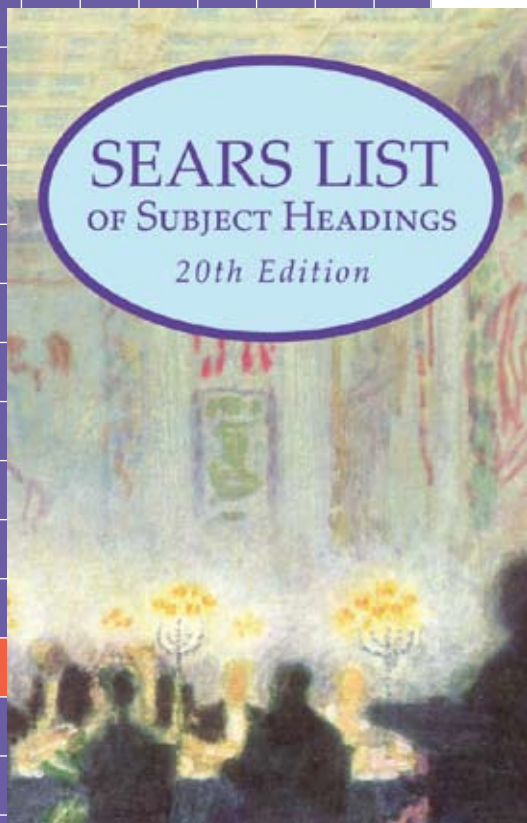
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- Facebook (Web site)

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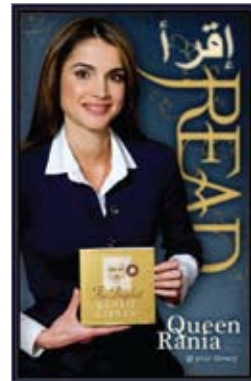


### <<< Focus

New video interviews with Neil Gaiman, Sarah Vowell, Luis Alberto Urrea, Sari Feldman.

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### >>> Posters

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### >>> Books

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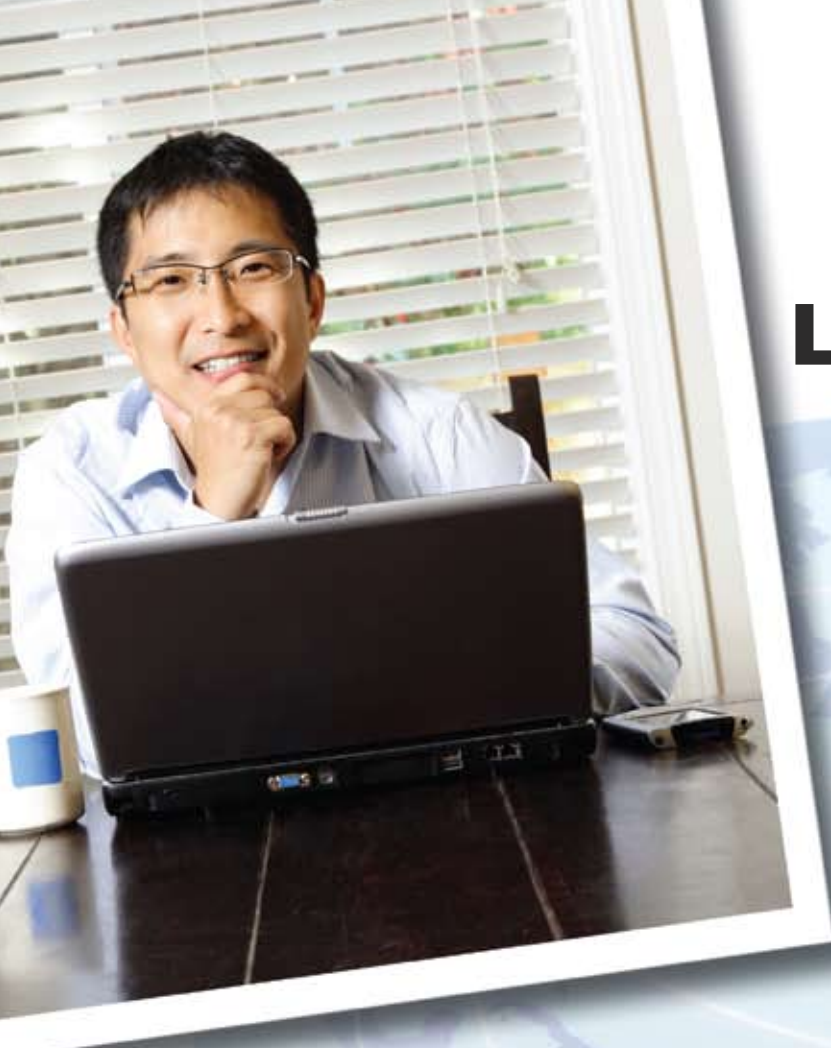
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New question-and-answer blog from the staff of the ALA Headquarters Library, serving all your professional information needs.

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# New Normal for Libraries

Embracing today's challenges for a better tomorrow

by Camila Alire

I was recently invited to address librarians, support staff, and administrators at one of our largest public library systems about dealing with changing and challenging times for their libraries. For my talk, I borrowed a term we hear frequently now—the new normal.

Silicon Valley venture capitalist Roger McNamee, author of *The New Normal: Great Opportunities in a Time of Great Risk* (Portfolio, 2004),

coined the term “new normal.” He writes that technology has had a profound effect in our lives—in business, government, education, and our personal lives. Because of this impact, working with and using technology became our new

normal. McNamee maintains that this new normal provides great opportunities to think out-of-the-box in dealing with changing times.

I applied his concept to describe what is happening in all types of publicly supported libraries. That is, technology and, more recently, our country's economic challenges, have produced a new normal for our libraries. When you add emerging trends, this new normal requires library administrators and library staff to rethink or re-engineer what they are doing now to provide the best possible resources and services to customers/users. What this means is that change is inevita-

ble for our publicly supported libraries.

Why do we have to be prepared for this new normal? Because even when funding improves for our libraries, we won't be back to normal as we once knew it. However, as McNamee states in his book title, there can be great opportunities in preparing for the new normal.

Most times when we face challenges in our libraries, we can also take advantage of the possible opportunities these challenges may bring. This could include revamping services, rethinking collection development and management, reorganizing departments and units, redeployment/retraining of staff, and the list goes on.

For example, inadequate funding may require the closing of specialized reference desks on different floors or areas of the library and the opening of a general reference desk for all subject areas. Doing this requires all library employees to understand the changes and to be part of the team to help resolve any challenges.

Change is inevitable during the new normal. Eighteenth-century German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once wrote that “life belongs to the living and he who lives must be prepared for changes.” Libraries are changing all the time and will continue to do so through

this new normal. Librarians and other library staff need to understand the process of getting to this new normal and embrace the need to adapt in order to continue to provide the best services possible for their users.

## About Spectrum

Patrice Johnson, a 2004 Spectrum scholar, is readers' advisor/first assistant at the Chicago Public Library (CPL) Talking Book Center, a subregional library of the Illinois State Library Talking Book and Braille Service, in partnership with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Among her duties, Johnson creates in-house and virtual workshops, and trains new readers' advisors. She also conducts programs and workshops during ALA Annual Conferences and Midwinter Meetings as well as for the Illinois Library Association Reaching Forward conferences, KLAS Users' conferences, and CPL's All Staff Institute Day programs.

I urge you to support Spectrum by making a tax-deductible contribution to the ALA-Spectrum Scholarship Program, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; e-mail the ALA Development Office at [development@ala.org](mailto:development@ala.org); or donate online at [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org) and click on “giveALA.” ■

ALA President CAMILA ALIRE is dean emerita at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque and Colorado State University in Fort Collins. Visit [camilalire.com](http://camilalire.com).



Even when funding improves for our libraries, we won't be back to normal as we once knew it.





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# Comment Enabled

## Thanks for Cereal Box Promo

One of our librarians recently purchased a box of Millville Raisin Bran at Aldi supermarket. To her delight, she noticed the entire back of the box was devoted to promoting public libraries.

I sent a letter thanking the company, on behalf of all public librarians. The promotion is especially welcome in these tough budget times.

Lynne Olver  
Morris County (N.J.) Library

## Wellness Partnership Lauded

Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library appreciates the program described in "Libraries, Hospital Join Forces to Promote Wellness in Body and Mind" (Apr., p. 14). We have been partnering with medical institutions as well for over a decade.

Hospital/library partnerships are one of the best ways to reach the hardest to reach children.

Our hospital storytelling program is run by the staff at the Child's Place for Children with Special Needs, a department dedicated to providing services to children with and without disabilities and their families. Hospital storytellers (paid) and reading troubadours (volunteers) visit medical facilities in Brooklyn to read aloud to children while providing them with a free book, building their family's home library. Children are issued library cards upon request, and receive a coupon to be redeemed for an additional free gift book at their local branch. During these sessions, families are informed of the range of services offered at the library.



Troubadours visit well-child and outpatient clinics in the community. Hospital storytellers visit pediatric inpatient wards, outpatient specialty clinics (hematology, oncology), and group homes for children with profound disabilities. By reading to children in the community, storytellers and troubadours model reading aloud for parents.

One-by-one we hand out books to as many as 5,000 children per year in over 40 locations with a force of approximately 20 readers. Hospital/library partnerships are one of the best ways to reach the hardest to reach children. We encourage other library systems to follow suit, as the growth and health of the communities you serve is dependent on it.

Andre Powe  
Child's Place for Children  
with Special Needs  
Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library

## Comic Strip Depiction Wrong

I usually love the comic strip *Hi and Lois*; however, as a librarian, I was very upset about the March 30 depiction of libraries (see above).

Libraries and the economy are *not* responsible for local bookstores going

out of business. You can blame that on such establishments as Barnes and Noble and Borders. They were forcing independent bookstores to close long before the recession. If the strip had shown a Borders going out of business, that would have been more accurate.

Those of us who love books use the library, but we also buy books that we want to keep on our shelves. In fact, I would rather pay full price for a book at an independent bookstore than get a discount from one of the chains or Amazon. Unfortunately, there are few local bookstores to choose from these days.

Libraries are one of the beneficiaries of an economic downturn. Our budgets are deeply cut when we need more money to serve the growing number of users who discover all the things the library can offer, such as DVDs, CDs, and, of course, books.

I thank the cartoonist for reminding readers about libraries, but he should not show us next to a failing local bookstore. He might as well say we are responsible for Circuit City going out of business because libraries provide internet access.

Trina King  
Rio Rancho, New Mexico

The editors welcome letters about recent contents or matters of general interest. Letters should be limited to 300 words. Send to [americanlibraries@ala.org](mailto:americanlibraries@ala.org); fax 312-440-0901; or *American Libraries*, Reader Forum, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611-2795.

## A Stroll Down Memory Lane

Will Manley's March column, "I Blog, Therefore I Matter" (p. 64), about retirement activities reminded me of recent endeavors.

Last year I created two DVDs memorializing Nevada's libraries during my career. In *NLA Lights the Way into the 21st Century: The Nevada Library Association, 1975–2000*, I included photos of memorable events, librarians, speakers, and authors. The cohesiveness of librarians working together at all levels was an important element.

My second DVD, *The Reading Conference: Promoting Literacy through Reading in Clark County Schools for Nearly 30 Years*, included photos, programs, book covers, and a historical record of this yearly conference, which brought noted authors, illustrators, and educators to Las Vegas to speak to librarians, teachers, and administrators.

Since both DVDs contain historical information, I have donated copies to our state universities, museums, and the Clark County School District.

Marilyn Grosshans  
Las Vegas

## We All Feel Your Pain

In response to "\$2 Million Sought by March 24 for Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, AL Online, March 19:

It is truly unfortunate that the libraries are to be closed because of the lack of funds. This actually is indicative of what most of our citizens are going through in these tough economic times.

Many families who have seen their family income significantly reduced are forced to make decisions as to what are the "got to haves," such as food, shelter, transportation, utilities, and what things are "nice to haves," including cable TV, cell phones, entertainment, and going out to eat.

While families are forced to cut back, government must also make reductions. The libraries that are closing can always be mothballed and reopened at a later time when finances



"Yes, we have books about the fear of heights. They're on the top shelf."

come back. I do not view the closings as a loss of assets. Of course nobody likes to see the library closest to them closed, but there still are other facilities where those people can go.

At least our leadership is being fiscally responsible instead of sticking their heads in the sand and overspending. Good luck in raising private donations.

Charlotte Homes  
Charlotte, North Carolina

## Our Conservative Ideals?

In response to Andy Spackman's *On My Mind* column, "Our Conservative Ideals, AL Online, March 17:

How refreshing (and surprising) to see an article supporting a conservative perspective published in an ALA publication. Frankly, it is embarrassing when I see an organization that

depends on intellectual neutrality and absence of bias to fulfill its core values taking public political stands that have nothing to do with those core values.

The best way to promote uninhibited free expression and free access to ideas is to build in the community a reputation of neutrality on all positions except those that represent our core values. That's hard to do when the dominant organization that represents your profession takes political stands on a range of issues that have nothing to do with free access to information.

Richard H. Mott  
Jacksonville, Florida

CORRECTION: Robert Walton, an administrator at Claremont University Consortium, was incorrectly identified as Robert Wilson (March, p. 43). AL apologizes for the error.



Continue the conversation at [americanlibrariesmagazine.org](http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org)

# Raise Funds with “Dinners for Spectrum Scholars”

**A**LA President Camila Alire, President-elect Roberta Stevens, and Immediate Past President Jim Rettig have joined together for a special year-long Spectrum presidential initiative to raise \$1 million for the Spectrum Scholarship Program. ALA Past President Betty Turock is serving as chair of the project, which had raised nearly \$200,000 as of April 7.

Among the fundraising efforts is a unique opportunity that Alire, Stevens, and Rettig have announced for members and library leaders to

contribute to the Spectrum Presidential Initiative through “Dinners for Spectrum Scholars.” The concept is simple—bring people together for a meal or night out and encourage them to make a donation.

“Dinners for Spectrum Scholars” can involve colleagues, coworkers, patrons, family members, neighbors, and friends—anyone who feels strongly about the value of librarians in today’s changing communities,” Alire explained.

According to Stevens, “Whether it’s a formal dinner, a barbecue, a pot luck, or simply a night out at a restaurant, finding a way to bring

people together and to encourage them to give to the Spectrum Scholarship Program will ensure that your event is fun and has a lasting impact, by helping a Spectrum scholar pursue a career in librarianship.”

Rettig stated, “We are proud to have come together to build the future of the Spectrum Scholarship Program. We’ll be having our own dinners, and hope that members across the country will join us by hosting dinners of their own.”

To learn more about “Dinners for Spectrum Scholars,” visit [spectrum.ala.org/dinners-for-spectrum-scholars](http://spectrum.ala.org/dinners-for-spectrum-scholars). The site provides tips and tools for hosting a dinner, along with information about the Spectrum Program and presidential initiative, including details about celebrity honorary cochairs, stories about Spectrum scholars, and news and photos from dinners and other special events.

## Kettering Names ALA as Center for Public Life

**A**LA and the Kettering Foundation have signed a research agreement to establish a Center for Public Life. The center will train librarians from different types of libraries to convene and moderate deliberative forums that will frame issues of local and national concern, using National Issues Forums materials and processes.

During the first year, ALA will form an advisory committee and begin training moderators. Initially, the new center will tap into the experience of those libraries already convening deliberative forums. They will form the hub of a network of active mentors capable of strengthening and expanding their work locally, statewide, and nationally and connecting it with other forum conveners throughout the country.

Unlike other centers, ALA will provide training to members of a single profession—librarianship—in different locations around the country. The center will document the growing involvement of libraries with deliberation and the challenges and opportunities they face in conducting nationwide programs.

Since the founding of the Kettering Foundation’s National Issues Forums in the 1980s, libraries have hosted and convened these and other types of forums.

ALA’s proposal was developed by Past President Nancy Kranich ([nancy.kranich@rutgers.edu](mailto:nancy.kranich@rutgers.edu)), with the assistance of consultant Taylor Willingham and ALA Associate Executive Director Mary Ghikas ([mghikas@ala.org](mailto:mghikas@ala.org)).

## Spring Is Time to “Step Up to the Plate”

Season five of “Step Up to the Plate @ your library,” sponsored by ALA’s Campaign for America’s Libraries and the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum’s Step Up to the Plate program, is open for registration at [ala.org@yourlibrary](mailto:ala.org@yourlibrary), click on “Initiatives and Projects.” Librarians can register for free promotional tools in English and Spanish. The first 100 libraries to register will receive a Jackie Robinson “History Lives” poster from ALA Graphics.

“Step Up to the Plate” encourages people of all ages to use print and

electronic resources available at their library to answer a series of trivia questions designed for their age group (10 and under, 11–13, 14–17, and 18 and over). One grand-prize winner will receive a trip for two to the Hall of Fame's World Series Gala event in Cooperstown, New York, in October. The program runs through September.

## Candidates Sought for 2011 Election

The ALA 2011 Nominating Committee is soliciting nominees to run on the 2011 spring ballot for the offices of ALA president and councilor-at-large.

The committee will select two candidates to run for president-elect and no fewer than 51 candidates for the 33 at-large Council seats to be filled in the 2011 spring election. The president-elect will serve a three-year term (as president-elect in 2011–2012, as president in 2012–2013, and as immediate past president in 2013–2014). Councilors-at-large will serve three-year terms, beginning after the 2011 ALA Annual Conference and ending at the adjournment of the 2014 Annual Conference.

