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From the Editor's Desk.....



SURPRISE! HERE'S ANOTHER ISSUE of *Teacher-Librarian Today*. At the last AGM, we decided to have the yearly issue published in early fall so that members could take advantage of the information about our school library specialty

during the school year, not after the fact in April.

I was going to eliminate my editorial because I am too far from the school library scene in retirement. But, alas, a situation came up for me to write about.

Three articles with the word *library* in their titles were submitted to me for publication. They were previously printed in *Alberta Voices*, the publication of the English Language Arts Council. They were titled "Classroom Libraries at Hidden Valley Elementary School," "Directions to the Library at Hidden Valley Elementary School" and "Teacher-Teacher-Librarian Partnerships for Developing Units That Marry Language Arts Curriculum and Technology."

Imagine my sad discovery that the first two were glowing reports about how classroom libraries work so wonderfully. Our message about the importance and effectiveness of teacher-librarians is hardly being heard in these times of budget restraints. Splitting the monies up into classroom libraries, instead of one central library, is wasteful and inefficient. So, for example, instead of circulating one or two copies of *Where the Sidewalk Ends* to all students, every classroom needs a copy to give students access to that wonderful poetry book. If only one copy is in one room and it is exchanged when the need arises, then one central library with a trained teacher-librarian could solve the problem and save money at the same time. The benefits of having a teacher-librarian to further plan the use of all resources would be truly effective and cost-efficient.

On the better side of this story is that the third title, "Teacher-Teacher-Librarian Partnerships for Developing Units That Marry Language Arts Curriculum and Technology," greatly describes how teachers and teacher-librarians can plan and work together to benefit both teachers and students. This article is included in this issue.

We carry on with our advocacy—this publication is preaching to the converted, but as we keep our numbers and time allotment up in many schools, we spread our message. Come to your regional and provincial events; the networking is strong and satisfying. Get your colleagues to join the Learning Resources Council (LRC). It is worth it.

Belonging to the LRC has the following benefits:

- *Teacher-Librarian Today*, once a year
- *School Libraries in Canada*, online, four times a year
- Professional-development funds to each regional to support local T-Ls
- A conference each year, alternate years with the Alberta Library Conference and with other specialist councils
- Kaleidoscope every four years (if you miss this one in 2004, the next one will be 2008)
- A chance to serve on regional or provincial executives (a chance to work and play with your teacher-librarian colleagues)
- A website to keep up to date and in the know: www.learningresources.ab.ca

Many professional-development conferences are in our future: regional, provincial and, in 2006, international. Keep up your association with the LRC and be part of a bigger picture—a great school library one. See you at Kaleidoscope, November 2004, and then again in Jasper at ALC 2005.

—Dianne Dunse, Acquisitions Director

President's Message

THANKS TO OUR EDITOR DIANNE DUNSE, *TEACHER-LIBRARIAN Today* is now available earlier in the school year. Through Dianne's efforts, including gentle persuasions to contributors, our council is kept apprised of news and happenings. She has done a great job for many years and continues with the same high standards. In case you weren't aware, Dianne is also an inspired storyteller. Her sessions on picture books and connecting with Native culture at the 2004 conference in Banff this past spring were standing room only.

The 2004 conference, held jointly with the English (ELAC) and computer (ATACC) councils, was the first time these groups had connected in this way. We were thrilled with how we could work together and amazed at what we could achieve. What a unique opportunity to advocate for teacher-librarians and make other councils aware of library happenings.

In these times of restraint and retirements, we must continue to advocate wherever possible. It is important to make those responsible for staffing aware of the vast amount of research, such as the Keith Curry Lance studies (www.lrs.org/), connecting school libraries and teacher-librarians with student achievement. We also need to make *Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada* available to the decision makers. In fact, wouldn't this be an appropriate Christmas gift for those on your list?

This year, the Council plans to rewrite the portion of the LRC handbook detailing teacher-librarian duties.

Times have changed and so have the duties of the teacher-librarian. Once this is completed, we will make it available to all superintendents and will post it on the LRC website. The website www.learningresources.ab.ca/ maintained by our webmaster April Tilson is an up-to-date and valuable source of information for all teacher-librarians. As an interesting aside, it was our own LRC website that kept the conference delegates informed.

SLIC is now online. Jennifer Branch is the editor and Lois Barranoik was guest editor. Teacher-librarian by distance education continues to offer excellent courses and draw professionals worldwide. We have two exciting conferences coming up this year. Kaleidoscope 8, under Jane Magee's direction, will be held November 4–6, and the ALC Conference, with Irene Masciuch as codirector, will be held in the spring of 2005 in Jasper. Our regionals continue to be strong and active and offer many interesting activities.

You teacher-librarians are unique teachers—you have skills in technology and in authentic teaching and learning, and you are creative and organized. Your skills and knowledge flow into any subject area. For such a small council, which is often erroneously confused with that other LRC, we have great skills and a loud voice. Be proud of who you are and remember that you make a difference in students' education and lives.

—Rhonda Hunter

Past President's Message

2004 AGM Report

2003/04 Highlights

Honourable Lois Hole, Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta

The Honourable Lois Hole continues to be an advocate for school libraries across Alberta. In October she was presented with an honorary LRC award. She sent a most eloquent response for the award, which boosted the executive members' spirits.

Focus on Inquiry: A Teacher's Guide to Implementing Inquiry-based Learning

The LRC executive was pleased to take part in drafting the updated *Focus on Research* document. Thanks to Jennifer Branch and Dianne Oberg of the University of Alberta for including the voices of teacher-librarians across the province. Thanks also to Teddy Moline who continues to update us on the learning resources available through Alberta Learning.

Professional Development

The executive continues to embrace and value the joint planning of conferences with various stakeholders. Alberta Library Conference 2003 allowed LRC membership to engage in camaraderie with our greater library community. The "Connect 2004" tri-council conference with our English- and computer-teaching colleagues allowed us to engage in meaningful learning and teaching dialogue. We continue to seek creative ways to collaborate on professional-development opportunities with a wide range of stakeholders. The executive met in January with a representative from the provincial regional consortium group to discuss current and future opportunities for collaboration on professional-development offerings for teacher-librarians. Support and appreciation for Dianne Dunse's work as editor of *Teacher-Librarian Today* allow a

continuing and important view of the school library professional leadership in our province.

National Library Presidents' Meeting

The annual teleconference with provincial presidents in February was most encouraging with a commitment from all to attend this year's Canadian Library Conference in Victoria, where key decisions were made regarding a new national framework for professional teacher-librarians (possible joining of the School Libraries in Canada and the Association for Teacher-Librarians of Canada). Struggles regarding memberships, advocacy and lack of teacher-librarian positions were discussed. Also, the encouragement of the Canadian Coalition for School Libraries and the new Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs put new life into our provincial talk. Presidents were asked to encourage members to nominate outstanding teacher-librarians for various provincial and national awards.