Those elected will serve in corresponding roles in the ALA–Allied Professional Association (ALA–APA). Individuals considering ALA–APA office are encouraged to consult with their employers regarding any restrictions regarding lobbying activities or service on the governing body of a 501(c)6 organization.

Members who wish to make nominations should submit the nominee's name, present position, institution, address, telephone, fax, and e-mail address to any member of the committee, chaired by Robert Newlen, deputy assistant director, Knowledge Services Group, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., or e-mail [rnewlen@crs.loc.gov](mailto:rnewlen@crs.loc.gov). Self-

nominations are encouraged. All potential nominees must complete the Potential Candidate Biographical Form available at <https://cs.ala.org/potentialcandidates/>. Nominations and forms must be received no later than August 13.

To encourage diversity and leadership development, the committee will refrain from nominating any current councilors for election to

another term. Those who wish to continue their service are encouraged to file as petition candidates. Petitions are available from Lois Ann Gregory-Wood, Council Secretariat, ALA, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; [lgregory@ala.org](mailto:lgregory@ala.org). They can also be obtained during the 2010 Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., or 2011 Midwinter Meeting in San Diego. Petitions re-

# THE ASSOCIATION'S ASSOCIATIONS: ALTAFF

## LET ALTAFF SHOW YOU THE MONEY

Even as the national economy seems to be eking out a small recovery, libraries of all types across the country continue to reduce staff and hours, or close altogether. What's a librarian to do? Many librarians have discovered that there is untapped power in the voices of their formalized support groups, such as Friends, trustees, and foundation members.

We're all for educating city and campus governors who often hold the library's budget fate in their hands, but sometimes it takes a massive outcry from constituents to save the library. The Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends, and Foundations (ALTAFF) works year-round with citizen leaders at the local, state, and national levels to help them become more effective in their role as advocates. And we've seen success!

Though "soft money" is no way to run a library indefinitely, Friends groups and foundations are further helping their libraries by redoubling their fundraising efforts, and again ALTAFF is there. We provide our members with toolkits for starting a Friends group if you don't have one and for growing existing groups. We provide on-site and virtual consultation on fundraising strategies, such as selling books online and engaging in capital campaigns. We've published two books and support a very robust discussion list that shares best practices.

Trustees can be and often are powerful advocates and catalysts for fundraising. To assist them in these and other important roles of guardianship, ALTAFF will be launching an online Trustee Academy this fall. The academy will feature a curriculum of six courses to help these citizen supporters, advisors, and governors increase their effectiveness on behalf of the libraries they serve. If you need effective Friends and well-educated trustees, you need ALTAFF. We hope you'll join us. Opportunities for membership are available at [www.ala.org/altaff](http://www.ala.org/altaff).

—Sally Gardner Reed, executive director

Each month the Association's Associations spotlights the activities and agenda of one of ALA's divisions. Next month: **Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies**



quire 25 signatures for names to be included on the 2011 ballot.

## Hemingway Home Named Landmark

The Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum in Key West, Florida, has been designated a Literary Landmark by ALA's Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends, and Foundations.

The dedication ceremony was held March 14 during the finale of the "One Island One Book" program created by Monroe County Public Library's (MCPL) Key West branch, for which participants read Hemingway's *To Have and To Hold*.

Hemingway lived at the home at 907 Whitehead St., in the heart of the island's Old Town historic

## LOUISIANA ADVOCATES



ALA President Camila Alire (far right) joins members of the Louisiana Library Association (LLA) during its 84th annual conference, "Louisiana Libraries: The Heart of Our Communities," in Baton Rouge March 10–12. Alire hosted a preconference on advocacy and served as the keynote speaker. With her are: (from left) State Senate President Pro Tempore Sharon Weston Broome, State Librarian Rebecca Hamilton, and LLA President Melanie Sims.

## CALENDAR

### ALA EVENTS

**June 24–29:** ALA Annual Conference, Washington, D.C., [ala.org/annual](http://ala.org/annual).

**June 29:** Library Advocacy Day, Washington, D.C., [ala.org/annual](http://ala.org/annual).

**Aug. 4–8:** National Conference of African American Librarians, Birmingham, Alabama, [bcala.org](http://bcala.org).

**Sept. 23–25:** Association for Library Service to Children National Institute, Atlanta, [ala.org/alsc](http://ala.org/alsc).

**Nov. 7–9:** Young Adult Library Services Association Young Adult Literature Symposium, Albuquerque, New Mexico, [ala.org/yalsa](http://ala.org/yalsa).

district, from 1931 to 1939. MCPL, the Friends of the Monroe Public Library, and the Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum joined ALTAFF in support of the literary landmark designation. Visit [ala.org/altaff](http://ala.org/altaff) for more information.

## Honorary Member Nominations Open

Nominations are being accepted for ALA honorary membership, the Association's highest honor, which is bestowed on living citizens of any country whose contributions to librarianship or a closely related field are so outstanding that they are of significant and lasting importance to the whole field of library service.

Honorary members are elected for life by vote of the ALA Council upon recommendation of the ALA Executive Board. Nominations will be reviewed during the ALA Executive Board's 2010 fall meeting and presented to Council for vote during the 2011 ALA Midwinter

Meeting. Newly elected honorary members will be formally recognized at the Opening General Session during the 2011 ALA Annual Conference.

Members who wish to forward nominations must complete the online ALA Honorary Member Nomination form ([www.ala.org/ala/awardsgrants/awardsrecords/honorariumembersh/honor\\_nomi\\_form\\_2009.doc](http://www.ala.org/ala/awardsgrants/awardsrecords/honorariumembersh/honor_nomi_form_2009.doc))

The completed nomination packet, with all attachments, must be received no later than September 1. Posthumous nominations are not eligible for consideration. Submit nomination packets to: Honorary Membership, c/o JoAnne Kempf, director, Office for ALA Governance, ALA, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

Additional information about ALA honorary membership, plus a complete list of all honorary members elected since the designation was first awarded in 1893, is available at [tinyurl.com/ylzp9x2](http://tinyurl.com/ylzp9x2). ■

# State of America's Libraries: Usage Soars, Funding Shrinks

**W**hen jobs go away, Americans turn to their libraries to find information about future employment or educational opportunities. This library usage trend and others are detailed in the 2010 State of America's Libraries report, released April 11 by the American Library Association. The report shows that Americans have turned to their libraries in larger numbers in recent years.

Since the recession took hold in December 2007, the local library, a traditional source of free access to books,

magazines, CDs, and DVDs, has become a lifeline, offering technology training and workshops on topics that ranged from résumé-writing to job-interview skills.

The report shows the value of libraries in helping Americans combat the recession. It includes data from a January 2010 Harris Interactive poll that provides compelling evidence that a decade-long trend of increasing library use is continuing—and even accelerating during economic hard times. This national survey indicates that some 219 million Americans feel the public library improves the quality of life in their community. More than 223 million Americans feel that because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed.

And with more businesses and government agencies requiring applicants to apply online, job-seeking resources are among the most critical and most in-demand among the technology resources available in U.S. public libraries. Two-thirds of public libraries help patrons complete online job applications; provide access to job databases and other online resources (88%) and civil service exam materials (75%); and offer software or other resources (69%) to help patrons create résumés and other employment materials.

## GROCERIES ONLINE



Terri Summerhill shops online for groceries at Enoch Pratt Free Library in the new Virtual Supermarket Project funded by \$60,000 in federal stimulus money to Baltimore's Food Policy Task Force. The program offers laptops at the library where residents can order from a local grocer and pick the items up at the Orleans Street or Washington Village branch in the city's "food desert"—neighborhoods with a scarcity of stores offering nutritious food options.

## A sobering dichotomy

However, the report also shows that increased library use did not lead to an increase in funding for libraries. Research by the ALA and the Center for Library and Information Innovation at the University of Maryland suggests a "perfect storm" of growing community demand for library services and shrinking resources to meet that demand. While library use soars, a majority of states are reporting cuts in funding to public libraries and to the state library agencies that support them.

Other key trends detailed in the 2010 State of America's Libraries Report:

- Internet use continues to expand at public libraries, which have seen double-digit growth since 2007 in the online services they make available to their patrons. More than 71% of public libraries provide their community's only free public access to computers and the internet, according to an article in the November 2009 issue of *Amer-*

ican Libraries (p. 14). Wireless access also continues to grow and is now offered at more than 80% of public libraries.

■ Ninety-six percent of Americans feel that school libraries are an essential part of the education experience because they provide resources to students and teachers and because they give every child the opportunity to read and learn. School librarians play a crucial role in “keeping the digital doors open to help young people think about learning beyond the classroom,” according to one authority on online social networking sites. However, funding for school libraries also lags.

■ America’s academic libraries are experiencing increased use, both physical and virtual. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports academic libraries have more than 20.3 million visits per week (1.5 million more than two years earlier), answered more than 1.1 million reference questions, and made more than 498,000 presentations to groups. Almost 95% of students use their academic library’s website at least once a week, according to one study of students and technology, and nine out of 10 college students surveyed in another study said they turned to libraries “for online scholarly research databases . . . for conducting course-related research, valuing the resources for credible content, in-depth information, and the ability to meet instructors’ expectations.”

■ America’s libraries continue their efforts to sup-

Some 219 million Americans feel the public library improves the quality of life in their community.

port minorities and other underserved or disadvantaged populations. The ALA’s Spectrum Scholarship Program, for example, awarded 48 scholarships in 2009 to members of underrepresented groups to help them pursue master’s degrees; and the library community remained committed to sustained efforts on behalf of people with visual and other disabilities and adult English-language learners.

■ The library community continues to defend a core value embodied in the First Amendment and the corollary right to receive and consider ideas, information, and images. Librarians nationwide encountered new challenges as a range of individuals and groups sought to have books or other materials removed from public access, and as the federal government debated extending the life of intrusive legislation such as the USA Patriot Act.

■ Library construction fared better in 2009 than many expected during the recession, especially given the unreliability of funding for programming, materials, and hours. The answer may be that money earmarked years ago was seeing construction through to conclusion. Many of the new libraries and renovations show a timely concern for the environment.



Read the full 2010 State of America’s Libraries report at <http://tinyurl.com/State2010>.

## THUMBS UP AND FROSTING DOWN THE HATCH



Winners of Laramie County (Wyo.) Library System’s “Ultimate Library Cake-Off, from left: Breanna Foley, Kaylee Alles, Micah Copeland, and Breanna Hauger—pose thumbs-up with their prizes March 19. The teens’ winning entry in the contest, which used the theme “Alice in Wonderland,” depicted the Mad Hatter.



# Public Librarians Rally for Centrality

I spent my entire childhood at the library,” singer Natalie Merchant exulted during a surprise appearance that opened the Public Library Association’s national conference in Portland. Noting that Leonardo da Vinci was her idol when she was 7, she pledged her devotion to libraries, especially at a time when “we’re all making budget cuts.”

Merchant closed with a rousing version of her song “Kind and Generous,” dedicating it to librarians and dancing through the audience to express her gratitude for all that she had learned in libraries in her life and as she researched the children’s poems she has set to music for her new CD. “For your selflessness, my admiration. For everything you’ve done, you know I’m bound, I’m bound to thank you for it,” she sang, to appreciative applause and an occasional tear.

## Collective moral conscience

No less appreciated was keynote speaker Nicholas Kristof, whom Public Library Association president and program emcee Sari Feldman called our “collective moral conscience,” saying he was her personal first choice for conference keynoter. The Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist began his talk by stating emphatically, “As a child, I pretty much lived in the library.” He went on to tell a number of moving stories about what he said was destined to become the most important moral dilemma of the 21st century: gender inequality, the oppression of women and girls around the globe.

Kristof pointed out that in the last half-century, more women and girls have been “discriminated against to death” than all the deaths from war and genocide in the entire 20th century. “The scale is mind-boggling,” he said. He told stories of what he had witnessed in Cambodia and elsewhere in the world where trafficking in hu-



Singer Natalie Merchant and her musicians perform for public librarians in Portland.

man beings, largely women and girls, is a scourge. He said that what really depressed him was coming back to America and seeing people caring only about having “a hot car or the latest cell phone,” but then he would recall people like a Polish nun he had met in the Congo, “and then I just want to grow up and become a Polish nun.”

“Helping people is harder than it looks,” Kristof said, noting that the only things that really work against abject poverty and subjugation are “health education, financial empowerment, and water.”

“Education is telling the truth to students,” said author and contributing editor to National Public Radio’s *This American Life* Sarah Vowell at the closing of the March 24–27 conference. “You have the goods,” she added. “You have the places where that person can find that truth.” Vowell was responding to a question from the audience about the recent flap in Texas over the school board’s decision to

give textbooks in the public schools a more conservative bent. She noted that cultural warfare and political fighting do nothing for education but get in its way.

Reading from her book *The Wordy Shipmates*, Vowell shared her droll perspectives on history and what Americans have inherited from the Puritans and the founding fathers, and she turned those assumptions on their head.

Asked what she had learned from all the historical research she has done, Vowell quipped, “It turns out I’m an imperialist,” noting that “I end up identifying with the people I set out to loathe.” She also noted, “The thing I like about books is learning about people who are unlike you.”

Total attendees at the March 23–27 conference numbered 7,725, which PLA Executive Director Barb Macikas said was reassuringly high, given the budget cuts that so many libraries are enduring. Visit [www.pla.org](http://www.pla.org) for more about the conference. —L.K.



# Faculty Survey Tracks Changing Perceptions of Campus Libraries

A new survey of U.S. colleges and universities has some troubling findings for libraries about their declining use by faculty, but also holds clues as to how they can maintain their relevance.

The report of the results, *Faculty Survey 2009: Key Strategic Insights for Libraries, Publishers, and Societies*, summarized the findings as:

■ “Basic scholarly information use practices have shifted rapidly in recent years, and as a result the academic library is increasingly being disintermediated from the discovery process, risking irrelevance in one of its core functional areas;

■ “Faculty members’ growing comfort relying exclusively on digital versions of scholarly materials opens new opportunities for libraries, new business models for publishers, and new challenges for preservation; and

■ “Despite several years of sustained efforts by publishers, scholarly societies, libraries, faculty members, and others to reform various aspects of the scholarly communications system, a fundamentally conservative set of faculty attitudes continues to impede systematic change.”

The survey of 3,025 faculty members in 2009 is the fourth conducted by Ithaka S+R over the past decade on faculty attitudes and behaviors, and the trend shows that “the library’s physical edifice and catalog have declined steadily as starting points for research. The research process is no longer likely to begin with a face-to-face consultation with a librarian, a visit to the library’s special collections service points, or a search of the online library catalog. Rather, faculty most often turn to network-level services, including both general purpose search engines and services targeted specifically to academia.”

Scientists continue to be the least likely, at around 10%, to start their research in the library, with humanists, at about 30%, the most likely.

Since 2003 the survey has asked about faculty perceptions of three traditional functions of the library: The perceived importance of the library as a starting point for research (the “gateway” function) has declined; that of the library as a repos-

itory of resources (the “archive” function) has held steady; and that of paying for needed resources, from books and journals to electronic databases (the “buyer” function), always the most important, has grown even more valuable, rated as important by 90% in 2009.

## Role as electronic hub

The report notes that “many believe that these historical roles will not be the main focus of libraries in the future, and envision the transformation of the library from an institution focused on acquiring, maintaining, and providing services centered on a local print collection into a more electronic hub offering a variety of services to support campus needs for research, teaching, and learning.” It adds that many libraries are already taking steps toward such a transformation, and that others “are taking on new research-support roles, providing digital information curation and management services and even establishing a new professional identity for themselves as ‘informationists.’”

In addition, two new roles that were asked about for the first time in the 2009 survey, teaching support and research support, “suggest unique opportunities for libraries to further develop campus relationships.”

Available at [www.ithaka.org](http://www.ithaka.org), the report also includes findings on acceptance of the transition of scholarly works to digital form, and new online communications channels such as open-access journals and digital repositories. —G.F.

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# GLOBAL REACH



## **HAITI** ①

A Duke University graduate student has discovered what is believed to be the only known printed copy of Haiti's Declaration of Independence. While researching the early independence of Haiti in February, Julia Gaffield found the document, an eight-page pamphlet dated January 1, 1804, in the British National Archives in London.—*Duke University*, Apr. 1.

## **SCOTLAND** ②

Jacqueline Wilson overtook Harry Potter author J. K. Rowling as the writer whose books are most stolen from Scotland's libraries. Rowling's books have slipped from the top spot to sixth in the most-stolen list. Thieves have instead been taking works by children's author Wilson, American writer James Patterson, and romance novelist Nora Roberts.—*The Scotsman (Edinburgh)*, Apr. 3.

## **UNITED KINGDOM** ③

Free internet access and coffee shops could help reverse a decline in the number of people using libraries in England, according to a government report released March 22. *The Modernisation Review of Public Libraries: A Policy Statement* stated that opening on Sundays and offering e-books could boost library use. CILIP, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, called on the government to support the recommendations with adequate funding.—*BBC News*, Mar. 22; *CILIP*, Mar. 22.