Alberta Learning's Online Reference Centre

The executive took part in evaluating the content and services of the Online Reference Centre resources. Response has been overwhelmingly in favour of continuing equitable access to quality online reference resources for all Alberta students. Teacher-librarians continue to be valued for their expertise in selection and evaluation of learning resources.

Advocacy

Following LRC's presentation at Alberta's Commission on Learning sessions (thanks to Lois Barranoik and Jennifer Branch), some politicians have a renewed interest in the state of school libraries in the province. The presentation can be viewed on the LRC website and is wonderful for advocacy with local and provincial political bodies.

Challenges

Membership

Membership remains strong despite the loss of many teacher-librarian positions provincewide. Strategies are being outlined by various regional groups to address these concerns. Networking with colleagues and advocating at district levels is common. At a December ATA workshop, specialist council presidents, treasurers and editors found that they faced similar challenges and expressed with a commitment to be more proactive in cross-council networking.

Recognition of the Professional Teacher-Librarian

The lack of recognition of and appreciation for certified teacher-librarians continues to be a concern. Library technicians and assistants are being encouraged to take on teaching responsibilities when teacher-librarians are no longer at a school. Library technicians and assistants voice the need to retain teacher-librarians

and their assistants, because of almost unmanageable workloads. Teacher-librarians are being overworked and overloaded with technology, network, library and classroom responsibilities. There is a continued need to work with ATA executives regarding these issues.

Upcoming Events

Kaleidoscope 8

November 4–6, 2004

Please encourage colleagues to attend this wonderful conference celebrating literature. Spread the word and check out the exciting sessions on the K8 website (links from LRC).

Alberta Library Conference 2005

Mark your calendars for next year's joint conference with librarians across Alberta April 28 to May 1. Calgary Regional president Irene Masciuch is cochairing this event.

—Linda Shantz-Keresztes

School Libraries in Canada

School Libraries in Canada, a journal of the Canadian School Library Association, is online. It is conveniently available to everyone by going to www.schoollibraries.ca.

Hopefully, our members will take advantage of this publication. The Learning Resources Council has designated funds to sponsor this national voice for the Canadian school library community.

From the Regionals

Calgary, Irene Masciuch

2003/04 Events

Judith Sykes presented a session on Achieving Information Literacy, Standards for School Library Programs in Canada. This session was well attended. Judith is a coauthor of the new standards. She showed various pages that provide school libraries with guidelines relating to budgets, collection and development of the collections. Programs and guidelines for school libraries were also discussed. The session provided much-needed direction when the future of school libraries is so uncertain.

About 40 LRC members attended the annual convention breakfast on February 13. It is a great time to socialize and connect with other teacher-librarians.

Jennifer Branch presented an overview of the new *Focus on Inquiry* guidelines at the teachers' convention on February 13. This session indicated to delegates that there is a need to provide our community of teachers with further information and inservicing on this topic.

In conjunction with the Calgary Regional Consortium on March 12, Doug Johnson presented Creating Information-Literate Communities. Sixty-five teacher-librarians, administrators and generalist teachers attended this session.

At the May 11 annual general meeting, the new slate of executive members was appointed as follows: Irene Masciuch, past president; Dianne Loveland, president; Ellen Sears, president-elect; Fran Geitzler, secretary; Sheri Coutts, membership; Kathy Wadja, treasurer; Mariaan Camp, director; and Pat Farley, director.

On May 11, Gail De Vos gave an excellent presentation on graphic novels that was well attended by teacher-librarians, English language arts teachers and other interested teachers. De Vos presented numerous graphic novels and discussed the various components that one needs to look at when evaluating a graphic novel.

An annual awards and retirement banquet held June 4 at Inn on Crowchild, Calgary, honoured those retiring and awarded those who have provided exceptional service to

their school in support of libraries. Although we had much competition from the Calgary Flames that night, it was a time for great celebration. As always teacher-librarians have been active in numerous ways, including the LRC, either locally or provincially. It was our pleasure to present Lynda Lyster with the provincial Award of Merit for her work in support of school libraries and the partnership that she has established between Fujitsu and the Calgary Board of Education for their new IMS.

Best wishes to the retirees: Barb Galeski, William Aberhart High School; Linda Korsbrek, Brentwood Elementary; Shirley Holmlund, Prince of Wales Elementary; Iris Spurrel, Patrick Airlie Elementary; Shelagh Innes, Queen Elizabeth Junior/Senior High School.

Regrets from Nigel Pottle, Mary Hawkins, Dean Romolfo Van Camp and Myrna Reeves.

Congratulations to the Award Recipients

- *Bev Anderson Certificate of Merit for School Administrators in Support of School Libraries*
Dian Goods, principal, G. W. Skene Elementary School
Sharon Gibson, principal, Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School
 - *Teacher-Librarians*
Lynn Russell, teacher-librarian, Ernest Manning High School
Dianne Loveland, teacher-librarian, Online teacher CBE-Learn
 - *Tom Colbens Certificate of Merit for Library Assistants or Library Technicians*
Dianne White, library assistant, Annie Gale Elementary School
Annie Lindgard, library assistant, Vista Heights Elementary
 - *LRC Provincial Award of Merit*
Lynda Lyster
 - *Phoenix Award*
Vista Heights Elementary School for the rejuvenation of their library collection.
- The Calgary Regional currently has 65 members.



Teacher-librarian winners Lynn Russell and Dianne Loveland.



Retiree presenter Janet Daines and retiree Linda Korsbrek.



Tom Colbens winners Annie Lindgard, Tom Colbens and Dianne White.



Principal award winner Sharon Gibson (l) and Pat Ropchan (r).



Retirees Shirley Holmlund, Barb Galeski and Shelagh Innes.



Provincial Award of Merit winner Lynda Lyster (l) and Linda Shantz-Keresztes (r).

Greater Edmonton, Cheryl Querengesser

Last fall we planned to create templates and examples to support the *Focus on Inquiry* document. Executive members and other teachers were asked to collect examples to include in the package. Unfortunately, we were unable to meet in the spring to go through the selections, but we hope to put something together in the fall or early winter.

In January Dr. Ross Todd spoke at the University of Alberta to a small group. His lecture was well received and informative.

Our annual meeting was held May 26. Guest speaker Glen Huser spoke about receiving the 2003 Governor General's Literary Award for his book *Stitches* and the weeklong activities that surrounded this prestigious award. The new executive members are Fern Reirson, president; Lois Barranoik, secretary; and Jennifer Branch, treasurer.

Peace River, Sherry Nasedkin

The Grande Prairie Public School District has a long history of supporting school library programs and teacher-librarians. A plaque outside the door of the high school library reads: "In memory of Wilma Cranston's contribution as teacher and librarian, 1913–1972." District support of teachers and libraries has continued over the years. We've had the ups and downs of budget cuts, but teacher-librarians continue to have a presence in all 10 schools in our district.

Superintendent Lorne Radbourne and recently retired deputy superintendent Wes Brooks were awarded the Learning Resources Council Award of Merit

in recognition for their ongoing support of school libraries. This administration has supported us with personnel, materials and, most important, time.

We are given time to meet as a group one morning a month. Our superintendent joins us for a portion of every meeting. The library clerks are also given time to meet each month to discuss technical and clerical issues. As a result of this collaboration, we have developed various programs that promote inquiry-based skills and a love of literature.

One literature program we have developed in our elementary schools is the Top Twenty program. Each year we collaborate on a list of genre-based books that we encourage Grades 4 to 6 students to read and share. A core list of 20 titles is developed, but each school adds extra titles to tailor the program to its collection and student needs. In June, an interschool celebration is held for all students who have read 20 books from the list. (See page 9 for recent lists.) This program exposes children to a variety of genres and promotes discussion of literature within our schools.

With the success of the Top Twenty program, we saw a need to continue to provide students with a literature program throughout junior and senior high. We are developing a website that will recommend good literature to teens and will allow them to comment on the book through a bulletin board or e-mail. We started this project (which turned out to be much larger than we originally anticipated) by developing a list of titles that we recommend to teenage readers. Our next step was to contact the various publishers to secure permission to use their books at our site. This is an ongoing process, because new titles are constantly added to the site. A huge hurdle was the actual development of the website itself. We had initially envisioned something like

Amazon, but found that with limited money and no full-time webmasters, that kind of a page was not possible. As an experiment, we had students develop the site, but they kept graduating, so we finally had to build the site ourselves. We are now in the stage of piloting the site with a few students and hope to fully promote it by September. Please visit our site at www.gppsd.ab.ca/teenread.

The teacher-librarians in our area also played an integral part in developing and implementing the PAL (Partners in Learning) program. This program matches community volunteers with reluctant readers who need one-on-one support. Junior high,



Pictured here are teacher-librarians, library clerks, retired teacher-librarians and our superintendent at a breakfast meeting in June.

high school and college students are also trained as PAL tutors. This program is now five years old and receives financial support from our community as well as the public and Catholic school districts.

We have started to build library webpages. Our district sponsored one day of a two-day workshop, and the LRC Kaleidoscope grant covered the second day. In this highly technical world, we need to promote our libraries and programs on school websites. Here is a list of websites for you to peruse:

- Grande Prairie Composite High School: www.gppsd.ab.ca/gpcomp
Follow the link to the library: www.gppsd.ab.ca/%7esnasedki/
- Hillside Community School: www.gppsd.ab.ca/hillside/framede.html
Follow the link to the library.
- I. V. Macklin: www.gppsd.ab.ca/macklin/library/library.htm

Despite our love of promoting literature, we have not lost sight of the importance of collaborative teaching in the research process. We have closely studied and have had input into the new *Focus on Inquiry* document. Upon the release of the final draft of this document, we will inservice our staffs on its implementation.

That's what's happening here in Grande Prairie. If you have some ideas that would enhance our programs, we'd be happy to hear from you.

Northern Notes

Look for a new book release this fall entitled *West Wind, North Chatter* (NeWest Press) written by Deanna Kent-McDonald, an English teacher at Grande Prairie Composite High School.

Another northern author to look for is Linda Smith, former children's librarian at the public library. She wrote the Freyan trilogy for young readers (Thistle-down Press): *Wind Shifter, Sea Change, The Turning Time*.

Long-time teacher-librarian Marie Antoniuk is retiring this year. We wish her all the best!

Top Twenty for Grades 4–6

2003/04

“Take Flight and Read”

Adventure

- Parvana's Journey*, by Deborah Ellis
- Summer of Adventure*, by Ann Alma
- Flight from Big Tangle*, by Anita Daher
- The Not-Quite World Famous Scientist*, by Susan Hughes
- Morris Rumpel and the Wings of Icarus*, by Betty Waterton

Animals

- Pelly*, by Dave Glazer
- Birdie for Now*, by Jean Little
- Incredible Jumbo*, by Barbara Smucker
- Song Dog*, by Betty Wilson
- TJ and the Haunted House*, by Hazel Hutchins
- Rebel of Dark Creek #1*, by Nikki Tate
- Team Trouble of Dark Creek #2*, by Nikki Tate
- Jessa Be Nimble, Rebel Be Quick #3*, by Nikki Tate
- Sienna's Rescue*, by Nikki Tate
- Raven's Revenge*, by Nikki Tate
- Return to Skoki Lake*, by Nikki Tate
- Keeping Secrets at Dark Creek*, by Nikki Tate

Biography

- The Wright Brothers: A Flying Start*, by Elizabeth MacLeod
- As Long As the Rivers Flow*, by Larry Loyie
- High Flight*, by Linda Granfield
- Hallelujah Handel*, by Douglas Cowling

Fairy Tale/Folktale

- Garth and the Mermaid*, by Barbara Smucker
- The Maestro*, by Judd Palmer
- The Toothfairy*, by Judd Palmer

Fantasy

- The Fledgling*, by Jane Langton
- Cat's Eye Corner*, by Terry Griggs
- Cave of Departure*, by Nikki Tate
- The Seventh Princess*, by Nick Sullivan

Historical Fiction

- Tunnel of Time*, by Mary Bishop
- Tunnel of Terror*, by Mary Bishop
- White Lily*, by Ting-xing Ye
- A Ribbon of Shining Steel*, by Julie Lawson
- McCurdy and the Silver Dart*, by Les Harding
- The Olden Days Locket*, by Penny Chamberlain

Humour

- Frindle*, by Andrew Clements
- The Janitor's Boy*, by Andrew Clements
- The School Story*, by Andrew Clements
- Noses Are Red*, by Richard Scrimger

Mystery

- Hydrofoil Mystery*, by Eric Walters
- The Spy in the Alley*, by Melanie Jackson

Myth/Legend

- Buddha in the Garden*, by David Bouchard
- Solomon's Tree*, by Andrea Spalding
- Pegasus the Flying Horse*, by Jane Yolen

Nonfiction

- Heartland*, by Jo Bannatyne-Cugnet
- Hana's Suitcase*, by Karen Levine
- Only in Canada*, by Vivien Bower
- Made for Canada: The Story of Avro's Arrow*, by Joan Dixon

Poetry

M Is for Maple: A Canadian Alphabet, by Mike Ulmer

Full Moon Rising, by Joanne Taylor

Love That Dog, by Sharon Creech

Realistic Fiction

Ellen's Secret, by Jean Booker

Tarragon Island, by Nikki Tate

No Cafes in Narnia, by Nikki Tate

Science Fiction

Earthdark, by Monica Hughes

I Spent My Summer Vacation Kidnapped in Space, by

Martin Godfrey

Sports Stories

Long Shot, by Eric Walters

Red Line Blues, by Camilla Rivers

Southeastern, Jane BahnMiller



Southeastern Regional: (back row left to right) Grace MacDougall, Jennifer Sissons, Patty Ambrosio and Linda Rossler (superintendent) (front row left to right): Rhonda Hunter, Linda Ruetz, Jane BahnMiller (retiring), Sharon Samcoe

Because of a dwindling number of teacher-librarians in the Southeastern Regional, Rhonda Hunter will act as both regional and provincial LRC president for 2004/05. Patty Ambrosio will continue to act as treasurer for our regional.