## **NETHERLANDS** ④

Erik Boekesteijn and Jaap van de Geer, both of the DOK Library Concept Center in Delft, have launched an internet TV series called *This Week in Libraries*. The series is in English and features global library news and interviews with individuals involved in library innovation.—*www.thisweekinlibraries.com*.

## **POLAND** ⑤

Ewa Bąkowska, director of scientific information at the Jagiellonian University Library in Kraków, was one of the passengers on the Polish Air Force airliner that crashed near Smolensk, Russia, April 10 with Polish President Lech Kaczyński aboard. She was the

granddaughter of General Mieczysław Smorawinski, who was one of the 20,000 killed in the 1940 Katyn massacre that the president and other dignitaries were on their way to commemorate. Bąkowska had apparently intended to take an earlier flight.—*Gazeta Kraków*, Apr. 12; *Toronto Star*, Apr. 10.

## **IRAQ** ⑥

Thirty-one antique manuscripts, allegedly looted from the National Library and Archives in Baghdad in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion by U.S. forces, were handed over in March to Culture Ministry Undersecretary Fawzai al-Atroushi. A special ceremony was held to celebrate their return. The manuscripts were described as highly significant works in mathematics, engineering, history, and poetry.—*Azzaman (London)*, Mar. 31.

## **SOUTH AFRICA** ⑦

Some 10,000 high school students marched through the streets of Cape Town March 21 to call for improved schools and school libraries staffed by professional librarians. Organized by the advocacy group Equal Education, the demonstrators pointed out that fewer than 7% of the country's schools have a functioning library. Student-reading test scores at all grade levels are among the worst in Africa.—*Johannesburg (S. Africa) Sunday Times*, Apr. 10.

## **MALAYSIA** ⑧

The National Library will launch a loan system in July that allows the public to request books online and have them delivered by mail. Director-General Raslin Abu Bakar said he wants to change the mindset that "books can only be borrowed at libraries."—*Bernama*, Mar. 23.

## **AUSTRALIA** ⑨

A severe thunderstorm that generated widespread, golfball-sized hailstones passed through Perth late March 22. The University of Western Australia was badly hit, with many buildings suffering flood and structural damage. The Education, Fine Arts, and Architecture Library sustained major flood damage and will be closed until the summer.—*Newmatilda.com*, Apr. 12.

# Will Social Media Activism Reverse the Fortunes of Besieged Libraries?

Library workers and supporters nationwide are turning to social media to spread the word about proposed funding cuts and recruit advocates. Despite what looks to be a very bleak FY2011, social media blitzes to stave off cuts for the current fiscal year may have laid some groundwork toward influencing budgetmakers.

In March, the Charlotte (N.C.) Mecklenburg Library was asked to return \$2 million to the county. The library board responded by voting to close 12 branches and lay off more than 140 library employees. The public reaction was immediate: An online fundraising and awareness campaign spread across Facebook and Twitter to plug the budget hole. Although that goal wasn't met (as of mid-April, some \$300,000 had been donated by people around the world), trustees rescinded the closures a scant week after okaying them, opting for reduced hours and fewer layoffs.

The swift action was thanks to the library's vibrant online presence; officials tweet up-to-the minute news from trustee meetings using the #cmlibrary hashtag, as well as information on how the community can best advocate for libraries.

Charlotte's Learning and Development Coordinator Lori Reed was also spurred into action. She created [savelibraries.org](http://savelibraries.org), a clearinghouse of online campaigns to fight cuts to

library services. The website also links to advocacy resources from the American Library Association as well as ALA's direct links for contacting Congress, state legislators, and the media. The site has the potential to create a powerful, unifying voice for library advocates: one-stop shopping for new libraries that come under threat.

Despite these efforts, deep cuts remain a possibility. Mecklenburg County officials have asked the library to plan for a 50% reduction in funding for FY2011.

## Viral reactions

Facebook groups and advocacy websites opposing cuts also sprang up quickly when Los Angeles and Boston officials eyed branch closures, layoffs, and service-hour reductions. The Florida and New Jersey library associations rallied the library troops virtually as lawmakers sought to slash or eliminate state aid to libraries. Los Angeles library lovers took action as Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa ended Sunday service April 11, with more cuts in the offing. In Boston, rallies organized online helped lower the number of branches eyed for closure from 10 to four.

The budget proposed by New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie would eliminate 74% of funding to libraries and associated organizations, which translates to the loss of 50% of state funding currently intended for public libraries—ending interlibrary loan and shared electronic resources. NJLA reacted by alerting the library community through Capwiz, advocacy software that ALA has provided to empower users to contact

their legislators about important bills. Within days, state lawmakers got more than 32,000 messages; Gov. Christie told a Cape May County Library patron at a gubernatorial forum that libraries' viability generated more messages of concern than any other issue.

The internet groundswell of support is in stark contrast to the difficulty encountered by Salinas (Calif.) Public Libraries in 2004. Would the city council have voted to close all three branches if the discussion and vote had been instantaneously broadcast over Twitter and Facebook? It's encouraging to note that even without the use of these online grassroots platforms, the Salinas libraries reopened after several months thanks to more traditional community networking (*AL*, Dec. 2005, p. 19–20).

What, then, is the advantage of social media advocacy? Certainly, more rapid and widespread coverage about impending crises. The library community inherently trusts that the Lori Reeds of the world are always benevolent and discreet. Yet, one well-meaning but angry supporter can harm long-cultivated relationships: In the heat of last year's budget crisis in Ohio, someone posted a spoof of Gov. Ted Strickland's READ poster; the devil horns and pointed tagline ("Read: Just Not at the Library") were impolitic at best.

It remains to be seen whether the Facebook pages and Twitter streams of library fans present and future make a lasting difference at budget time during an economic downturn.

—Cindi Trainor, coordinator, library data and technology services, Eastern

**New Jersey lawmakers got more than 32,000 messages via Capwiz in a few days.**

# Gates Foundation, IMLS Research Proves Patrons Value Online Access

The economic downturn has led to dramatic increases in library visitation across the nation, including unprecedented demand for free computer and internet access. Over the last year, Americans have flocked to libraries to go online and find help from trained staff to conduct job searches, complete online coursework, apply for government services, and learn new workforce skills.

Ironically, even as demand for services grows, library budgets are shrinking. According to a recent ALA survey, 24 out of 45 reporting states experienced decreased library funding over the past year. And although almost all libraries offer free technol-

ogy access, many continue to struggle to replace aging computer workstations and increase the speed of their internet connections. Up to a third of all libraries say they lack even minimally adequate broadband for their patrons.

Despite these challenges, I am optimistic about the future of libraries. They have never been more relevant and more important to our communities.

Groundbreaking new research proves the broad use and value of internet access in public libraries. "Opportu-

nity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries" reaffirms what many of us already thought to be true—that

library technology services have created opportunity for millions of Americans.

This research, authored by the University of Washington and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services,

found that nearly one in three Americans age 14 or older—roughly 77 million people—used a public library

**Although almost all public libraries offer free technology access, many struggle to increase the speed of their internet connections.**



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computer or wireless network to access the internet in the last year. Major uses of online access at libraries include employment and career support (40% of users); education and training such as applying for college, doing homework, or taking an online course (42%); and researching health and wellness issues (37%).

This important study highlights what is at risk, particularly for low-income individuals who rely heavily on the public library for their technology, if future public and private investment in public libraries doesn't keep pace with demand.

At the federal level, we've recently seen the potential for unprecedented commitment from the federal government to help public libraries secure the high-quality broadband access they need to ensure libraries remain vital technology hubs for our communities.

Libraries and other community institutions have been given priority in the disbursement of federal stimulus broadband grants, and the National Broadband Plan recently announced by the Federal Communications Commission recognizes libraries as critical access points to ensure digital inclusion of all communities. By digital inclusion, I mean that people have both quality access to technology and the ability to use technology to improve their lives.

## Transformation

The Gates Foundation began its partnership with public libraries over a dozen years ago to help transform the way patrons access information at the library. We believe that every life has equal value and that everyone deserves the chance to live a healthy, productive life. In the United States, there is no better way for us to continue working toward that vision than by partnering with libraries.

With our investments in computer hardware now completed, we look forward to our role as a champion of technology in public libraries and helping amplify the value of libraries to the public and decision makers. Over the next several years, the foundation will make investments designed to help library leaders plan for, manage, and advocate for technology, and to help community leaders understand the value of public access technology in libraries.

As I look to the work and challenges that lie ahead, I am more confident than ever that libraries will continue to provide Americans with the opportunity, learning, and hope that shapes our country. I am proud to partner with the thousands of library leaders, staff, and community supporters that will carry this important work forward.

—Jill Nishi, deputy director

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## NEWSMAKER: KATHERINE PATERSON

**K**atherine Paterson, two-time winner of both the National Book Award (*The Great Gilly Hopkins* and *The Master Puppeteer*) and Newbery Medal (*Bridge to Terabithia* and *Jacob Have I Loved*), is the second person to be named National Ambassador for Young People's Literature by Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. Children's author Jon Scieszka was named the first ambassador in 2008. Paterson was selected for a two-year term based on recommendations from a selection committee. Her international fame rests not only on her widely acclaimed novels, but also on her efforts to promote literacy in the United States and abroad. She said books had altered her life on more than one occasion. The National Ambassador post is sponsored by the Library of Congress' Center for the Book, the Children's Book Council, and its foundation, known as Every Child a Reader. Paterson discussed her new role and the importance of public and school libraries. Read the full interview at [americanlibrariesmagazine.org](http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org).



to talk to teachers and librarians and to see the kind of work that all the heroes of literacy are doing. What is more creative and imaginative than working with children and opening up the world for them?

**Recently results from the 2009 National Assessment for Educational Progress shows that reading scores are up from 2007 for children in grade 8, but unchanged for those in grade 4. What do these results tell you about children and reading?** I don't know

whether we should take heart from that or not because for so long the scores seemed to be going down as soon as you hit 4th grade. I don't know if that means that we have begun to focus on the older kids, which we should have done long ago.

**What are some of the activities or programs that are planned or have already taken place in your role as national ambassador?** The Read Across America program took place in New York in early March. I spoke at the National Educational Association and Channel 13 in New York City, I'm going to the National Book Festival and the American Library Association Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. I plan to be a part of Library Advocacy Day to tell Congress that we really do have to have support for libraries. We really do. I hope our wonderful book-reading, book-writing president will help us do that. I know he's got an awful lot on his plate, but it's so important that we support libraries during this difficult time. ■

**American Libraries: "Read for Your Life" is your ambassadorship theme. Why?**

**KATHERINE PATERSON:** I wanted to talk about a broad range of things that would be inclusive of not only reading that you do for your own enjoyment, nourishment, and information, but also for your life.

**What role can libraries and librarians play in your efforts and for overall literacy goals?** The classroom and the playground were just very frightening places for me when I came to the U.S. as a child from China. But the librarian was so understanding and the library was such a wonderful place. I know what a library can do for a child from my own experience. We have so many coming into our country now and the library is still the place where the language lessons are taught—where they can come freely and just educate themselves. In these difficult times, libraries are needed more than they ever were.

**How important are school librarians to maintaining good reading skills for students?** Most children won't find the right books for themselves. It is the librarian who most knows the children and the books, and who is able to bring the right book to promote the love of reading in every individual child. I hope that we will never forget that handing a book to a child is an important part of that role and not just reduce it to teaching somebody to use the computer.

**As a two-time Newbery medal winner, how did receipt of this honor change your life and possibly pave the way for your role that as national ambassador?** It did change my life because nobody had ever heard of me and my books. What happens is that you're suddenly in a wider world of children's books and not just the little one of your own today. That's been such a wonderful experience for me to not only get to be close friends with other writers, but

# How the World Sees Us

"Before parents accept the wisdom of a school board to cut school librarians, they should ask: Will my child graduate with a 21st-century résumé, or a 19th-century transcript? . . . As the information landscape becomes ever more complex, why does a school district want to abandon its professional guides to it?"

Web publisher MARK MORAN, who heads Dulcinea Media, offering one entrepreneur's view of what educational experiences produce a valuable workforce, in "Young Learners Need Librarians, Not Just Google," *Forbes*, Mar. 22.



When you are growing up there are two institutional places that affect you most powerfully: the church, which belongs to God, and the public library, which belongs to you."

Rolling Stones guitarist KEITH RICHARDS, quoted in a preview of his forthcoming autobiography *Life* (Little, Brown), in which he confesses to a secret longing to be a librarian, "It's Only Books 'n' Shelves But I Like It," *Sunday Times (U.K.)*, Apr. 4.

"Imagine if all public school students received a library card, or even a public library-connected e-book, on the first day of school. Imagine public library kiosks in train stations and hospital lobbies, allowing any New Yorker with a library card to download the newest novel or the greatest classic."

Charles V. Revson Foundation President JULIE SANDORF, in "New York City Foundations and Philanthropists Must Realize That the iPad Era Demands a New Partnership," *New York Daily News*, Mar. 26.

"I just got back from the library; I reserved a cubicle for the semester." Miss Sue the tutor, played by Kathy Bates, advising rising football star Michael Oher, played by Quinton Aaron, how to succeed, *The Blind Side*, directed by John Lee Hancock, 2009.

"'There are no good guys in [*Running with Scissors*],' said Jill Driver . . . outlining her panel's concerns. . . . 'So we felt there was no reason to keep the book.' . . . 'That's exactly why we wanted to keep the book,' said Paula Marczynski from Robinson High." CATHERINE ROBINSON, on nine challenges to Augusten Burroughs's 2002 novel at the Hillsborough County (Fla.) Public Schools, where two review committees removed the title, *Creative Loafing*, Mar. 26.

"Every public library branch in every community across America is an extension of my college campus . . . but most of all, the little red brick building

in York, Nebraska, where I first met Dorothy Parker, Ogden Nash and so

## "What's so bad about having a lot of libraries?"

CHRISTOPHER STOCKBRIDGE, avid user of Boston Public Library, discussing closure contingency plans, in "Anger, Queries Mark Meetings at Branches," *Dorchester Reporter*, Apr. 8.

many more of my closest friends. Don't close them down. Don't close any of them. Build more."

Retired newspaper columnist DOUG ROBARCHEK, weighing in on the Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, budget crisis that continues to threaten Char-

lotte and Mecklenburg Library, *Charlotte Observer*, Apr. 8.

"The nurse-midwives of literacy, public librarians are already loaning e-readers; a library that got 10 as gifts reported that within a half-hour they had all been checked out."

Author ANNA QUINDLEN, arguing for an end to the either/or view of print versus electronic, in *Newsweek*, Apr. 5.

"Let's face the facts. How many people use the library anymore?"

Nixa, Missouri, resident CHUCK RUMFELT, explaining why he voted against a 16.3-mill increase to build three new Christian County Library branches to accommodate a circulation jump of 50% and a 150% spike in internet workstation use since 2005, in "Christian County Voters Once Again Reject Library Tax," *Springfield News-Leader*, Apr. 7.

"All in all, the most ecologically virtuous way to read a book starts by walking to your local library."

DANIEL GOLEMAN and GREGORY NORRIS on the longevity of print tomes vs. e-readers, in "How Green Is My iPad?" *New York Times*, Apr. 4. ■



# Let's Review Everything

Why stop at books?

by Jeffrey Beall

For many years, readers' advisory has been a fundamental and valuable library service that has helped library patrons and others decide what books to borrow from a library or to buy from a book dealer. Librarians have also been prolific writers of book reviews, which have helped other librarians make purchasing decisions and helped readers decide what books to check out or purchase.

However, librarians' readers' advisory and reviews have been mostly limited to books. I think it's time to expand their coverage and include shorter publications, such as magazine and journal articles, essays, short stories, and even individual poems.

The ever-increasing number of journal articles means readers are overwhelmed with content. University of Manchester chemistry professor Douglas Kell recently estimated that five scientific papers are published every minute. Academics and researchers are especially in need of a *Booklist* for scholarly articles.

Individual journal articles are increasingly gaining equal stature with monographs; many times the only difference is length. In some scholarly fields, journal articles, given their faster publication time, are more important than monographs. So articles, like books, are equally deserving of reviews and recommendations.

Book reviews help tell readers whether a book is worth checking out and reading, and they tell collection development librarians whether it is worth purchasing. In many cases, the library probably already has online access to many magazines and journals, eliminating the need to suggest buying them or not. Therefore, the chief purpose of journal article reviews is simply to advise which articles to read and which to skip. Readers lack the time needed to scan through them all to determine which are worth investing time in reading. Article reviews will help save the time of the reader.

**It's time to expand readers' advisory and library reviewing to shorter works.**



Citeulike.org, allow users to add ratings and reviews to everything the sites index. However, librarians ought to take the lead on article reviews, just as they have done with books. Libraries spend a large portion of their budgets on full-text electronic journal access, so writing article reviews is a great way to expose and promote the best of this content.

Systems need the ability to limit search results to articles with accompanying reviews, and then to sort the results in order of most positive first, using reviewers' star ratings (1–5 stars). This would help searchers easily and

quickly find the best articles and those most appropriate to their needs from among the millions available.

## Reviewing reviews

Some indexes, such as WorldCat .org, include many more non-monographic titles than just magazine and journal articles. Even poems and short stories appearing in journals such as *The New Yorker* are indexed and therefore reviewable. And because sites like WorldCat index book reviews, it's even possible to write and publish reviews of reviews.

Not all articles need to be reviewed. Librarians should point out the outstanding articles to readers and they should signal the bad ones, the flawed articles that sneaked into publication because of bogus peer review (an increasing trend among open access, online journals) or flawed research.

Review journals such as *Booklist* ought to consider adding journal article review sections, organized by discipline (like they do for book reviews), such as the best science articles, the best education articles, or the best cooking articles.

Readers' advisory has a long history and a strong reputation. It's time to build on this reputation and expand readers' advisory and library reviewing to shorter works. It's time to review everything. ■

JEFFREY BEALL is metadata librarian at Auraria Library at the University of Colorado, Denver.

# Gadgets and Gizmos

Personal electronics and the library

by Jason Griffey

If we think back, we can imagine a time before the book and, once books became inexpensive and widespread, what a revolutionary and democratizing tool the book was for sharing information. It must have been incredible to think that you could have so much text in such a compact form, and so many of them!

The technological revolution that we are going through now will make that look like a blip in history.

The last 10 years have seen more information created, shared, and collected than in the rest of human history combined. We've seen a huge shift in the last 20 years, as microchips get smaller and smaller, and cheaper and cheaper, to the point where even the least expensive digital toy you can buy has more computing power than the machines that were used to crack the German Enigma codes during World War II.

Personal electronics, or gadgets, are something that our patrons are using; but more to the point, they are a part of the future of information retrieval and sharing. They are becoming an increasingly important and even critical component of the way that information is generated and disseminated, and it's important that librarians be aware of what gadgets are available, what they can do, what they cost, and how practical they are in different settings.

There are several general categories of gadget, including e-book readers like the Amazon Kindle and the Barnes and Noble Nook. The term "gadgets" also includes personal multimedia players, media capture devices like the Flip video camera and the Zoom H2 audio recorder, as well as scanners and note-taking helpers. If you can consume or produce it, there is likely an electronic device that lets you do so more easily and cheaply than you thought possible.

Moore's Law is still driving the price down and the complexity of computing devices up to such an extent that there are now portable devices that truly would have been unimaginable not that long ago. For \$150 you can buy a portable video camera that can capture higher quality video than an entire TV studio could just 20 years ago. These devices are miracles of the modern technological age, and are enabling the creation and consumption of content in truly remarkable ways.

These silicon wonders are significant to librarians for three key reasons. First of all, our patrons are using them more and more. Just as we began to build library websites as

more patrons went online, we need to become fluent in the language of gadgets as patrons become more conversant.

Second, these devices can make us more effective at our jobs. They can give libraries new venues for the distribution of content. They can make complex tasks simpler, help librarians share information with one another more rapidly and efficiently, and help us give better, more advanced service.

Finally, these devices often change the nature of information interactions. They provide new opportunities for the delivery of content, something libraries should always be interested in. You have a much richer, multimodal experience with a number of these gadgets than you do with the traditional print world. When it's possible for you to read text, click a link to a video, and then leave a comment about the original text, your relationship with the consumption of media has changed. Libraries and librarians need to understand this changing landscape, and the windows through which we interact with this new world of information are gadgets. ■



When you can read text, watch a video, and leave a comment, your relationship with the media has changed.



Read more from Jason Griffey on gadgets in libraries at [americanlibrariesmagazine.org/perpetualbeta](http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/perpetualbeta)

JASON GRIFFEY is the head of Library Information Technology at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. This article was excerpted from the April 2010 issue of *Library Technology Reports*.



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# The Biggest Front Porch

The medium changes the way we tell our stories

by Joseph Janes

There are few pleasures in life as rewarding as being in the presence of a great storyteller—an opportunity I get every year when the University of Washington SLIS hosts the Spencer Shaw Lecture, in honor of our beloved emeritus faculty member. This year's treat was Patricia McKissack, whose talk was titled "On the Front Porch of My Mind."

Her love for storytelling started on a (real) front porch where, as a girl, she would sit with family and neighbors, gathering to quilt or shell peas, sharing and passing down stories and along the way building a sense of community and togetherness that's easy to envy.



**Will the changes be for the good? As storyteller Patricia McKissack says, "Different is not a synonym for wrong."**

tus updates on Facebook (ick);

- A movement among young Jewish professionals to promote (via Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube) a National Day of Unplugging, encouraging people to turn off all their electronic devices for the Sabbath;

- A feature piece on the former editor of the defunct *Jane* magazine, who now edits Yahoo's website for women called Shine, which is about to get some competition in the form of a rival site from MSN;

- And, on the back page, the potential drawbacks of texting or chatting while exercising; the distraction can help to pass the time, though leaning forward might diminish the value

of the workout.

These made up at least half the section, which demonstrates either that the *Times* was hard up for copy that week, or that our notion of "lifestyle" is now inextricably digital in nature. Probably both. And I didn't even include the column musing on the inability of just getting lost in a GPS world.

Picture yourself as a little girl on that front porch, stitching and listening, shucking and absorbing, and then, one day, tentatively, shyly, trepidatiously, trying out your first story. That experience has been replicated, on front porches, in marketplaces, in front of barber shops,

around water coolers, in the agora and around the campfire, for millennia.

## Tools tell the tale

The front porch is now a whole lot bigger. We tell our stories, in all their myriad forms, from the puppet show to the journal article and the textbook, using whatever tools are around, and sometimes we even invent a new tool when the story requires it. In the process, the medium shapes the message and vice versa. (Could the novel have arisen without the printing press? And didn't radio just repurpose the epic as the soap opera?)

As the internet grows and changes, it will change the ways we tell those stories, and eventually, the stories themselves, and then, ultimately, us as the tellers and hearers. We will be different people and societies. Will that be for the good? Hard to say, although as McKissack told us, "Different is not a synonym for wrong."

Her travels have taken her, among other places, to Gee's Bend, Alabama, where the quilters there told her how to stop an infant's teething pain. Apparently the secret is to put an egg in the baby's sock and tack it over a doorway they go through. Don't say I never give practical advice here . . . but that's another story. ■

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## Style without substance

I was ruminating on this the other day when I was whizzing through the Thursday style section of the *New York Times*. In between the incredibly superficial and largely useless advice (apparently linen for men is in this summer; I'll have to get right on that, as soon as I find someone to follow me around with a hand steamer all day), there were several articles that reflected the times we live in:

- Couples who fight by trading passive-aggressive—or worse—sta-

# Dipping into the Stream

Building collegial ties on Twitter and FriendFeed

by Meredith Farkas

**W**hen you think of Twitter, you might think of Oprah. You might think of Ashton Kutcher. But do you think of Roy Tennant, Jessamyn West, and ALA's Association of College and Research Libraries? While social networks are useful for keeping up with celebrities, friends, and family, they're also valuable professional networking tools that can connect you to the brightest individuals in librarianship. I have developed rewarding professional relationships through my use of Twitter and FriendFeed and believe these sites have value for librarians looking to further their careers.

## Following the leaders

Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service where users update the people following them with broadcasts (tweets) of 140 characters or less. Users choose who they want to follow and will receive tweets only from those individuals. You can comment on what someone else tweets by using the @username reply function and can promote a tweet you liked to your followers by retweeting (rebroadcasting) it. Twitter is an "always-on" technology, so people who use Twitter simply dip into the stream of information when they have time rather than expecting to keep up with everything.

The population of librarians on Twitter has skyrocketed as people increasingly use it more as a tool for

professional communications than a medium to share what they had for lunch (though

there is still some of that). Twitter's not only useful for building relationships with library professionals, but also for getting help and keeping up with the profession. I constantly find people tweeting links to useful articles or discussing studies whose results could impact my work. Also, once you are part of a professional network on Twitter, you can "query the hive" for feedback or help.

FriendFeed is similar to Twitter in that users share resources and broadcast updates, but it's considered more of a lifestreaming tool that can aggregate your entire social media presence. It can pull in your tweets, blog posts, websites you bookmark, photos you share, and much more. Users can comment on anything posted to FriendFeed and conversations are much easier to follow since, much like a blog, the comments show up just below the original post. Updates on FriendFeed are not limited to 140 characters, but should still be brief.

## Grow your own hive

So how do you get people to follow you on Twitter and FriendFeed? When you follow someone in either network, they will receive a notification that you did so and will have the opportunity to follow you back if



Once you are part of a professional network, you can "query the hive" for feedback or help.

they want. Writing interesting content is therefore important, but, as with blogging, you need to in-

teract with people you're interested in networking with. In Twitter, you can do this by commenting on the things they post using the @username reply. It's easy to follow mentions of your username in Twitter, so they'll see your comment. In FriendFeed, interacting is as easy as commenting on someone's post, since your comment will show up right below their post. If people find your response interesting, they'll likely check out your profile, see what you've shared, and perhaps decide to follow you.

Trying to choose between FriendFeed and Twitter? Use both; have your FriendFeed posts show up on Twitter and vice versa. A drawback is that you can end up having parallel conversations in each space. Lots of tools exist to manage these streams so you can keep up with what's important to you and filter out what isn't. There is so much great content in these social networks; just adjust the information flow to a level that works for you. ■

**MEREDITH FARKAS** is head of instructional initiatives at Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont, and part-time faculty at San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science. She blogs at *Information Wants to Be Free* and created *Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki*. Contact her at [librarysuccess@gmail.com](mailto:librarysuccess@gmail.com).

# From Children's Literature to Readers Theatre

Get kids excited and engaged with books by getting them onstage

by Elizabeth A. Poe

Five 2nd-graders stand before a group of 20 preschool children sitting on the rug in the library's story area. Each of them is holding a hardback copy of Eric Rohmann's picture book *A Kitten Tale* (Knopf, 2008).



After the name and author of the book have been announced, the children begin to read:

(*Nar*): Once there were four kittens who had never seen snow.

(*1st Kitten*): "Snow scares me!"

(*Nar*): Said the first kitten.

(*1st Kitten*): "When winter comes, the snow will fall and fall and we'll all be cold!"

(*2nd Kitten*): "Freezing cold!"

(*Nar*): Said the second kitten.

(*3rd Kitten*): "Cold to the tips of our tails!"

(*Nar*): Said the third kitten. The fourth kitten said,

(*4th Kitten*): "I can't wait."

The 2nd-graders continue through the book, reading their designated parts. When the readers finish, they bow and sit down on the rug. The preschoolers clap enthusiastically and rush to the older children, wanting to see the pictures in the books they hold. The teachers and librarian, used to channeling the children's energy and curiosity, quickly organize the children into five small groups, with a 2nd-grader in each. The 2nd-graders agree to read the books with the children as they look at the pictures and discuss the story.

Comments like: "Oh, the fourth kitten is striped like my cat at home"; "I love it when it snows"; "I was afraid to swim in the ocean until my mother went in with me last summer"; and "We have new kittens at our house!" fill the room. Several preschoolers pretend to be kittens, and soon one group is acting out *A Kitten Tale*. They particularly love shouting, "I can't wait," and pretending to roll in the snow.

In this room abuzz with literature-inspired conversation and dramatic play, the librarian and teachers look at one another and smile. The Readers Theatre performance has clearly been a success. The preschoolers' energetic response to the initial reading and their subsequent interest in hearing the book read repeatedly, drawing pictures

of the four kittens, and eventually putting on *A Kitten Tale* puppet show all speak to the power of hearing older children give a Readers Theatre performance.

But the preschool audience members are not the only ones to benefit from the performance. The 2nd-graders, who participated in the project from inception to execution, experienced a variety of personal, social, and intellectual gains. They had fun working together to prepare the performance, and they had fun reading to and interacting with the preschoolers. They developed literary appreciation for a masterfully written and illustrated picture book. They improved their reading fluency and public speaking skills. And, in addition to experiencing the satisfaction that comes from helping others, they felt increased self-confidence by virtue of doing something well.

But all these benefits did not occur without a lot of hard work by the readers who volunteered for the project and the adults who want to help children develop a love for literature. The adults in this scenario care deeply about nurturing and empowering children. Helping children create a Readers Theatre in the library is one way to accomplish these goals.

As the opening scenario demonstrates, Readers Theatre is a staged reading of literature that emphasizes the importance of text by using limited action, suggested characterization, no costumes, and no props. Sometimes called minimalist theatre, it is a dramatic form, originally developed for performing in theatrical settings, in which participants read from scripts taken directly from a literary work.

Educators have embraced this dramatic form for its myriad educational benefits and adapted it for a variety of purposes. Many teachers and reading specialists, who regard it as a tool for teaching reading skills, have students read from prefabricated scripts. This activity is widely lauded as an effective means for increasing reading fluency as students practice reading aloud with others for the sake of a performance. It can also familiarize students with a literary text and deepen their comprehension of the text because successful reading aloud involves understanding what one is reading. It follows that understanding what is being read can lead to reading expressively. Educators with these goals in mind frequently rely upon the array of commercially produced scripts available to them.

Language arts teachers may have additional reasons for using Readers Theatre in libraries and classrooms. They may seek to deepen students' literary experience with a book, encourage language appreciation, provide a means for sharing books read in small groups, or offer an option

for a group response to a book. These educators achieve their goals by encouraging students to create their own Readers Theatre scripts.

## Creativity enhances learning

While my approach to Readers Theatre encompasses the goals of both reading and language arts teachers, it stresses the use of reader-created scripts. When readers create and perform their own scripts, they not only improve their reading skills but also enhance their literary appreciation, thereby increasing their chances for developing a love of literature and becoming lifelong readers. I base this statement on John Dewey's philosophy of experiential education, Louise Rosenblatt's theory of reader response, and my 30-plus years' experience as an educator.

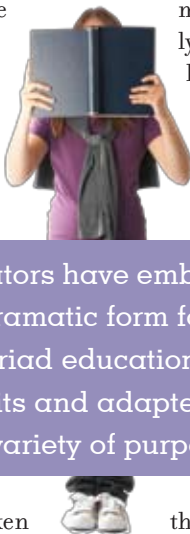
As Dewey observed in *Experience and Education* (Macmillan, 1938), learning takes place most profoundly when children are involved in the creation of the learning experience. In our opening scenario, the children were highly involved in all stages of their Readers Theater production. They first volunteered to be part of the project. Then they spent several afternoons perusing a stack of picture

books suggested by the librarian. They talked with the preschool teachers about what the children might enjoy. After conferring with one another, they selected the book they wanted to use.

The next step was to prepare the script. They read and reread the story. Because there were six of them, the children decided that four would be

the kittens, one would be the narrator (a term the librarian supplied for the person who would say everything the kittens didn't), and one would be the director (another term supplied by the librarian when the children quickly recognized that someone needed to be in charge). At the librarian's urging, they discussed whether the words told the story without the pictures. After deciding they did in all but one instance, the children collaborated to compose the additional words to insert into the script. The librarian helped the director type the script on the computer, with reading roles labeled A, B, C, D, E. They glued each reader's parts to large sticky notes, which they stuck over the original text on the appropriate pages of the books.

The director assigned parts, and the practicing began. The group rehearsed several afternoons until each member felt confident reading his or her part. During the practices, they discussed the kittens' different personalities and how this might affect the way their words were read. They practiced reading expressively, using consistent voices for each character. The librarian suggested a bit of work on rhythm and pacing.



Educators have embraced this dramatic form for its myriad educational benefits and adapted it for a variety of purposes.



When readers create and perform their own scripts, they not only improve their reading skills but also enhance their literary appreciation.

The performance was a success, and it inspired the preschoolers to become involved in their own learning and love of books. The possible gains for the 2nd-graders are numerous. Certainly they improved their readingskills, but they went beyond that to increase their understanding of and appreciation for literature. Their work selecting the text meant they had to read many books closely and choose one suited for the audience. This required careful consideration of the books' subject matter and use of language.

Writing the script, in this situation, did not necessitate making many changes. There was only one place where they had to imitate the writer's style to invent a line for the narrator to read when the text did not explain that the fourth kitten leaped out into the snow while the other kittens hid in the house. They did, however, come away with an important understanding concerning the relationship between illustrations and text in picture books. They also learned the term *narrator* and how this literary device functions in literature. They gained a sense of characterization as they delved into the personalities of

the four kittens. In addition, they experienced firsthand the exhilarating effect sharing a good book can have on a group of listeners. In one way or another, each of the children involved in this project had a rich, satisfying experience with a literary text.

### Individual interpretations

In her book *Literature as Exploration* (Appleton-Century, 1938), Louise Rosenblatt built on Dewey's philosophy of experiential education, which deals with learning in general, to develop a theory of reader response primarily concerned with the nature of literary experiences. According to Rosenblatt, every literary experience involves a reader who comes to the printed word, or the text, with a unique set of characteristics, or experiences, which creates a transaction resulting in the reader's evocation of meaning from the text. Because we are all individuals, each reader's response to a text is unique, its meaning special to him or her.

In the case of *A Kitten Tale*, several readers had different interpretations of the kittens' personalities, and that interpretation influenced how he or she thought a particular kitten's lines should be read. Different interpretations were respected, even celebrated, but group negotiations were needed to ensure the integrity of the performance. The

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children decided that each reader could read his or her kitten's lines the way he or she wanted as long as the voice was consistent and the kittens sounded different from one another. Negotiations such as these are an important part of learning to express one's response to a literary work, developing necessary collaboration skills, and understanding the process of creating a successful Readers Theatre experience. The audience's responses were also considered as the 2nd-graders talked with the preschoolers about how the book related to them, and the teachers nurtured their desire to act out, draw, and perform their own responses to the story.