We are a small group. Because our library time and the number of teacher-librarians have declined over the years, group support is vital. One way that we can support each other is to work on a joint reading theme, which consists of a four-to-six week reading program. Weekly programs are planned by one teacher-librarian; for example, when our theme was "Read. Travel Far. Pay No Fare," each teacher-librarian chose a continent, prepared lessons and gathered materials and reading

prizes. At the end of each week, we met at a local watering hole to talk about the week and rotate materials. Because we took a break from the collaborative reading activity last year, we will probably do one this year. We have been doing this long enough that we are able to recycle themes from more than six years ago.

We worked together on webpages in the fall and had a day-long study session on the *Focus on Inquiry* document in April.

At our year-end meeting, which was attended by Linda Rossler, superintendent of schools, Medicine Hat School District No. 76, the teacher-librarians described the various activities and programs that were carried out in 2003/04. Here are some of the main points:

Banff Conference

Rhonda Hunter organized the LRC joint conference in Banff. The conference was very successful and well attended.

Technology

Patty Ambrosio showed us the Crescent Heights High School website and reported that most schools with teacher-librarians now have a website. All schools hope to have the IPAC, the web-based search engine for library books, available for students. Grace MacDougall, Patty Ambrosio and Rhonda Hunter are part of the TELUS team and have helped teachers and students with technology. The TELUS team is also collaborating with Livingston Range teachers.

Literacy and Collaboration

Jane BahnMiller showed how she used the idea of pirates to encourage students to read at George Davison School. Linda Ruetz initiated a Literature Fair as an alternative to a Science Fair at Southview School. Grace MacDougall worked with the AISI team to promote functional reading with recipes and following directions. This was the theme of Literacy Discovery Days at River Heights School. Sharon Samcoe, teacher-librarian at Herald School, showed pictures of and discussed various authors who have been brought in to talk to students at schools.

Two teacher-librarians, Leisha Dyck and Jane BahnMiller, retired and the group is looking forward to working with their successors.

Focus for 2004/05

- A job description for the teacher-librarian will be completed at the provincial level.
- Linda Rossler will sit on the committee working to include "Policy for Selection of Library Materials" in the Operational Directives manual.
- A retreat for teacher-librarians is proposed for this year.

2004 IASL Conference

by *Edith Doyle and Gerald Brown*

THE 33RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL Association of School Librarianship (IASL) was held jointly with the School Library Association (SLA) at historic Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, June 17–20, 2004. Over 400 delegates from 38 countries considered the theme “From Aesop to E-Book: The Story Goes On...” The formal sessions offered a selection from 19 presentations, 19 workshops, 10 research reports and 6 library-related site visits.

Aidan Chambers, raconteur extraordinaire, captivated his audience with a witty and thought-provoking address entitled “Beyond Words.” As a distinguished author and honorary president of SLA, he established the tone for the conference. Patrick Dolan in “Because a Fire Was in My Head: Stories to Fire the Imagination,” challenged the listeners to help students develop their imagination, while Margaret Meek Spencer reinforced the theme in “What Counts as Growing Up in Reading? The Intellectual and Affective Evidence of Authors and Texts.”

Workshops and Presentations

Valerie Coghlan (Ireland) “Pictures, Books and Pedagogy” in which she explained the role of picture books in raising standards of visual awareness. She discussed techniques for integrating appropriate titles into the curriculum in primary and middle schools.

Debra Gniewak (United States) “Explaining Urban Legends” provided a sample of an online unit for secondary students. She demonstrated a variety of websites to illustrate the characteristics of urban legends and ways we are being exposed to these legends: electronically, mass media and through the oral tradition. Sample rubrics and assessment techniques, using the websites, were shown and discussed.

Elizabeth Greef (Australia) “Lighting the Fire: Inspiring Boys to Become Readers” shared practical strategies including literature circles as a means of establishing a reading culture.

Eleanor Shakespeare and Gaynar Cooper (Great Britain) “Reading to the Power Squared” shared proactive strategies to develop a positive reading culture. Through their use of role models, they showed how to motivate a keen interest in a wide variety of titles and topics. The discussion included ways to expand these strategies to other classrooms and external library links.

Research Sessions

Dr. Anne Clyde (Iceland) reported an ongoing project related to homosexuality in literature for young people (1989 to date). She is continuing to identify new publications as they become available.

Dr. Diljit Singh (Malaysia) recipient of the Murofushi Award for School Library Research, reported on a study to examine the education and training of school librarians in IASL member countries. Some issues that arose in his research included (1) inconsistency in position names for professional and support staff; (2) lack of unanimity in definition of terms used in describing training programs; and (3) huge variations in the perspective for training personnel for the future rather than the past.

Dr. Ross Todd (United States) reported on a recent large-scale research study entitled “Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries.” Details of this study can be found on his website.

Awards

The Dr. Jean E. Lowrie Leadership Development Award was presented to Mr. Claudio Laferla of St. Martin’s College, Malta. He is a founding member of the Malta School Library Association.

The Dr. Ken Haycock Leadership Development Award was presented to Dr. Jagtar Singh, Punjabi University,

India. Dr. Singh is a member of several library associations and has been active in library education for 15 years.

The Takeshi Murofushi Research Award was presented to Dr. Inci Onal, associate professor, Department of Information Management of Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey. She will examine the impact of national and international standards on school library programs with particular attention to Turkey, Germany and Iran.

(Application details available at www.iasl-slo.org.)

School Libraries Awarded IASL/UNESCO Book Grants

The 2004 recipients of the US\$1,000 grants were Nuukata Primary School serving 750 students in Oshakati, Namibia, and Mazapan School, which is a bilingual school serving 298 students in Grades 1–12 in La Ceiba, Honduras. Through this award, more than US\$20,000 has been disbursed to schools in more than 15 countries by IASL over the years.