As a teacher educator and children's/young adult literature specialist, I advocate using this child-centered approach to Readers Theatre as a pleasurable way of sharing stories that also has a wealth of secondary benefits. I used it for many years in my university-level children's literature, young adult literature, and teaching methods courses. My hope is that when pre-service teachers and librarians actually participate in a Readers Theatre experience, they will be more likely to use this activity in their own classrooms and libraries. It has been my pleasure to observe numerous reader-created Readers Theatre performances given by students of all educational levels in a variety of venues, both inside and outside of school set-

tings. I have also had students and adults give Readers Theatre demonstrations in conjunction with sessions I have conducted on the topic at professional conferences.

For the past eight years, I have been working with groups of children's authors giving Readers Theatre performances at professional conferences. I have organized Readers Theatre sessions at national conferences in Florida, Nevada, Texas, Illinois, Washington, D.C., and California, as well as at international conferences in South Africa, Denmark, New Zealand, and Spain. Since I believe the library to be a perfect setting for children and teens to encounter Readers Theatre, whether as reading participants or audience members, the sessions at ALA Annual Conferences in Washington, D.C., and Anaheim, California, were particularly rewarding to me because the librarians seemed deeply interested in organizing opportunities for children and teens to create Readers Theatre experiences in their libraries. ■



For the past eight years, children's and young adult literature consultant ELIZABETH A. POE has organized Readers Theatre performances with authors at professional conferences across the U.S. and around the world. This article is excerpted from her book *From Children's Literature to Readers Theatre*, to be published this fall by ALA Editions.

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 FICTION



Teens dealing with violence and other risky behaviors can get help from young adult fiction

by Michael Cart

# A Literature of Risk

Risky behaviors remain very real factors in the daily lives of 21st-century teens. Ranging from physical and emotional violence to drug and alcohol abuse, from risky sexual practices resulting in STDs and unintended pregnancies to driving recklessly and carrying weapons to school, these behaviors make up the main threat to adolescents' health, according to the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health.

While the incidence of specific behaviors may wax and wane like the moon, one thing remains constant: "You have to realize that all adolescents are going to take risks," asserts Lynn Ponton, author of *The Romance of Risk: Why Teenagers Do the Things They Do* (Basic, 1998). "Adolescents define themselves," she said in a May 10, 1999, *New York Times* article, "through rebellion and anger at parents or other adults, engaging in high-risk behaviors including drinking, smoking, drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sexual activity, disordered eating, self-mutilation, stealing, gang activity, and violence."

The riskiest of teen behaviors involves violence and the resulting injuries, which remain the leading causes of death among all youth aged 5–19. Of these deaths, 67% result from injury, 16% from homicide, and 14%

## Violence and its resulting injuries remains the leading cause of death among all youth aged 5–19.

from suicide, according to the Centers for Disease Control. These are startling—and sometimes shattering—statistics. The CDC reports that “a number of factors can increase the risk of a youth engaging in violence.” Among them: “a prior history of violence; drug, alcohol, or tobacco use; poor family functioning; poor grades in school; poverty in the community; and association with delinquent peers.”

### Violence and its consequences

It is hard not to think that some impact comes from growing up in a violence-ridden world—the real thing, as in the Oklahoma City bombing, the Columbine shootings, 9/11, international terrorism, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the imagined but powerfully visualized (and sometimes glamorized) violence in movies, on TV, on the internet, and in video games (*Grand Theft Auto*, anyone?). Indeed, according to the University of Michigan Health System, “Literally thousands of studies since the 1950s have asked whether there is a link between exposure to media violence and violent behavior. All but 18 have answered ‘Yes.’”

Accordingly, the exponential growth of a media presence in adolescent lives may give one pause. In his fascinating 2008 book *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (Harper), sociologist Michael Kimmel writes, “Today’s young people—from little kids to adults in their late 20s and early 30s—represent the most technologically sophisticated and media savvy generation in our history. The average American home . . . has three TVs, two VCRs, three radios, two tape players, two CD players, more than one video game console, and more than one computer. . . . American kids 8 to 18 spend about seven hours a day interacting with some form of electronic media; the average 13- to 18-year-old spends two hours a day just playing video games” (p. 145).

Kimmel, who teaches at Stony Brook (N.Y.) University, chillingly continues, “The dominant emotion in all these forms of entertainment is anger. From violent computer games to extreme sports, from racist and misogynistic radio show content to furious rap and heavy metal music, from the X-rated to the Xbox, the amount of rage and sensory violence to which guys have become accustomed is overwhelming. It doesn’t even occur to them that all this media consumption might be extreme.” Extreme and extremely desensitizing and ultimately dehumanizing, perhaps?

The American Academy of Pediatrics agrees, pointing out that “Extensive research evidence indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being harmed.”

As we have seen, young people have good reason to fear being harmed, and it doesn’t help that, as Kimmel notes, “The most avid consumers of this new media . . . are young men 16 to 26. It’s the demographic group most prized by advertisers,” who, needless to say, cheerfully stoke the fires of that young male avidity.

Does it seem counterintuitive to now argue that we

need more—not less—literature that addresses these same issues honestly and realistically? In the wake of the tsunami of violence inundating today’s YAs, do we really need *books* that embrace violence, too? Well, yes, I believe we do.

After all, the great gift literature can give its readers that new—and old—media can’t is the experience of empathy and sympathy. Books can take their readers into the interior lives of characters in ways that television and video can’t. They can not only show what is happening to characters but also powerfully convey how what is happening feels. Interactive games and media can, doubtless, improve hand-to-eye coordination. But books can improve heart-to-eye coordination and even, I would argue, create it when—as increasingly seems to be the case—it is altogether absent.

The shocking absence of empathy in today’s adolescent lives is nowhere more powerfully evidenced than in the epidemic of bullying that is plaguing America’s schools, playgrounds, parks, and neighborhoods.

### Bullying ascendant

Bullying is hardly new, but the freshly minted attention it has been given increased dramatically in the wake of the Columbine High School shootings. Indeed, the CDC reports that an estimated 30% of all kids between the 6th and 10th grades (i.e., 5.7 million-plus) now report being involved in bullying.

If any good thing came out of the Columbine tragedy, it was the elevation of attention given to this epidemic and the very rapid emergence of a subgenre of young adult literature that continues to explore the many aspects of this issue with insight and, yes, empathy. Arguably the first book to emerge in this category was Todd Strasser’s chilling documentary novel *Give a Boy a Gun* (Simon and Schuster, 2000). In it Strasser charts the growing disaffection of two teenage boys, Gary and Brendan, who first dream of taking revenge on the people who have bullied them and then transform that dream into reality.

A number of other novels dealing with school violence have appeared in the decade since Strasser’s; among them are Ron Koertge’s verse novel *The Brimstone Journals* (Candlewick, 2001), Nancy Garden’s *Endgame* (Harcourt, 2006), Diane Tullson’s *Lockdown* (Orca, 2008), C. G. Watson’s *Quad* (Razorbill, 2007), and Jennifer Brown’s *Hate List* (Little, Brown, 2009).

Not all violent responses to bullying are directed at the bullies; sometimes the target is the victim himself or, more often, herself. One of the most common ways that teen girls punish themselves for being different is by cutting. Shelley

# Cyberbullying is the posting of innuendo, put-downs, gossip, lies, and compromising photos online.

Stoehr's 1991 novel *Crosses* (Delacorte) is the first YA novel to examine this growing phenomenon, which has since become a fixture in teen fiction. Another gravely misguided strategy for coping with bullying is suicide, a topic that was taboo in YA literature for many years (for fear of creating a copycat effect among young readers). This has recently begun to change, since the enormous success of Jay Asher's 2007 novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* (Razorbill), in which a teenage girl named Hannah kills herself, leaving a package of audiocassettes articulating her reasons. Laurie Halse Anderson also addresses this issue in *Twisted* (Viking, 2007), in which a teen boy contemplates killing himself in response to intolerable bullying.

Fortunately, not all bullying results in apocalyptic violence. Arguably the best-known book on how the targets of bullying can find a creative way to respond is James Howe's *The Misfits* (Atheneum, 2001), the story of four middle school students who are, yes, misfits and are accordingly the targets of painful bullying. Instead of getting even, the four

resolve to change their school's climate of abuse by running for class office on a no-name-calling platform. Clearly Howe's novel touched a nerve; its huge popularity has inspired a national No Name Calling Week that is observed by middle and elementary schools all across the country.

Bullying is not a uniquely American problem, of course. Indeed, the newest kind of bullying has international ramifications thanks to the ubiquity of the internet. I'm referring here, of course, to cyberbullying: the posting of innuendo, put-downs, gossip, lies, and—perhaps worst of all—compromising photos online.

"Cyberbullying is the fastest-growing form of bullying happening around the world," observed C. J. Bott, author of two books about the subject, in the June 2008 *VOYA*. One of the attractions of this technique is that it allows the bully both anonymity and the ability to inflict pain without being forced to see its effect, which an August 26, 2004, *New York Times* article noted "also seems to incite a deeper level of meanness." Perhaps worst of all, there is no escaping this type of bullying; it spreads virally and follows the victim everywhere. Cyberbullies can be both boys and girls, but the latter tend to predominate. A few recent books about this invidious phenomenon are Laura Ruby's *Good Girls* (HarperTempest, 2006) and Shana Norris's *Something to Blog About* (Amulet, 2008).

Perhaps because of these books, a new anti-bullying

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technique has begun gaining favor. In an April 5, 2009, front-page article in the *New York Times*, reporter Winnie Hu wrote, “The emphasis on empathy here and in schools nationwide is the latest front in a decade-long campaign against bullying and violence.” According to Hu, “the Character Education Partnership, a nonprofit group in Washington, said 18 states—including New York, Florida, Illinois, Nebraska, and California—require programs to foster core values such as empathy, respect, responsibility, and integrity.”

Not all violence is related to bullying, of course. On September 11, 2001—scarcely two years after Columbine—the attack on Manhattan’s World Trade Center and the Pentagon brought the specter of international terrorism—and the threat of violent death—into the forefront of American teens’ consciousness. Within a year a dozen or more books, virtually all of them nonfiction, had appeared with the goal of helping young readers of all ages to cope with this new fear factor in their lives. Although short fiction was included in *911: The Book of Help*, the anthology that Marc Aronson, Marianne Carus, and I coedited (Marcato/Cricket, 2002), full-length fiction about this terrible event has been slower to surface. Joyce Maynard’s crossover novel *The Usual Rules* (St. Martin’s) appeared in 2003, and Francine Prose’s YA title *Bullyville* (HarperTeen)

followed in 2007. Finally, in 2009, David Levithan’s *Love Is the Higher Law* (Knopf) appeared.

In an eloquent letter to the reader, Levithan explained his reasons for taking us back to that terrible event: “As time goes by, it’s really easy to remember 9/11 and the days afterward as a time of tragedy, fear, grief, and loss. Less easy to remember—and even harder to convey—is that it was amazing not just for the depth of that loss, but also for the heights of humanity that occurred. The kindness. The feeling of community. The deepening of love and friendship.”

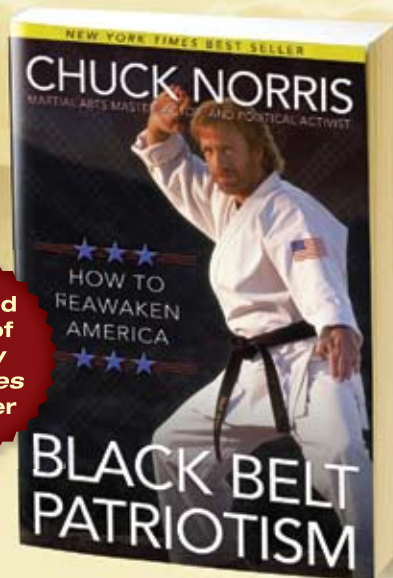
This, it seems to me, is the most compelling argument one can offer for writing fiction about even the most unpleasant realities of teens’ lives. For life, even at its darkest, can hold the promise of hope and positive change—especially when we read about it with open minds and hearts, with intellectual attention and emotional empathy. ■



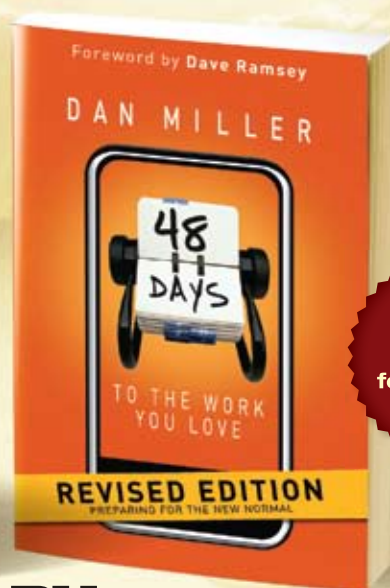
MICHAEL CART is a nationally known expert in young adult literature, which he taught at UCLA before his recent relocation to the Midwest. A columnist and reviewer for ALA’s Booklist magazine, he is also the author or editor of 20 books and countless articles. This article is excerpted from the new edition of *Young Adult Literature*:

From *Romance to Realism*, to be published this summer by ALA Editions.

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# FIXING

## the Federal Depository Library Program

The system must respond to the digital age and a weakened economy

by Patrick Ragains

**I**n April 2009, the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) released its updated *Federal Depository Library Program Strategic Plan, 2009–2014* ([tinyurl.com/y8xde7c](http://tinyurl.com/y8xde7c)), which summarizes the current condition of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) and posits a future for the program in which depository libraries will be significant providers of current and historical government information.

Many points in GPO's plan were restated in a report released in October 2009, *Documents for a Digital Democracy* ([www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/documents-for-a-digital-democracy](http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/documents-for-a-digital-democracy)), prepared by Ithaka S+R and commissioned by the Association of Research Libraries and the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies. The Ithaka report also addresses key service issues, among them digitization and discoverability of federal information and the future of tangible documents collections.

In the wake of those two crucial reports, I will try to clarify the key issues related to the future of depository libraries and emphasize practical steps in a transition to new models for collections and public service. I hope this wider exposure will help elevate this discussion beyond

depository librarians and the GPO to the level of the national library community.

The FDLP's mission is to make federal government publications easily available in every congressional district (1,190 selective depositories and, in most states, a regional federal depository). The GPO identifies the following "Principles for Government Information" in its strategic plan:

- The public has the right of access to government information;
- Government has the obligation to disseminate and provide broad public access to its information;
- Government has an obligation to guarantee the authenticity and integrity of its information;
- Government has an obligation to preserve its information;
- Government information created or compiled by government employees or at government expense should remain in the public domain.

The plan also projects several characteristics of the FDLP through 2014:

- The Principles for Government Information will remain the FDLP's core ideology.
- Federal depository libraries will continue to facilitate access to the American public through traditional services as well as through enhanced or new services made possible by the digital age.
- GPO, working actively with depositories, will ensure accessibility, findability, and usability of government information dissemination products.
- The options for building federal depository collections will increase.
- Regional depositories will continue to have the responsibility for permanent public access for tangible publications that remain in their collections.
- GPO will ensure permanent public access to, provide version control of, and authenticate federal dig-

ital content. This does not rule out depository libraries providing redundancy.

- Communication will exist, and improve, between and among GPO, depository libraries, other federal agencies, and the public and communities served by depository libraries.

- Consumers of federal information will be able to access it from wherever they are and whenever they need it.

Government information departments in many libraries have been downsized or eliminated. As this trend continues and more depositories leave the FDLP, many libraries will be unprepared to meet their users' needs for government information. Notwithstanding, the public, students, and researchers still need the full range of federal government information, from publications printed at the birth of the republic to those "born digitally" and posted on the internet.

Although libraries nationwide have partially bridged the digital divide by providing public access computers, these efforts do not ensure access to online government information. Disadvantaged segments of the public often lack internet access, making it harder for them to get tax forms, respond to proposed government regulations and actions, or find more elusive information such as federal reports not sent to depositories. If federal depository libraries are to have a significant future, they must effectively redefine both access and outreach. Failure to do so will distance populations from services they need and could further erode public support for libraries.

## Meeting the public's needs

Regional depository libraries agree to receive all publications made available to federal depository libraries and retain them permanently. These libraries are intended to be an easily accessible safety net for meeting the public's needs for government information. The 50 regional depositories that currently exist are now somewhat redundant, due to the presence of holdings in multibranch catalogs like WorldCat and availability of materials through regional and nationwide interlibrary loan networks. Even so, many libraries and their users rely on the relative permanence of regional library collections.

In contrast, selective depository libraries may receive only those publications they wish to add to their collections. Selectives may also reduce their collections by weeding (with approval from their regional library). A small but increasing number of selective depositories are leaving the FDLP, their directors citing the burden of processing publications that aren't used and the diminishing importance of maintaining tangible collections of government publications when most current federal publications are available online.

The GPO and depository librarians see the national network of federal depositories as a safety net for public access to government information, but we can't presume they perform this function effectively for all of society. Many people in both urban and rural settings are isolated from libraries, such as those with mobility limitations or without convenient transportation. The safety net also misses a lot of information (including e-mail messages, postings on social networking sites, presidential records, product safety and recall information, records and publications with a security classification, and federally funded research). Another threat to the safety net is the trend among libraries to reconsider their depository status, with some leaving the program altogether. In our currently weak economy, depository status isn't too attractive if it entails staff costs for processing current paper and microfiche documents into collections, when virtually all of it is available online.

## Fixing the safety net

In today's environment, what "safety net" roles can we propose for depository libraries and the U.S. Government Printing Office?

Congress can:

- Revise Title 44 of the United States Code to conform with current library and information service practices, specifically: allowing permanent online access to depository publications to replace tangible copies in all depository libraries; permitting establishment of interstate regional libraries and at least two comprehensive archival collections of federal government publications; and defining the scope and requirements for "digital deposit," whereby libraries would capture and locally host electronic copies of federal publications.

Selective depositories can:

- Affirm and strengthen their commitment to make government information easily available to their communities. They should do this with minimal reliance on tangible collections. The experiences of the University of Arizona and three new depositories (all in tribal college libraries), all of which have formally committed to emphasize online access, can guide other libraries moving in this direction.

- Meet community members in branch libraries and outside library buildings (e.g., shopping malls, schools, community centers) and bring popular government information to them in these locations. This will lessen the isolation of users from library services.

- Direct their public service staff's attention to government information-related training opportunities and provide support for them to participate.

- Include the Catalog of Government Publications ([catalog.gpo.gov](http://catalog.gpo.gov)) in a federated search or similar appli-

cation with the local library catalog. This will lessen the library's workload for catalog maintenance and can be a cheap, satisfactory alternative to purchasing GPO bibliographic and item records from commercial services.

- Conduct zero-based reviews of publications they select from the GPO. Libraries should select only those items needed for 1) reference assistance, when a paper copy is more convenient than an online version; and 2) known user interests, which may include such things as maps and printed legal sources.

- Base continuing or relinquishing depository library status upon user needs rather than processing workload. Maintaining depository status will encourage valuable connections with other libraries and information providers and allow libraries to meet user needs better than if they exit the national program.

Regional depositories should adopt the first four points recommended above for selective libraries, plus the following:

- Conduct long-term outreach within their region (usually statewide) and provide needed staff training in both selective depositories and nondepositories. When training others, regional librarians should emphasize sources and search techniques. Good training will strengthen government-related reference and research services, even as selective depositories continue to leave the program.

- Join OCLC's QuestionPoint/Government Information Online reference service (GIO). GIO allows government information librarians to assist users and share their expertise nationally (membership is also open to selective depository libraries).

- Contribute to efforts to catalog pre-1976 U.S. government publications not already in OCLC and identify the best such records already in the database. GPO is currently creating brief records from its retrospective shelflist, but will need assistance from libraries to create complete MARC records.

The U.S. Government Printing Office should:

- Comprehensively capture, archive, and disseminate web-based federal government information (or more broadly, born-digital federal information). The GPO's FDSys program ([www.gpo.gov/fdsys/](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/)) currently supplies authenticated files, including the *Congressional Record*, *Federal Register*, bills, and public laws. FDSys needs software that will scan the web for federal information not generated by GPO, then capture and authenticate it. Such harvested information must be organized for public access and archived for preservation, which requires periodic refreshing and migration to new formats.

- Provide bibliographic access to all known federal publications issued since 1789 by finishing the conver-

sion of GPO's shelflist to MARC record format. Any records created or collected by this and other retrospective cataloging projects should be added to the online Catalog of Government Publications. GPO can collaborate with libraries by providing converted shelflist records, which participating libraries could check, revise, attach holdings to, and submit to OCLC.

- Create two tangible, national retrospective collections of U.S. government publications, to be housed separately in secure federal buildings. These would be archival collections from which tangible and electronic copies would be made for libraries and end users. Since the GPO has no library, collaboration with existing depositories will be necessary to establish and operate such collections.

- Create or sponsor an online retrospective collection of U.S. government publications, with both basic and advanced search interfaces. These electronic surrogates could be linked from the current Catalog of Government Publications interface, WorldCat, and local library catalogs. The need for coordinated standards and oversight makes GPO (or a contracting entity) the most logical organization to lead this effort. As public domain-based digitization of older federal documents progresses, each associated record in WorldCat and GPO's Catalog of Government Publications should include a hyperlink to a digital copy.

- Assist and consult with selective and regional libraries as they evaluate their depository status. The wide availability of federal government information online has eroded the value of building and maintaining tangible collections, and library directors are ever more reluctant to commit staff to traditional processing and maintenance routines. This forces selective and regional depository library directors to identify and protect services that their funding authorities will support.

James Madison wrote in 1822 that "a popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both . . . and a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives." The national library community should take Madison's warning to heart and use its expertise, infrastructure, and emerging technology to assure a strong and lasting presence for government information in library services. ■



PATRICK RAGAINS is business and government information librarian at the University of Nevada, Reno.



# Those Who Can, Do.

# THOSE WHO CAN DO MORE, Volunteer

A thriving volunteer workforce can help libraries fill the gaping holes caused by funding reductions, staff cuts, and reduced hours.

By Alan Jacobson

The world is in fiscal meltdown, with libraries feeling the heat. Layoffs and budget cuts in Philadelphia, threatened branch closings in Boston, reduced hours and services in Charlotte, North Carolina: These big stories overshadow how commonly we simply lose staff without being able to afford to replace them.



According to a survey conducted last fall by ALA and the Center for Library and Information Innovation (*AL*, Mar., p. 13), library usage has skyrocketed while half of states have reduced library funding and nearly one-quarter of urban libraries have reduced open hours. How do we mend these often gaping holes? Volunteers are part of the answer, a solution that can be used by any library.

When we talk about our profession's foundation, we talk about S. R. Ranganathan, whose five laws of library science we have internalized. When Carol Simpson adapted his dictums for the 21st century in the April/May 2008 *Library*

**These human assets are waiting to be tapped; it is our responsibility to become responsive to them.**

*Media Connection*, the fifth law—the library is a growing organism—was the only one not to change wording. And let me add one more law to Ranganathan's: Adapt or die. From one year to the next, sometimes one week to the next, we must change to survive. . . and to thrive. With an uncertain budget, much of our auxiliary work is done by volunteers. They deliver materials to those who can't make it in. Volunteers work programs and events, and the quality of our output does not suffer. They deliver first-rate film presentations, book discussions, and chess tournaments particular to their backgrounds as film historian, Great Books Foundation member, and chess scholar. At our library they also do much of the day-to-day invisible work: report-running, displays, scrap paper, and so forth can easily be done by dedicated individuals simply eager to contribute. Our core value of stewardship makes it our duty to manage our resources as effectively as possible. These human assets are waiting to be tapped; it is our responsibility to become responsive to them.

## How to manage?

Imagine managing 27 people. Did a gray hair just land on your piles of work? Every grand idea in the library world is met with a cynically weary "Nice; but how would I ever be able to do this tremendous amount of work by myself?" Especially in hard times, we are stretched thin—working extra public service desk shifts, filling in, and picking up all kinds of slack in order to continue operating in a way that looks good to our constituency.

Proper screening, training, and communication are essential for a thriving volunteer workforce that can bear much of this weight. With dozens of volunteers with different levels of training to juggle at any given time, the misperception that managing them is more work than it's worth is constantly validated throughout your stressful workday. A volunteer coordinator is the answer.

Envision yourself as this person. More loss of hair? Don't worry. You are not responsible for every little thing related

to volunteers. Work with your colleagues. Just as your programming coordinator will not run every single program (as noted above, often volunteers are a better choice), there is no need for you to do "all things volunteer." Support is crucial—without a qualified professional helping with orientation, appreciation parties, and most important, screening candidates and checking references, a thief (or worse) could be loose in the stacks. Also, train your colleagues not only to thank volunteers (their only payment, so be generous!) but to treat them with respect and answer any questions in regards to the building, the profession, and the minutiae of their work. And if there are those that don't have your desire to work with the volunteers, inform them that you are always available for backup.

Invest in your volunteers. Train them heavily on the front end so there are no problems throughout their tenure. Micromanagement is the alternative. Your colleagues will thank you for their time saved. And you will be able not only to slough off mundane tasks, but to tailor tasks to the individual. I have had some volunteers who could actually augment productivity by pulling books from sophisticated reports, working on displays that require that certain touch, and coming up with ideas on how to improve the library. But where does this indoctrination begin?

An orientation is crucial to success. Spending three hours with 20 people is obviously more economical than a total of 60 hours individually. Expectations in regards to the detailed level of work, knowledge of the Dewey Decimal System, dress code, and so on can be explicitly laid out along with signed agreements. Tour the building. Go over the work. Introduce them to staff. Promote your library, share facts, figures, trivia, the good work that you (and they soon will) do. In all of this, you are indoctrinating them, wedging them into your culture. Be flexible. As you talk, ask questions. Not only ask them what types of tasks they would prefer (which helps with retention) but also use the opportunity to go over handouts.

Your handout packet should include not only your contact information on every page and general information about volunteering, but directions on how to do the major tasks a volunteer can do unsupervised (in my library's case, shelf-reading and computer lab assistance). Pore through Dewey, alphabetizing rules at the library, what to do when someone needs help with their will, or if unsavory content appears on a patron's screen.

We have two binders we give volunteers. One volunteer binder is filled with sign-in sheets. These are for keeping track of hours both to tout to your board and for community service statistics (many high schools require this; partnering with them is a good thing to do).

The other binder is for shelf reading. Walk the stacks and break the library down into sections that take one hour to shelf read. Ours has 124 shelves, or 62 sections. Be sure to

include high-traffic areas such as magazines and sections that may be messier than you think, such as reference (we recently found a minilibrary from all sections—fiction, nonfiction, movies, CDs—all stashed there). Assign at least two shelves per shelf-reading volunteer. Train them not only to arrange books perfectly and beautifully, telling them of the \$50 they save the library each time they find even the least-expensive misplaced book, but to move on to the next section after double-checking their work. Surprisingly, shelf-reading is very satisfying to a large contingent of volunteers.

Other volunteers require more; Zen labor is not for them. Or they may enjoy being scheduled for a mix—one day shelf-read, the next computer lab, the third general labor. We have volunteers partnered with labor-intensive collections such as audiobooks and large-type books that travel quarterly in mini-libraries to local senior centers. Others clean discs, fill displays, match missing pieces, work on special projects, and run reports of missing items. These crucial tasks keep the library orderly and running seamlessly. Computer lab volunteers come with the expertise to help someone edit a Word document and attach it to e-mail, the patience to work with the inexperienced, and the wisdom to report deviant behavior. Whatever your volunteers do, they are individuals; so tell them that if they become bored and want to do something different, you are also open to change.

This is a crucial factor: Be laid-back but responsive. If a volunteer fails to show up, following up is appropriate. But since you have assigned nonessential nondeadline jobs such as watching the lab or organizing donations, the library will not collapse if Joe or Jane Volunteer fails to show. Let Jane know that her work is essential and to call in, just so you are aware and can account for it not getting done. Be concerned and open, assume the best, and let the volunteers know that they are important to the library's success.

## Giving thanks

I once helped a man I didn't know move out of his apartment. His only payment was a heartfelt "thank you." Since then, I have volunteered for the film festivals he organizes. All for gratitude; meeting film directors like George Romero and Jack Hill was nice, but the fact that he understood that all he could afford was a sincere thanks was more than enough.

I have found his philosophy to be incredibly useful in application to volunteers. They work for good feeling. No need for money, mugs, shirts, bags, or vendor swag (although a cupcake from the staff room adds to that sense of belonging crucial to retention). Further, like the orientation, an organized volunteer appreciation party is an economical way to institutionally reiterate what you have said countless times all year: Thank you!

A lot of library staff will grumble about volunteers doing our work at a time when so many of us are looking for jobs. Volunteers don't (and can't) replace us; they merely add to what we are able to do. A volunteer can search that CD collection that hasn't been touched in months (using a precise report run by an expert staffer). That DVD section that always seems to be a mess can be shelf-read on a regular basis. That messy pile of CDs and DVDs can be finally matched and cleaned. This mindless manual labor generally takes us away from the "big idea" projects we really need to be working on to better ourselves and our profession.

With unemployment wavering around 10%, many people are looking for a structured place to connect and do feel-good work—anything to help mentally weather the storm. A great way for libraries to survive the financial turmoil is to use these eager souls. Volunteers can be crucial to our operations, our standing in the community, and our ability to seamlessly accomplish all of our "invisible" work. From repairing that long out-of-print DVD to filling a display, volunteers can make us look good while making themselves feel better about their situation.

Success comes not for the library alone. Volunteers thrive. Although it's rare, one got a job at our library. Now among our best shelvers, his hard work earned him a rookie of the year award and \$50 gift card to a local business. Another was hired by a local nonprofit due to the fact that he had been working here—a great "résumé enhancer," as he put it. Young volunteers benefit even more by gaining this valuable résumé-creating experience, while we exploit their digital-native skills to modernize the library. Others find this their place to connect, contribute, and collaborate; serve society; or support a nonprofit. A teen, pressured by his parents to excel, loves the Zen of cleaning discs and had a ball putting up decorations for a holiday he doesn't even celebrate.

It is all about selflessness, but in a quiet, subtle, beautiful way where by serving each other, we serve something greater than ourselves: the community. The judicious use of volunteers allows us to serve the community more efficiently. Incorporating them into our functions creates a seamless connection between us and the community, when their friends and neighbors walk through the door and are pleasantly surprised to see a thriving library, despite hard times. ■

Surprisingly, shelf-reading is very satisfying to a large contingent of volunteers.



ALAN JACOBSON ([libraralan@gmail.com](mailto:libraralan@gmail.com)) is a volunteer coordinator, teaches computer classes, and leads film and book discussions in his capacity as librarian at Oak Park (Ill.) Public Library.



# Everyday Existence

The founder of StoryCorps talks about the central role of libraries in this national oral history project that records the lives of ordinary people.

By Dave Isay

**A** confession: I am a library freak. I believe deeply in the importance of libraries and think of librarians as some of the most amazing, committed, brilliant, and

radical professionals I've ever been lucky enough to meet and work with. I believe that the future of the organization I founded, StoryCorps, will be tightly entwined with libraries. Libraries have played a huge role in our work to date: When I needed to get away for a few weeks to focus on the manuscript for the first StoryCorps book, *Listening Is an Act of Love*, I escaped from our base in Brooklyn to a heretofore undisclosed location (the Wallingford Public Library in Connecticut) and holed up there to edit and write.

When our MobileBooths travel the country to record the stories of this nation, they site themselves at the most central and community-oriented spot possible in each town; most often it's right in front of the local public library. Our first two StoryBooths outside of New York City were located in the Milwaukee Public Library and the Nashville Public Library. Our Door-to-Door facilitators have recorded countless stories inside scores of public libraries from coast to coast. MobileBooths? StoryBooths? Facilitators? What is this thing called StoryCorps?

StoryCorps is built on a few basic ideas:

- That our stories—the stories of everyday people—are as interesting and important as the celebrity stories we're bombarded with every moment of the day.
- That if we take the time to listen, we'll find wisdom, wonder, and poetry in the stories of the people all around us.
- That we all want to know our lives have mattered and we won't ever be forgotten.
- That listening is an act of love.

Participating in StoryCorps is a simple process. First, you make an appointment to visit one of our recording booths. Bring anyone you choose—your grandmother, your dad, your sister, your best friend, the waitress at the local diner whose story you’ve always been curious about. A trained StoryCorps facilitator will greet you, take you into the booth, and shut the door.

Inside, the booth is completely silent. The lights are low. The room is cozy. You sit at a small table across from, let’s say, your grandmother, looking into her eyes. There’s a microphone in front of each of you. The facilitator sits down in front of an audio console and presses “Record.” You begin to ask your questions:

“What are the most important lessons you’ve learned in life?”

“What did your mother sing to you when you were a baby?”

“How do you want to be remembered?”

At the end of 40 minutes, two broadcast-quality CDs have been created. One goes home with you. A second becomes part of our archive at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, so that your great-

**I realized how many people among us feel completely invisible, believe their lives don’t matter, and fear they’ll someday be forgotten.**

great-great-grandchildren will someday be able to get to know your grandmother through her voice and stories. (We also have dozens of local archives in libraries across the country.) Excerpts of interviews are broadcast each Friday on NPR’s *Morning Edition*.

I was a public radio documentary producer for years before I started StoryCorps. In many ways, the idea came to life at the Library of Congress, where I first encountered the WPA recordings that emerged from the Federal Writers’ Project. These 78-rpm records were made by a small cadre of historians and folklorists who drove across the country, lugging enormous acetate disc recorders in the trunks of their cars, to capture the stories and songs of everyday people.

## Voices from before

On these recordings you can hear the voices of former slaves reflecting on their lives, prisoners in Mississippi’s Parchman Penitentiary singing work songs, Harlem fishmongers hawking their wares, pool players in Washington, D.C., talking about the bombing of Pearl Harbor the day after the attacks. Many of these were perfectly recorded. I was in my mid-twenties, and I was mesmerized. Hearing these voices transported me back in time in a way that no photograph, movie, or book ever had. I wondered why nothing along the lines of these WPA interviews had been



Happy interviewers and interviewees pose for photos outside the StoryCorps booth at Nashville (Tenn.) Public Library’s archives room.

undertaken since—top-quality recordings of the voices of everyday Americans across the nation.