Softlink Excellence Award was presented to the Australian University of Queensland Library's UQL Cyberschool. They received US\$1,000 for their model of excellence. The program was launched in 1998 as a community outreach program to address the challenges faced by schools that have limited resources in finding appropriate and reliable information for effective learning and teaching. The program has expanded from three schools in 1998 to 148 high schools across Queensland in 2004. For more details, please see www.cybrary.uq.edu.au/schools.

ProQuest SIRS Commendation Award was presented to CSLA and ATLC jointly for the 2004 publication of *Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada*. It is a nice coincidence that this presentation was being made at almost the same time as these two associations were amalgamating at the CSLA conference in Victoria, B.C. Rich Mulholland from the ATLC board accepted the plaque and cheque for US\$500 on behalf of the associations.

Information about the Astrid Lundgren Memorial Award was also shared at the conference. IASL board member Helle Barrett has played a significant role in the implementation of this award, and in seeking nominations.

Conference Publications

The annual proceedings document contains 29 papers presented at the 2004 conference. They are an

excellent source for practical ideas and applied research. Copies are still available for purchase.

Communique 2004 contains reports from associations and library-related agencies in 54 jurisdictions. This publication presents “grassroots information” on the status of school libraries globally. Ask your local president to see a copy. Each province has received one by now.

Communique 2004 Supplement was distributed to over 100 members electronically and to 186 people in print format. It contains the printed reports from the animated discussion groups at the Assembly of Associations meeting held on June 17.

The *Communique 2000–2004* is now available digitally on CD. Contact Gerald Brown for a copy at browner1@mts.net.

We encourage you to visit the IASL website for updates on this 2004 conference and the forthcoming conference in Hong Kong July 7–12, 2005.

Social Aspects

Being able to live in the residence in Trinity College, for those lucky ones who registered early, was sheer delight.

One of the conference functions incorporated a tour of the College's famous Old Library and a viewing of the magnificent *Book of Kells*. It fires the imagination that such a beautiful work has been created and has survived for so many years.

Irish dancing, whether at the banquet or in the pubs, is a splendid sight to see.

Two Dublin-walking tours were guided by local authors Lorcan Collins, Conor Kostick and Shane MacThomais. The guides provided rich personal insights and local perspectives.

The annual auction, conducted by Gerald Brown, raised a record US\$2,700 for the foundation to support book grants to schools in developing countries.

Summary

In summary, IASL conferences provide an international perspective. We can hear about cutting-edge developments; we meet other people who are facing the same kinds of issues as we are; we develop a personal camaraderie that helps to break down the barriers of isolation. We are encouraged to strive with renewed energy for revised goals. And in the process, we get to see other parts of the world. Do consider coming to Hong Kong.

For more information, contact browner1@mts.net.

Boys and Literacy: Factors Within Our Reach

by Wendy Coleman



Wendy Coleman attended the University of Alberta from 1990 to 1992, then taught with Edmonton Public Schools for five years before her husband's work took her to Hamilton, Ontario. Since moving to Hamilton in 1997, she has worked as a teacher-librarian with the Hamilton-Wentworth District

School Board where her work centres on literacy intervention strategies for students and teachers. In light of the ongoing underachievement of boys on achievement tests, Wendy has explored the factors that affect boys and their literacy in a school setting. In 2004, she received an M.Ed. from the University of Alberta.

WHY ARE GIRLS OUTPERFORMING BOYS ON STANDARDIZED literacy-achievement tests, and how do we address this problem? At first, the phenomenon of boys' low achievement test scores was explained in many research articles as a reading problem; it was suggested that boys lagged behind girls developmentally but would catch up eventually. However, the gap in scores between boys and girls not only remains but has actually widened across all age groups. The latest research suggests that the underlying cause is related to instruction, and that multiple factors must influence our thinking about the

problem. Younger boys' lack of reading achievement may be addressed by intervening to close the gaps in basic reading skills. For older boys, there are a whole range of reasons why capable readers don't read, why they are inhibited from reading and, therefore, why they may lose basic skills. To guide our thinking, I offer these thoughts in a question-and-answer dialogue. This format ensures that important conceptual and practical issues are considered.

How Widespread Is the Concern with Boys' Low Literacy Achievement and How Does It Relate to the Fiction Versus Nonfiction Debate?

According to Rowan et al. (2002), the wide gap between male and female performance in relation to literacy skills recurs in many countries; it has been a topic of concern since the 19th century. From the early school years to high school, girls outperform boys in literacy (pp. 19–22). Scholars have suggested that girls enjoy fiction and boys enjoy nonfiction or informational texts. Perhaps most language arts programs favour girls' preferences by emphasizing fiction texts; if boys' reading preferences are not honoured during the primary years, they may not be motivated to develop their reading competence later on. At the same time, by catering to girls' taste for narrative, we might not be helping girls develop the skills they need to comprehend informational texts in middle school. However, in actuality, the situation is not as simple as this binary between girls and fiction and boys and nonfiction would suggest. Many factors influence boys' low achievement scores on literacy tests.

Given That Girls Have Been Outperforming Boys on Achievement Tests for a Long Time, Are the Recent Concerns That Boys May Be the New Losers in Our School Systems Valid?

We must not let concern over boys' low literacy-achievement rates become a rhetoric of crisis, because the implicit message is that if the boys are losing at school, then the girls must be winning. This creates the illusion that boys and girls must compete for a finite set of positive schooling outcomes. Although interest in boys' lagging performance is now firmly on the overdeveloped world's agenda, the general public rarely examines the data to see which boys are lagging (Salisbury, Rees and Gorard 1999, 403). The problem with this unspecified, alarmist approach is that it may not necessarily lead to positive changes in practice and may reinscribe the initial disadvantages feminists sought to redress. Moreover, the results of any standardized test must be considered alongside a child's school-performance results to see a more holistic picture.

A healthy counterbalance to the alarm over boys' examination results is that achievement in school doesn't necessarily translate to equality in the labour market. Salisbury, Rees and Gorard (1999, 420) state

Although examination performance at age 16 is clearly a determinant of later academic routes, the apparent advantages enjoyed at school by high-performing girls are not always "cashed out" into later advantage in higher education and beyond.... Labour market research reports that a "glass ceiling" continues to operate for women with men's pay significantly higher on average, across the employment sector.

We Know That Other Factors Influence Achievement; Nonetheless Some Are Related to Gender. What Factors Are Related to Masculinity?

Among the factors that must be considered, parents' income and education levels are more significant indicators of school success than gender is (Booth 2002, 12). Nevertheless, Dutro (2001/02) tells a story of watching Kindergarten children line up at the close of their weekly visit to the school library. A five-year-old boy slipped into line clutching his book choice, a Disney

version of *Beauty and the Beast*. The boy standing in line behind him spotted the book and taunted him, saying, "He's going to read a girls' book." Other boys soon joined in with a chorus of "Ha, ha, ha, he's a girl." The accused boy quickly ran out of line to a nearby shelf and exchanged his book.