A few years later, I produced a radio documentary about the last flophouses on the Bowery in New York City, where homeless men could sleep in prison cell-sized rooms with chicken-wire ceilings for as little as five dollars a night. Later, the documentary was turned into a book of photographs and oral histories. I remember bringing early proofs of the book into a flophouse and sharing them with the residents. One of the men looked at his story, took it in his hands, and literally danced through the halls of the old hotel, shouting, “I exist! I exist!” I was stunned. I realized, as never before, how many people among us feel completely invisible, believe their lives don’t matter, and fear they’ll someday be forgotten.

Out of these and myriad other experiences and influences, StoryCorps began taking shape in the summer of 2002. Having seen the positive impact that participating in documentary work could have on people’s lives, I wanted to open the experience up to everyone. I hoped to create a project that was all about the act of interviewing loved ones, with only a secondary emphasis on the final edited product—in essence, inverting the purpose of traditional documentary work from an artistic or educational project created for the benefit of an audience into a process principally focused on enhancing the lives of the participants.

From there it was a matter of figuring out the details and finding the right partners. I hoped beyond hope that the StoryCorps collection might live at the Library of

# DAVE ISAY IN PERSON

Congress' American Folklife Center, home to the WPA interviews I so admired. I made a cold call to the center's director, Peggy Bulger. I told Peggy about this crazy idea I had called "StoryCorps" and asked if the Folklife Center might consider housing the collection. Miraculously, she had the vision and foresight to say "yes" on the spot. And so it began.

**The broadcasts, podcasts, books, and animations we produce from these interviews remind us how much more we share in common as a nation than divides us.**

StoryCorps opened its doors October 23, 2003, in Grand Central Terminal. The great oral historian Studs Terkel, who was 91 at the time, flew in from Chicago to cut the ribbon. "Today we shall begin celebrating the lives of the uncelebrated!" he proclaimed. "We're in Grand Central Station. We know there was an architect, but who hung the iron? Who were the brick masons? Who swept the floors? These are the non-celebrated people of our country. In this booth the non-celebrated will speak of their lives. It might be a grandmother speaking to a grandchild. It might be a kid talking to his uncle. It might be a neighbor talking to a neighbor. And suddenly they will realize that they are the ones who have built this country!"

Since launching more than six years ago, we've become a national project with booths, mobile booths, and Door-to-Door teams (facilitators armed with recording equipment in backpacks) gathering stories around the country, year-round. To date, StoryCorps has recorded more than 30,000 interviews with around 60,000 participants. Each session represents an act of love and respect: 40 minutes set aside to ask important questions and listen closely to the answers. The interviews honor our families, friends, and elders: ordinary people we find all around us who, in their day-to-day acts of kindness, courage, and humanity, embody the true spirit of our nation. The broadcasts, podcasts, books, and animations we produce from these interviews remind us how much more we share in common as a nation than divides us; that if we spent less time shouting at each other and more time listening we'd be a better, more thoughtful, and more compassionate nation.

## The start of a long journey

We are only at the very beginning of a long journey with StoryCorps. In the coming years, we hope to touch the lives of every American family with the project. We hope that much of this work will be done in concert with libraries and librarians. I can imagine a day when libraries across the country have StoryCorps listening stations; a day when teams of StoryCorps facilitators rotate through libraries every day of the year recording this nation's story; when

Author and StoryCorps founder Dave Isay will talk about his award-winning oral history project Sunday, June 27, as part of the Auditorium Speakers series during the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D. C.

Winner of a MacArthur "genius" Fellowship, Isay is also the author or editor of four books that grew out of his public radio documentary work, including *Listening Is an Act of Love*, a *New York Times* bestseller. His new book, *Mom: A Celebration of Mothers from StoryCorps*, was published by Penguin in April, and Isay will sign copies following his program, sponsored by *American Libraries*.

The librarians whose essays were selected from the "Win a Spot with StoryCorps" essay contest will be introduced at the program.

StoryCorps interviews air weekly on NPR and can also be heard on the StoryCorps website. Copies of all interviews are placed in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

libraries and librarians help students and families record their own stories—bringing StoryCorps Do-It-Yourself to millions. I hope and believe that public radio, libraries, and—with a little luck—StoryCorps have the potential to become infinitely more important to this country and its people than they are even today: forming three of the most trusted, safe, and valued cornerstones of our communities and our society at large.

StoryCorps and libraries both stand as strongholds of authenticity in a culture where phoniness often rules the day. They are about permanence in an ever-more-disposable society. They remind us of what's really important in the midst of all of life's distractions. They encourage us to connect despite endless temptations to detach and disengage.

We consider each StoryCorps session sacred, and we place great value on every story that's been recorded as part of the project. It is a joy and honor for all of us at StoryCorps to do this work and a privilege to work so closely with libraries and librarians to bring this project to the nation. ■



DAVE ISAY is the founder of StoryCorps, a nonprofit oral history project that honors and celebrates the lives of everyday people through listening. He is also the author or editor of four books that grew out of his public radio documentary work. Isay's new book, *Mom: A Celebration of Mothers from StoryCorps*, was published by Penguin in April.

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# Currents

■ **Barbara A. Bintliff** has been appointed director at University of Texas's Tarlton Law Library in Austin.

■ **Kathleen M. Carney** has been named director of library services at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts.

■ **Jennifer Chamberlain** has been appointed library director at the University of Wisconsin—Washington County in West Bend.

■ April 2 **Karen Bosch Cobb** retired as library director at Fresno County (Calif.) Public Library.

■ **Nancy Coriary** has been promoted to deputy town librarian at Fairfield (Conn.) Public Library.

■ In June **Janet Crozier** will retire as director

of Acton Public Library in Old Saybrook, Connecticut.

■ **James L. Farrell Jr.** has been appointed director of the Ossining (N.Y.) Public Library.

■ **Riva Feshbach** has joined the Columbia College Chicago Library as outreach librarian.

■ March 1 **Chris Freeman** became city librarian for Stockton—San Joaquin County (Calif.) Public Library.

■ **Kari Garman** is now director of Hudson (Ill.) Area Public Library District.

■ In March **Gary Hausman** was appointed South Asia librarian at Princeton (N.J.) University's Firestone Library.

■ **Sara Heitshu** retired as



Mary Ann Louviere



Claire Schubel McLaughlin



Danuta A. Nitecki



Eric Young

librarian at the University of Arizona Libraries in Tucson January 15.

■ April 30 **Hal Hubener** retired as director of Blue Ridge Regional Library in Martinsville, Virginia.

■ **Jill Dugas Hughes** became executive director for the Connecticut Library Consortium in Middletown March 1.

■ March 1 **Bill Landis** was appointed head of special collections research and instructional services at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

■ **Mark Lester** has retired from San Diego State University as director of access, administrative operations, and communications.

■ March 8 the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia appointed **Margaret Grasberger Lindem** head of the Veterinary Libraries.

■ **Mary Ann Louviere** retired March 26 as manager of the Pascagoula (Miss.) branch of the Jackson—George Regional Library System.

■ March 24 **Jeanne McDermott** was appointed school and library marketing consultant at Egmont

USA in New York City.

■ In April **Claire Schubel McLaughlin** retired from Canton (Mich.) Public Library as head of the technical services department.

■ **Sonja Melton** has become manager of the Portage County (Ohio) District Library's Pierce—Streetsboro branch.

■ **Mary Nacu** became assistant library director at San José (Calif.) Public Library in March.

■ In January **Danuta A. Nitecki** joined Drexel University in Philadelphia as dean of libraries and professor in its College of Information Science and Technology.

■ **Atifa Rawan** retired as librarian at the University of Arizona Libraries in Tucson March 13.

■ February 2 **Karen Ronald** was named town librarian for Fairfield (Conn.) Public Library.

■ **Tinsley Silcox** recently became director of Green Library and Information Services at St. Mark's School of Texas in Dallas.

■ February 28 **Joan Smith** retired as head librarian of Capital Area District Library's Okeanos branch in Lansing,

## CITED

■ The Faculty Assembly at West Virginia University Library in Morgantown has selected **Linda Blake**, science librarian and electronic journal coordinator, as its outstanding librarian for 2010.

■ **Jennifer Lohmann**, reference librarian at Durham County (N.C.) Library, has been named the 2010 Romance Writers of America's Librarian of the Year. She was selected for her efforts in support of romance authors and the romance genre represented in library publications.





Michigan.

■ In March **Sarah Stody** joined Bradford County (Pa.) Library as children's librarian.

■ In March **Margaret "Peg" Sullivan** became library marketing and sales manager at Smith System in Plano, Texas.

■ April 2 **Bonnie Travers** retired as associate librarian in special collections at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

■ **Patricia Tully** was appointed university librarian at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, March 1.

■ March 29 **Mike Wasilick** was named director of Wake County (N.C.) Public Libraries.

■ In March **Eric Young** became assistant dean of the Law Library and Information Technology Center and assistant professor of law at the Shepard Broad Law Center of Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale—Davie, Florida.

## At ALA

■ In November 2009 **John Amundsen** was promoted to communications specialist in the Office of Literacy and Outreach Services.

■ **Elise Fette** became manager of professional development for the American Association of School Librarians in March.

■ In April **Jenni Fry** became managing editor for

## OBITUARIES

■ **Esther Green Bierbaum**, 81, professor emerita at the University of Iowa's School of Library and Information Science in Iowa City, died February 14.

■ **Sara Jean Davis**, 57, librarian at Kleberg Elementary School in Dallas, Texas, died in a motorcycle accident March 18.

■ **Richard Sweeney Halsey**, 80, dean at the School of Information Science and Policy, University at Albany, State University of New York, from 1981–93, died March 28 after a short illness.

■ **Helga Herz**, 97, who retired in 1978 as a librarian for the Detroit Public Library, died of leukemia February 27.

■ **Thomas C. Hobbs**, 61, reference librarian and assistant professor at the University of South Carolina at Aiken, died of a heart attack February 28. Hobbs's interest in obituaries as a research tool led to the creation of the Obituaries in Education Interest Group in the International Association of Obituarists.

■ **Burton Joseph**, 79, died of brain cancer March 31. Joseph, a civil liberties lawyer in Chicago, was counsel for the American Library Association in a 1997 suit brought by nearly 20 organizations against a provision of the Communications Decency Act.

■ **Lillian Lewis**, 48, died April 10.



Thomas C. Hobbs

Lewis was a former ALA employee who worked in several different units before leaving, most recently the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies and the Reference and User Services Association.

■ **Liz Oesleby**, 69, died of cancer April 1. She was director of library services at the American University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

■ **Donald P. Panzera**, 63, chief of European and Latin American acquisitions at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., until his retirement in 2007, died March 22 from multiple myeloma.

■ **Marjorie Pierce**, 92, died March 4. She was library director at Curry College in Milton, Massachusetts, where she helped get the library involved with Nelinet and taught courses in library science, for more than a decade until her retirement in 1980.

■ **Theo B. Rockwell**, 65, young adult librarian at Venice Public Library in South Venice, Florida, died of cancer March 2.

■ **Ed Tyson**, 92, librarian of the Searls Historic Library in Nevada City, California, died March 12. He volunteered there for 38 years after retiring as a librarian at San José (Calif.) City College in 1972. His research is credited as being largely responsible for Nevada City's inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

ALA Editions.

■ In April **Michael Gallego** became development coordinator for the Development Office.

■ **Oliver Murdock**, administrative assistant in

the Washington Office, left ALA March 16.

■ March 17 Conference Services' Administrative Assistant **Molly Sasajima** left ALA.

■ **Christine Schwab**,

managing editor for ALA Editions, left March 26.

## Correction

■ December 22 **Kenneth A. Yamashita** retired as city librarian at Stockton—San Joaquin County (Calif.) Public Library. ■

# Chalkboard Heroine

If only a school librarian had her back

by Jennifer Burek Pierce

One might reasonably think I'm beyond having a favorite teacher. Having turned in all my assignments and completed my formal education years ago, such a declaration might seem a tad unnecessary. A note on author Nikki Grimes's Facebook page, though, called my attention to Teacher Appreciation Day, recognized early each May. Her words, to say nothing of recent media attention to declining education funds, prompt me to enthuse about a particular teacher.

My gratitude to all my instructors (including Ann and Nancy, who patiently correct my novice knitting mistakes) is boundless. Yet the teacher whose work so awes me isn't someone I've studied with; instead, my longtime friend Laura, now a 3rd-grade teacher in California, reinforces my belief in the power of public education to support literacy and related learning.

Laura calls my attention to the sprawling details of elementary school life, from tracking down parents who'd rather not chat with their child's teacher to researching California's geography. Once she told me what it was like to explain all the intricacies of the use of commas . . . to 25 8-year-olds. "Can you do

that?" she asked. Um, next question please.

## Literature lovers welcome

Reading with her students is one of Laura's priorities. She has had an animal control officer and high school drama students come into her classroom to share favorite stories. "To have someone come in and

make reading a fun and engaging activity is a big deal," she said. "Only two kids in my room have parents who read bedtime stories. That's the reality of the environ-

ment." Her thank-you notes charm me, too: Her students draw favorite moments from these visits, images she sends to the volunteers. Laura sees reading's rewards when the kids are excited to find now-familiar books at the library.

I'm used to having the resources of a research university at my fingertips, and I sometimes forget that elsewhere such tools are not the norm. When a vendor sent me an e-mail about a new bilingual reference set, I forwarded it to Laura and asked if she had had a chance to use the material with her students yet, eager for her real-world perspective. I certainly got it: She has a 1998 encyclopedia set in her classroom that is missing only a couple of volumes.

We're nearing the end of the school year. In Laura's classroom, that means

a couple of things. One is the annual round of standardized tests. The other is calendar-making, an activity that involves math, language, culture, and art as students construct grids, number dates, identify days of the week and special events, and illustrate each month. This learning experience becomes a gift students take home to their parents, and I want to believe it's something they'll all remember years hence.

## Reading and roses

Every time I hear about this project, I want a school librarian to ply the class with *Chase's Calendar of Events* and other reference works. While the school has a library, it lacks a librarian to shape the collection or even a clerical aide to manage circulation functions. It's filled with donated volumes, many of which aren't the newest, coolest, award-winning titles I tell my students they should promote in the libraries they'll one day run. Stories of this California classroom fill me with wonder every time, because I know it's not all reading and roses.

Long ago, one of my elementary school teachers assigned an essay that asked me to describe my hero. I didn't have a good response, a ready image of someone whose indefatigable creativity and character I idealized. But Mr. Mittenzwei, if you happen to read this, now I do. ■

JENNIFER BUREK PIERCE is assistant professor of library and information science at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Contact her at [youthmatters@ala.org](mailto:youthmatters@ala.org).



**I'm used to having the resources of a research university at my fingertips;**

**I sometimes forget that elsewhere that isn't the norm.**



# Ex Libris Seminars at the ALA 2010 Annual Conference Washington DC

**Saturday, June 26, 2010**

## Ex Libris Rosetta: Goodbye Digital Preservation, Hello Permanent Access

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Speaker: Mike Thuman, *Ex Libris*

Explore the challenge of providing access to digital content in the coming decades. Intended for institutions which understand the fragile nature of digital content and want to take steps today to authenticate and prepare all types of file formats for both long term preservation and access. A discussion and demonstration of Ex Libris Rosetta will be included to show how workflows for different sources and objects can be created and how advanced preservation planning capabilities can be employed to provide ongoing stewardship and file format migration of large collections.

## Ex Libris Primo/Primo Central: The Ultimate in Next-Gen Discovery

1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Speakers: Stu Baker, *Northwestern University*; Alison Hitchins, *University of Waterloo*; Corey Harper, *New York University*; Tamar Sadeh and Jorgen Madsen, *Ex Libris*

Learn how to take discovery and delivery of local and remote resources to the next level at your institution! This session will explore how three institutions are extending Primo to a mobile environment, integrating the system with the Blackboard course management system, using third-party Open Source software to provide improved user experiences, and redesigning the user interface with the Primo custom tiles functionality to provide a more seamless and unified user experience.

  
**Ex Libris**  
The bridge to knowledge

**Sunday, June 27, 2010**

## Cut it Out: Reducing Costs and Improving Efficiency with Next-Generation Library Services

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Speaker: Susan Stearns, *Ex Libris*

“EFFICIENCY CUTS ARE NO LONGER ENOUGH AND SOME SERIOUS THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE SHAPE OF SERVICES AND PROVISION IS NEEDED”. As libraries look to the future, they face the challenge of reducing costs at the same time as they improve — and add new — services. This presentation will discuss how the Ex Libris next generation of library services addresses these critical requirements. Susan Stearns, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships, will review ways in which the URM (Unified Resource Management) framework addresses reducing the total cost of ownership of back-office library systems and services, citing examples from work with Ex Libris customers around the world. We will review the ways in which URM streamlines back-office operations, with a focus on minimizing staff resources and leveraging collaborative opportunities.

## Recommended for Libraries Like You: Scholarly Evaluation, Social Networking Metrics, and a New World for Usage Data

1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Speakers: Johan Bollen, *School of Informatics and Computing, Center for Complex Networks and System Research, Indiana University*; Nettie Lagace, *Ex Libris*

Libraries have now moved into an almost completely online world. The exciting study of usage metrics — as they apply to the evaluation of scholarly communications — offers many opportunities for exploitation of this new environment, including new services to users and collection development activities. This session will introduce you to the possibilities and energize you with new potential applications as well as already-realized applications, such as the bX recommender service from Ex Libris.