On what basis did the boys decide that the book was feminine? Was it based on the sex of the protagonist or the romantic theme? Dutro (2001/02) comments that many girls chose books without caring whether the protagonists were male or female. Dutro (p. 376) says that she "was certain from that moment on that that little boy would never again choose a library book without first checking and double-checking that he had made a suitably "masculine" choice, [and not crossed] those once invisible boundaries." The most apparent interpretation of this situation is that boys do have a gendered assumption about what is desirable or appropriate reading for boys and will police these reading boundaries. What is less visible to the casual onlooker is how the hierarchy among boys may have influenced this scene. This time it was a book that caused such derision, but next time it could just as easily be running shoes or a haircut. Moss (quoted in Barrs 2000, 6) notes that "Boys' peer group relationships tend to work against their choosing to read."

Feminist theorists suggest that opposing notions of femininity and masculinity are how humans construct and organize the world. These notions have become stereotypes and are often hard to see because they seem natural (Dutro 2001/02, 377). Gender theorists, such as Butler (1990) and Connell (1995), demonstrate that gender is not so much a product of biology as of performance or practice. Furthermore, the anthropologist Gilmore (1990), in his survey of cultures around the world, points out that masculinity is under intense pressure to perform. As Dutro (2001/02, 377) explains, "Boys, for instance, can feel tremendous, though perhaps unconscious, pressure to display expected masculine traits or risk ridicule." If, as some researchers have shown, literacy is a gendered practice, then whether boys read, or what they read, is subject to external pressures; this can be seen in their selection of reading materials and whether they view reading as a feminine activity. Educators need to observe the subtle and not so subtle ways gender is performed in schools and how we may inadvertently reinforce these codes. If gender is something learned, rather than something inherent in us, this theory opens up the possibility that we can teach gender differently and move away from society's entrenched notions.

Why Would Boys Assume That Reading Is a Feminine Activity?

Scieszka (2003) has interesting perspectives to offer from his personal and professional experiences. He says that, when he taught Grade 2, he was the only male teacher in the primary division, except for the gym teacher. He also notes that in the U.S., 75 per cent of elementary school teachers are women; among elementary teacher-librarians, it's close to 80 per cent. He goes on to say, "It shouldn't surprise us that many boys don't see reading as a particularly masculine activity. We *tell* boys that reading is important, that reading is for everyone. We *show* them that reading is something mostly women do" (p. 17). Like other researchers, Scieszka links boys not seeing reading as a guy activity to the grim reading test results that show boys scoring lower than girls every year, in every age group (p. 17).

Barrs (2000) found that boys who could read, and did read, "nearly always came from homes where at least one parent was a committed reader, but this was not true of girls, who seemed able to become committed readers via their peers and via the school" (p. 6). It follows then, that if boys need positive role models, "one obvious solution is to get more men involved in teaching, more fathers actively reading with their boys, and adult men generally showing boys that reading is a male activity" (Scieszka 2003, 18). It is important to actively recruit men to work and volunteer in our school and public libraries, too.

What Kinds of Books Engage Boys? What Do Boys Want to Read If Given the Choice?

Not long ago, my response might have been that, when given the choice, boys will read nonfiction and girls fiction. This is true to a certain extent, but the kinds of materials boys read is wide-ranging and idiosyncratic. Worthy (2002, 568) found the most common reading material choices among boys were magazines, comic books, mysteries, books with scary themes, jokes and humorous stories, sports series, drawing books, and books with relevant characters and themes. Jones and Fiorelli (2003, 9) add newspapers, especially comics, sports and entertainment, and heavily illustrated nonfiction and graphic novels to the list. Booth (2002, 21) adds Internet reading, card collections and hobbies. This list of boys' reading materials shows that boys' interests range widely, including fiction but also extending beyond it. The inclusion of many forms of nonfiction shows that boys often read instrumentally to

gain information and help them perform tasks, but they also read for entertainment. They like forms that mix media, such as the multimodal aspects of the Internet, in addition to forms that have minimal text and are highly graphic. But the list does not divide evenly between fiction and nonfiction. As Wynne-Jones (2001) has written, boyhood itself does not fall readily into easily separable categories. In the introduction to *Boys' Own: An Anthology of Canadian Fiction for Young Readers*, Wynne-Jones asks:

What is a boy's story? Well, it kind of depends on what you think a boy is. Based on personal experience and observation, I would have to say that a boy is, typically, brave and scared, full of strutting confidence one moment and wobbly as a first bike-ride the next. Boys are thoughtful and reckless, amiable and gross, noisy and withdrawn, smart and, sometimes, thick as a brick! So a boy's story, I guess, would have to reflect some of that (p. viii).

Because gender is not a stable, fixed identity, but always in development (as Butler [1990] would say it is always "performed" and Connell [1995], it is always "practiced"), it makes sense that gender have the kind of contradictory, unsettled quality that Wynne-Jones (2001) describes, particularly during the volatile adolescent years. While we can identify considerations that relate to boys' motivation or engagement with reading, we must remind ourselves not to allow these considerations to become categorical.

How Do the Materials Commonly Available in Schools Match Up with Boys' Reading Interests?

Researchers have noted that boys often don't connect their own out-of-school reading interests with reading they do at school. McGlenn (2003, 2) refers to the reading-log data that Smith and Wilhelm collected, saying it

showed a sharp distinction between school and home literacy for most boys. School literacy is characterized by an emphasis on the future and as a means to an unknown end. Boys did not feel competent doing this type of reading nor did they feel supported by their teachers. Home literacy, on the other hand, is immediate and deals with present realities. Boys read for concrete and immediate goals.

The boys in this study saw many forms of literacy as important only in school because they did not connect these forms as relevant to their lives. Whereas boys see reading as relevant when it is simple and instrumental,

Ron Jobe (quoted in Booth 2002, 30) states that teachers “prefer elegance of story structure, sophistication of character development, complexity of description, irony and references to other literature.” As a result, there is often a gap between what boys see as engaging reading and what teachers think they should be reading.

Teachers face a dilemma between validating boys’ popular tastes and valuing books of high quality. However, teachers need to be more than cheerleaders for the kinds of reading boys prefer. The answer is not simply to incorporate their existing preferences wholesale into school curriculum. Although there are ways to validate boys’ reading preferences both in and out of school, teachers should not only expose boys to works of literary merit but also give them the tools to access and appreciate these texts.

Educators and Researchers See a Need for a Curriculum That Specifically Addresses Boys’ Low Literacy Achievement. Should This Be Pursued?

I personally don’t think so, because there is a danger of over-correction, which places girls and boys in opposition to one another. To find a quick fix to boys’ low achievement scores, researchers and educators see a need to develop a curriculum that focuses on boys’ needs. The danger in this is introducing a gender-biased curriculum, replacing practices thought to favour girls with practices thought to favour boys, or a divided literacy curriculum, where boys are encouraged to specialize in what Rosenblatt (1978) terms *effluent reading* and girls in *aesthetic reading*. A gendered curriculum might address boys’ engagement and satisfaction with their school experience, but such a knee-jerk reaction can only produce a limited curriculum (see also Barrs 2000, 288). A divided curriculum would reinforce gender differences and produce more inequality than equality. It is much more strategic and advantageous to both boys and girls to increase their literacy repertoires by including each other’s strengths in a curriculum rather than separating them.

How Can Boys’ Competency Issues and Reading Interests Be Addressed Without Producing a Gender-Biased Curriculum?

Teachers must acknowledge and be knowledgeable about how boys and girls are different. Statements such as “boys learn this way” and “girls learn that way” should never be uttered in the classroom, even though

such notions inform teachers’ instructional practice. Being informed about gender differences but not voicing them allows a teacher to address these differences without reinforcing them. For example, a gender-divided curriculum that exclusively emphasizes fiction would prevent both boys and girls from becoming fully literate. Boys and girls who can read proficiently from various materials and formats will be better prepared for the reading tasks they will encounter later in their lives. If we view literacy as necessary life skills, both girls and boys must be able to read a full range of material effortlessly and aesthetically.

Worthy, Moorman and Turner (1999) use the term *situational interest* to define how a learning environment can capture students’ interest. This learning environment includes motivational instructional approaches and materials as well as teachers who show interest and enjoyment in the subject they teach (p. 15). Research projects and computer-driven learning can create situational interest for boys, and educators can capitalize on the kinds of reading boys find engaging by encouraging them to use these as aids to literacy. Research projects give teachers a twofold opportunity to support boys’ interests in expository and informational texts. The teacher or teacher-librarian can deliberately form groups of students to “develop competencies and place value on diversity. Creating boy–girl teams to investigate diverse perspectives, grouping by gender-neutral topics (such as different countries) to reinforce the notion that boys and girls can be interested in the same topic” (Abilock 1997, 2).

Booth (2002) suggests that technology is ideal for boys to become more familiar with literacy. However, there are two sides to this coin; though computers can be a positive learning tool, they can hinder boys’ literacy. Many boys are partial to solitary, fact-based activities and find the computer a comfortable learning tool. Computers allow boys to work on their own, yet computers hinder development in collaborative learning. Computers can also be an obstacle to boys’ literacy learning given all the inaccurate information posted on the Internet. Boys must be encouraged to not be passive consumers of information found on the Internet but to develop critical literacy instead by consulting multiple sources. Through technology, teachers have an opportunity to build on boys’ digital competencies in reading and writing (Booth 2002, 33–35).

Teachers can provide ways for boys to feel competent and engaged with their literacy learning and can influence students’ feelings toward reading. Students know when a teacher’s enthusiasm for literacy is real and when teachers treat reading merely as a

required subject. Fox (1993, 21) can't hide her love of books and reading when she asserts, "We need to be seen laughing over books, being unable to put books down, ... gasping over horror stories.... If children don't know we love to read, how will they realize what an absorbing rewarding activity reading is?"

Do You See a Role for Literary Texts for Boys? What Strategies Could Make Them More Appealing?

Literary texts can give boys and girls emotional and aesthetic experiences that are fundamental to their holistic development. Fiction, in particular, can give boys (and girls) a wider range of models of masculinity than they might otherwise experience in their daily lives. Jerry Spinelli's (1997) *Wringer*, for example, addresses the protagonist Palmer LaRue's confrontation with peer pressure and the rites of passage that his community associates with masculinity. Although this confrontation is the central theme of Spinelli's novel, other literary texts present alternatives to conventional masculinity. Glen Huser's *Stitches*, David Almond's *Skellig*, Sharon Creech's *Love That Dog*, Nicky Singer's *Feather Boy*, and Rodman Philbrick's *Freak the Mighty* are all compelling books that present readers with boy protagonists who present examples of counter-hegemonic forms of masculinity. The emotional activity of identifying with characters and their challenges and problems is healthy, especially for boys who are limited by peer pressure in their willingness or capacity to express or even understand their emotions. Barrs (2000, 2) writes

Reading that involves feeling, that invites the reader to "live through" an emotional experience, may be difficult for boys to relate to in the context of the classroom and the peer group. Social pressures often operate against boys communicating their feelings.

Barrs emphasizes how the emotional appeal of fiction and its capacity to represent different models of gender identity intervenes in children's existing gender assumptions:

We all take our view of gender identity and how it is marked partly from what we find in texts, including media-texts—many of which are strongly stereotyped.... But part of growing up is the discovery of more complex ways of being, including being female/male. Reading helps with these discoveries. (p. 4)

Literature circles can effectively help resistant boys open up to literature texts that they might not normally allow themselves to enjoy. Dutro (2001/02) found that

Grade 5 boys who had bullied each other over whether they read boys' or girls' books reduced this behaviour when they were put in literature circles whose books were chosen for them, so they could no longer blame each other for the choice of books. Dutro found that girls felt less peer pressure than boys about what books they read, but also that when students crossed gendered-reading boundaries and challenged the borders of acceptable reading for boys, anxiety lessened and the policing of gender boundaries eased. One element commonly associated with literature circles, journal writing, can also help boys respond positively to literature. Because of its private nature, journal writing allows boys to discuss their feelings safely. Barrs (2000) reports that journals develop boys' capacity for reflection and meditation. "Journals became a way into forms of talking and thinking that boys were socially inexperienced in, and sometimes reluctant to engage in, but which have an important role to play in becoming a critical and reflective reader" (p. 3).

Final Thoughts

We know that boys don't achieve as high as girls do in standardized literacy tests. This is not a new phenomenon. We also know that many factors influence this difference, including individual I.Q., parents' socioeconomic status and their educational background, and differential brain development patterns for language processing between boys and girls, but these factors are beyond the purview of the school. We know, too, that there are as many differences between boys' reading practices as there are commonalities, so we shouldn't overemphasize gender and forget to attend to individual reading interests. What matters is that we focus on factors within our reach; these factors are the ways boys' literacy is affected by their motivation to read, which can be enhanced when they have the opportunity to select texts they see as relevant and engaging. It is important to affirm the kinds of reading boys do outside of school and help them see its relevance to school. Boys' motivation to read can be inhibited by peer pressure, which sees reading as a feminine activity. This view can be counteracted by providing boys with positive male role models—male readers, authors and protagonists. It can also be counteracted by helping boys feel a growing confidence in their competency as readers in the language arts curriculum. Finally, literary texts can help boys expand their idea of masculinity by providing a wider definition of masculinity than they may be aware of.