Visit [www.exlibrisgroup.com/category/ALA2010Annual](http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/category/ALA2010Annual) to register for these seminars as space is limited. Locations of the seminars will be listed in the ALA Annual program and on the Ex Libris Web site. Refreshments will be served.

Visit us at **Booth #1315** to learn how Ex Libris can be your bridge to the future!

# Librarian's Library

Tomes' Tome

by Mary Ellen Quinn

If books disappear, they'll have a fitting monument in *The Oxford Companion to the Book*. The first part of this hefty Companion comprises 48 in-depth essays offering a tour of the book's evolution from



Sumerian clay tokens to e-books. In between are discussions of printing, paper, illustration, bookbinding, children's books, and other topics, as well as the history of the book in

countries across the globe. The second part consists of more than 5,000 entries on individuals, libraries, types of books, types of type, printing, publishing, seminal works such as *The Canterbury Tales*, and much more. Some 28 editors and 398 scholars from 27 countries labored on this project which, incidentally, is also available in digital form. INDEXED. 2V. 1,048P. \$275 FROM OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS (9780198606536)

## Taking control of technology

If you feel as though technology is taking over your library (and your life), a solid technology plan can give you back



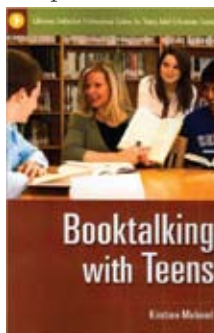
some control. *The Complete Library Technology Planner* by John M. Cohn and Ann L. Kelsey is a guide to creating, evaluating, updating, and implementing a plan. The chapter "A Model Two-Day Process for Developing a Basic Strategic Plan" is especially useful, as is the accompanying CD-ROM with over 25 examples of plans from different kinds of libraries.

INDEXED. 161P. PBK. \$99.95 FROM NEAL-SCHUMAN (9781555706814)

## Titles for Teens

Librarians who work with teens will welcome these useful guides.

In *Booktalking with Teens*, Kristine Mahood explains how to use booktalks



to engage teens with the library. She discusses what teens are reading (and how to find out); surveys various genres, including graphic novels and classics; and outlines the steps in making booktalking a success.

INDEXED. 289P. PBK. \$45 FROM LIBRARIES UNLIMITED (9781591587149)

## NEW FROM ALA

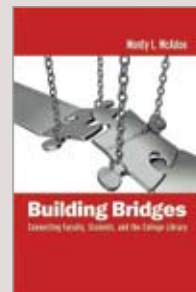


In the latest book on a persistent challenge, Michael Sullivan offers readers' advisory as a strategy to bring boys to the library and get them to read. *Serving Boys through Readers' Advisory* explains "boys' lit" and outlines how to use readers' advisory effectively. Librarians will appreciate the many boy-friendly booktalks and book lists.

INDEXED. 152P. PBK. \$48 (9780838910221)

Collaborating with teachers to develop assignments can be a good way to promote information literacy, as media specialists know. In *Building Bridges: Connecting Faculty, Students, and the College Library*, Monty L. McAdoo proposes the same kind of collaboration at the college level. In addition to identifying what works, he devotes a section to library assignments that fail. If you've tried tours and scavenger hunts that have flopped, this book will help you understand why.

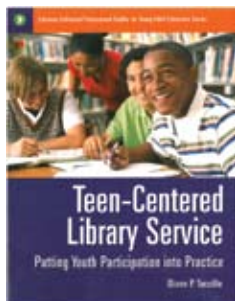
INDEXED. 159P. PBK. \$55 (9780838910191)



# ROUSING READS

ALAN FURST

There are plenty of books on working with teens, but *Teen-Centered Library Service: Putting Youth Participation into Practice* offers a twist. Instead of leaving teens on the receiving end of what a library offers, Diane P. Tuccillo shows how to get them to take an active role in programming, teaching and promoting technology, fundraising, serving on adult library boards, and other activities.



INDEXED. 259P. PBK. \$45 FROM LIBRARIES UNLIMITED (9781591587651)

## English around the world

No matter what country they were from, everyone seemed to be speaking English at the recent Winter Olympics. In *Globish: How the English Language Became the World's Language*, Robert McCrum explains why. The Norman Conquest, the Reformation, Shakespeare's plays and Johnson's dictionary, British imperialism, the American Revolution, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the growth of the internet have all been steps along the way to English becoming "the world-wide dialect of the third millennium."

McCrumb didn't invent the term *Globish* (that honor goes to a French-speaking former IBM executive), but he provides a fun and fascinating account



of its origin and evolution.

INDEXED. 352P. \$26.05 FROM W.W. NORTON (9780393062557) ■

MARY ELLEN QUINN is editor of *ALA Booklist's Reference Books Bulletin*.

On the 10th of March 1938, the night train from Budapest pulled into the Gare du Nord a little after four in the morning." To readers of historical espionage fiction, that sentence can only mean one thing: Alan Furst. Furst writes about the years from 1938 to 1941 as if they were recurring characters, and over the course of several books, he has laid claim to the period as his own.

The eight World War II novels Furst has written since 1996 divide into two groups: those taking place in Paris during the Occupation and those set a bit earlier, as the war was just beginning, a time when spies of all stripes were gathering information and securing alliances while tanks gathered at the borders. In his new book, *Spies of the Balkans*, as well as in *Spies of Warsaw* (2008) and *Kingdom of Shadows* (2001), he has focused on the edges of the European theater—oft-invaded countries like Greece, Poland, and Hungary, where reluctant heroes find themselves drawn into the dark world of espionage. "When somebody takes your country, you help them or you fight them," a patriot from Zagreb tells Costa Zannis, in *Spies of the Balkans*. Yes, but Zannis, who helps ferry Jews from Berlin through Greece to neutral Turkey, is equally driven by desires to protect his family and claim a separate peace for himself and his lover. On that delicate psychological fault line, Furst has carved a fabulous career.

As much as I admire these recent Furst novels, my favorites remain *The World at Night* (1996) and *Red Gold* (1999), both set in Nazi-occupied Paris in the early 1940s. Not since the doors were still open at Rick's Café Americain has the pungent smoke from Galoises cigarettes filled a room with such a heady mix of trenchcoated intrigue and romance by searchlight. Both books star Jules Casson, a film producer who would prefer to keep making movies while the world explodes but who, inevitably, winds up in the resistance. What makes Casson so appealing is the way Furst refuses to let his hero off the hook; here's a resistance fighter whose cynical antiheroism doesn't evaporate in the last reel. Casson fights out of weary pragmatism, and he dreams mainly of a good meal, a decent glass of wine, and a willing woman. I like to think that Casson, unlike Bogie, would get on the plane with Ingrid Bergman.

Beyond the razor-sharp evocation of period and place, Furst captures the moral ambiguity at the hearts of his lapsed cynics. Their commitment is to individual rather than national values, even to hedonism rather than patriotism. Casson acts heroically but does so almost in spite of himself. That's not to say he's not romantic—you can't light a cigarette on a dark Paris street in 1938 without being romantic—but he's also utterly unsentimental. Unlike *Casablanca* and the other movies portraying the twentieth-century's most terrifying yet perversely romantic period, Furst's novels never let the romance turn the terror into mushy idealism.



BILL OTT is the editor and publisher of *ALA's Booklist*.

# Solutions and Services



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APTE has announced the launch of Literacy Suite. Based on visual learning theory, the Literacy Suite builds reading, writing, and science skills by combining students' own images, videos, and photos with rich learning content. Designed by special educators, Literacy Suite responds to the unique needs of visual learners, including young learners and students with ADD, autism, Down syndrome, and hearing impairments. APTE's Literacy Suite uses innovative technology and proven strategies to enrich learning in a whole new way.



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To have a new product considered for this section, contact Brian Searles at [bsearles@ala.org](mailto:bsearles@ala.org).



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OCLC says this approach can increase visibility and accessibility of libraries' collections for patrons, reduce duplication of effort, streamline workflows, and build a cooperative intelligence from the large-scale aggregation of usage data.

## CASE STUDY

### PERFECTING PEAK-USAGE STAFFING

The Fort Vancouver Regional Library District in Vancouver, Washington, serves a population of 436,605 and is composed of 13 libraries and three bookmobiles. The libraries experience peak-usage times around holidays and summer vacations. The district uses a large number of substitutes during those weeks, which once required manual calls and e-mails to potential substitutes to cover these time periods. This time-consuming task needed a solution. Sherry Braga, volunteer and substitute coordinator, researched several options and found CRS Advanced Technology and the SubFinder product. With SubFinder, a library system has the ability to schedule substitutes, volunteers, and part-time help; track substitute and volunteer hours; utilize preference and skill lists; access the system via

internet or phone; and verify and approve substitute job information before exporting to payroll to protect from manual entry mistakes. SubFinder is available to libraries on two platforms: box on-site, where a library's

technology department will maintain all hardware and software at the library; or as an ASP solution where all hardware and software are housed at the CRS Data Operations Center and maintained by CRS Advanced Technology staff. Braga explains, "We mainly use SubFinder to schedule subs and track sub hours, including part-time staff who want to work extra hours. We use skill levels and preference lists to meet union contract requirements and limit what

staff sees as available hours. Additionally, we utilize several of the reports for a variety of reasons. Many help us in tracking costs of projects, budgeting, and so much more."



Vancouver Community Library

[www.crsadvancedtechnology.com](http://www.crsadvancedtechnology.com)

# Weeding Grows the Garden

Removing worn-out and outdated material is a surprisingly effective circulation booster

by Brian Mathews

**M**ichael Sawyer takes pride in weeding books. In fact, he estimates that over the past 30 years he has overseen the removal of more than 500,000 items across eight library systems. As you can imagine, this has not been without controversy.

“Many librarians have an emotional attachment to their collections,” Sawyer observes. “They think of the books as a literal part of the library, as part of their family.”

Sawyer takes a more utilitarian view of library materials by believing that most items in the average library will eventually fulfill their purpose and need to be discarded.

As director of the Calcasieu Parish Public Library in Louisiana, Sawyer feels that weeding the collection is one of the most essential practices that a library can do. While there are many benefits, the main reason is that it helps to improve circulation.

“When the library gets rid of those ragged, smudged, damaged, and unattractive rebound books, circulation increases every time,” Sawyer maintains.

He believes that public libraries in particular have a responsibility to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information possible. Weeding not only allows for this, but also presents the library as a more credible source for information and enables patrons to find what they need more easily.

However, routine weeding has not always been an easy task, and Sawyer has shown his dedication through

leading by example. With the CREW weeding manual in hand, he has personally trained staff on the subtle art of weeding.

“It is one thing to have a philosophical conversation about removing materials, but when you are out in the stacks handling books that are damaged or that have outdated information, people start to understand why we need to do this.”

While Sawyer’s passion is weeding, he also focuses on public relations. One of the library’s most successful programs, the Yard Sign Project, almost didn’t get off the ground due to staff reluctance. The project was inspired by Louisville (Ky.) Free Public Library and rewarded kids who read 10 books over the summer with a yard sign that proudly stated: “A library champion lives here.” The response was phenomenal. Sawyer said that the initiative demonstrated in a very visual manner how much support there is for the library. In addition, it created a sense of positive peer-pressure that generated excitement for children and their parents. Sawyer’s persistence paid off; staff embraced the project and the library earned the 2010 Public Library Association’s Highsmith Innovation Award.

Sawyer strives to make his library the heart of the community, but in order to do so he knows that he has to appeal to its mind. In 2009 his parish

was set to vote on a tax renewal to cover library funding for the next 10 years. Knowing that the majority of the money would be collected by local businesses, Sawyer circulated a white paper that outlined the economic benefits of the library for the community. In addition to digital billboards and television ads, he developed a series of talking

points that distilled funding into relatable terms. A homeowner with a house valued at \$100,000 would

pay a tax equal to about two candy bars a month. A business owner with property valued at \$600,000 would pay a rate equal to a monthly home internet connection. The community responded emphatically by passing the tax with a 91% approval rate.

While a strong vision and managerial prowess are important qualities of leadership, perhaps one of the most critical aspects is the ability to generate buy-in. Whether it is building trust among staff, convincing the board to embrace a new project, or presenting the value of the organization to the community, developing support is essential to success. Having a great idea is one thing, but convincing others to collaborate, implement it and make it their own is the key step in the process. ■



Many librarians have an emotional attachment to their collections—as part of their family.

**BRIAN MATHEWS** is a librarian at the University of California, Santa Barbara. This column spotlights leadership strategies that produce inspirational libraries.



## Career Leads from

**SUBLETTE COUNTY WYOMING LIBRARY DIRECTOR.**

The Board of Trustees of the Sublette County Library is seeking an experienced enthusiastic, and service-oriented Library Director for our library system in one of the most beautiful areas in the Rocky Mountains. The successful candidate will demonstrate the ability to direct a flourishing and progressive library system in a small, rural western community, and will lead the continued development and monitoring of the library systems role at the heart of our community. The library director works with the board in assuring efficient and effective organization and operation of the main library in Pinedale and its Big Piney branch to provide quality services to the public throughout Sublette County. The director will provide leadership to a staff of 19 and will manage a \$1 million budget. The director oversees and directs the activities and operations of the main library and its branch library, and provides guidance to the board on long and short-term goal setting, daily operations and services to the public. The director works to determine the needs for improved library services; creates linkages with community groups; plans budgetary expenditures; prepares reports and statistical information; and supports library collection development. The Sublette County Library system participates in the statewide WYLD Network for the delivery of library and information services; the director will play an active role in that organization to improve access to information for all residents of the county and state. The ideal candidate will have a Masters Degree in Library Science, with a minimum of three years of progressively responsible library experience, working knowledge of library technologies, good communications, planning experience and interpersonal relation skills. The salary range begins at \$60,000 plus benefits. Sublette County is located in western Wyoming's Green River Valley. Pinedale is nestled between the Wind River and Wyoming Range mountains, and this region is known for its natural beauty and endless outdoor recreational opportunities. Pinedale has retained its small-town charm along with its bustling economy. With a population of less than 8,000 in nearly 5,000 square miles, there isn't a single stop light in Sublette County. Interested individuals can learn about our library system by visiting: [www.sublettecountylibrary.org](http://www.sublettecountylibrary.org). To learn about our community checkout: [www.pinedaleonline.com](http://www.pinedaleonline.com), [www.sublettewyo.com](http://www.sublettewyo.com) and [www.sublettechamber.com](http://www.sublettechamber.com). **Applicants should submit a letter of introduction and resume with three references to Search Committee, Sublette County Library, P.O. Box 489, Pinedale WY 82941. The deadline for applications is June 1.** The Sublette County Library system is ADA/EOE.



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# Quirkiness “R” Us

Have you embraced your inner eccentricity?

by Will Manley

A couple of months ago I started a daily blog entitled “Will Unwound.” At first, I had no idea what I was doing. All I knew was that as a retired librarian I wanted to stay connected to librarians on a daily basis. Call me crazy, but I think librarians are the most interesting tribe of people on the planet.

The last seven years of my professional career I spent as a city manager with 1,900 full-time employees under my administrative control. I made it a point to learn every employee’s name, and I spent a great deal of time out of my office meeting with employees on their own turf in police cars, on fire trucks, inside sewers, on top of light rail tracks, on street sweepers, inside garbage trucks, and on top of bridges. There wasn’t a nook or cranny in that city organization that I did not visit.

I worked closely with a wide array of occupational types, including law enforcement professionals, civil engineers, rescue experts, urban planners, public administrators, social workers, arborists, architects, landscapers, computer engineers, accountants, electricians, plumbers, truck drivers, janitors, and graphic artists. I admired them all and respected their work. It was a fascinating job.

But it wasn’t until I had been in the city-manager job for several years that I realized how unique librarians are. At the risk of sounding a bit judgmental, I have to say that all the other occupational types I worked with were simply boring by comparison.

The librarian stereotype will always be a person in an 18th-century hairstyle who is hard-working, bookish, a bit ill-tempered, reserved, and boring. I have met thousands of colleagues on the speaking circuit; my overwhelming impression is of an individual who is bright, inquisitive, knowledgeable about many different subjects, brimming with enthusiasm, and unexpectedly excited about technologies that others think could ren-



**Librarians are very funny in dark, devious, and unexpected ways.**

der this profession obsolete.

However, the characteristic that most differentiates librarians from all

the other occupational groups I worked with is a very weird and shockingly offbeat sense of humor. Librarians are very funny in some dark, devious, and totally unexpected ways—not a “gallows” humor so much as *Far Side* in comfortable shoes. And who wouldn’t wear comfortable shoes after being on your feet all day helping patrons?

I created my blog to give me an opportunity to stay in touch with librarians, and I love writing it because of the freedom it gives me to rant, rave, reflect, and ruminate. I’m my own man for the first time. That’s the beauty of retirement: There is no employer looking over my shoulder, and I’m beginning to appreciate what a beautiful concept intellectual freedom is.

That’s the other thing about librarians. They love to exercise their intellectual freedom. The blog has drawn up to 1,000 visitors on any given day, some of whom leave comments; 99% of them are funny or insightful. But the other 1% are disappointing: They are abusive, profane, or disgusting. I delete them, and lately I’ve been feeling guilty about that. Am I a censor or a selector? You tell me. Thanks. ■

WILL MANLEY has furnished provocative commentary on librarianship for over 30 years and nine books on the lighter side of library science. Write him at [wmanley7@att.net](mailto:wmanley7@att.net).



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