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Teddy Moline

Teddy Moline has retired! She will be leaving Alberta Learning at the end of August and has been accepted into a doctorate program at the University of Alberta. We will miss her great liaison with Alberta Learning and our LRC, but we will be hearing much from her as she does her research and uses us as her statistics. I did ask her how retiring and doctorate could fit into the same sentence! Teddy can do it, if anyone can. We hope she continues to be a great part of our specialist council. Good luck, Teddy.

Reality Check! Integrating Information Literacy Skills Across the Curriculum

by Linda Shantz-Keresztes

Linda Shantz-Keresztes is curriculum liaison and teacher-librarian for the Performing and Visual Arts Program at Central Memorial High School in Calgary.

AS A SENIOR HIGH TEACHER-LIBRARIAN, PAST DISTRICT-LIBRARY consultant and Web-awareness trainer, I was excited to hear about the Media Awareness Network (MNet) classroom resource for evaluating online information.

I was one of twelve educators trained under the auspices of Alberta Learning in 2000 to deliver MNet's Web Awareness professional-development workshops: Safe Passage, Kids for Sale, and Fact or Folly. After three years of working with teachers, our training group identified a clear need for student resources to promote quality research practices and ethical use of online information. I was delighted to hear that MNet had produced a classroom resource for just that purpose.

Reality Check! Evaluating Online Information, applies the journalistic framework *who, what, when, where, why and how* to Internet content. The package, available on CD, consists of three components: a PowerPoint presentation for teachers who have access to a data projector and want to stimulate full-class discussion; an independent study unit (for individual student use); and a teachers' guide, containing discussion guides, handouts and assignment sheets. The first two components are interchangeable; teachers can use one or the other, or mix and match, covering some of the units as a class and assigning others to be done independently in the lab or from an Internet-connected home computer.

Using the already familiar 5Ws of Cyberspace¹ structure, *Reality Check!* covers a wide range of topics from optimizing online searches and investigating the originators of website content to examining bias and purpose in online information and applying ethical considerations to copyright and plagiarism. An introduction sets the stage for these learning modules, provides general background and encourages self-assessment of teens' online research practices.

This resource is timely; schools are becoming increasingly frustrated with time wasted on poor quality searches, questionable findings and plagiarism. I particularly liked *Reality Check!*'s handling of the plagiarism issue. It addresses two types of plagiarism: intentional and inadvertent. This issue is treated delicately and responsibly by allowing students to reflect on their own ethical frameworks for use of online information and by providing practical guidelines for referencing and citing online information sources. The *When* module, regarding timely versus accurate information, is currently part of the preplanning requirement for our student research unit. The *Who* and *What* modules teach Web content deconstruction skills, which are essential if students are to become more critical users of online information. The strategies for effective Internet searching, offered in the *How* module, are a blueprint for any school.

Teacher-librarians have always appreciated the MNet's advocacy for credible print and online library reference databases. In the *Why* module, students are challenged to pick a research topic and compare their library and Internet research experience. Often, one research source is not enough, and sometimes one or the other may be better, depending on the topic and type of research. The *Reality Check!* approach to these issues parallels the strategies we currently use in effective school library programs.

Reality Check!'s interactive independent student unit is designed for learning through critical inquiry and

response around key Internet literacy issues. Each module links students directly to websites that inspire reflection and examination. This, and examples, such as *Matrix Reloaded*, *Harry Potter* and reference to the 2003 additions to the periodic table, which are relevant to young people's radar, make the resource timely and engaging. Canadian content, including a survey of 6,000 students nationwide in 2001², also lends credibility and authenticity to the unit for students, who can identify with the information. Studies show that the majority of Canadian students turn to the Internet first for research (41 per cent), ahead of the school library (19 per cent) and the public library (16 per cent), and I believe that these figures accurately reflect the research habits of the student body.

Although there are advantages to presenting *Reality Check!* for class discussion, most students prefer to work through the modules electronically. Our English language arts curriculum leader suggests that all students complete the seven modules independently over a year. This would be credited as part of their ELA program and would infuse research and inquiry skills into other subject areas. Another approach would be to have modules used in different curriculum areas. Two modules could be required for English, two in social studies, and two or

three in a required information technologies or CALM option. Teacher-librarians and subject teachers on our staff agree that the *Reality Check!* content meets the information and communication outcomes that are imbedded in all Alberta's programs of study. They also agree that every high school student should be expected to complete all seven modules.

This is an outstanding resource for senior high schools, and it provides an excellent vehicle for infusing information literacy and technology skills, as they apply to Internet information, across the curriculum. The valued outcome of students completing *Reality Check!* will be lifelong learners who are better equipped to engage effectively and ethically with online information.

To preview or order *Reality Check!*, visit www.realitycheckforstudents.ca, write licensing@media-awareness.ca or call the Media Awareness Network at 1-800-896-3342.

Notes

1. A student handout on the MNet website.
2. Young Canadians in a Wired World, Media Awareness Network, 2001.

Are the Information-Literacy Needs of Learners Addressed in K–12 Education?

by Dianne Loveland

Dianne Loveland is an online teacher-librarian and online art teacher with CBe-learn, Innovative Learning Services, Calgary Board of Education. Her current work involves online course development, research and learner support, distributed learning information literacy programming and digital learning resources development. She has worked in Ontario and Alberta in school and postsecondary libraries, art education and public relations and marketing since 1975, for public, private and nonprofit sectors.

THE INFORMATION EXPLOSION AND RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF electronic and wireless technologies presents new challenges for learners. Information literacy encompasses a set of knowledge skills and processes, including critical thinking, questioning and inquiry. Skilled users of information understand “the process of retrieving, questioning, interpreting, evaluating, utilizing and assuming responsibility for the use of information in a world of multiple literacies (Langford 1998). Information-literacy education has always been a vital component in formal education settings (K–12 and higher), and recent research in the integration of information-literacy and school library programs provides evidence of enhanced student-achievement scores (Lance, Rodney and Hamilton-Pennell 2000; Haycock 2003; McNew and Lankford 2001).

At Connect! 2004, a joint conference with the Computer, English Language Arts and Learning Resources Councils, various presentations focused on teaching and learning best practices around technology-enhanced learning, learning-resources management,

digital- and web-based resources, learning objects, repositories, communities of practice, types of literacy, communication, curriculum framework, and teaching and learning strategies. I had the pleasure of giving two presentations. The first session provided background about current realities, issues and challenges of providing information-literacy programs in schools with recent cutbacks to school library support. Through the investigation of the literature and research, through current information-literacy frameworks in Alberta and based on the new Canadian national standards for information-literacy education and school libraries programs, this session presented online information-literacy modules, lessons and activities that I developed for junior high and high school learners in WebCT, which is an online learning-management system. Teacher-librarians and teachers can use and apply these lessons and activities across the curriculum for face-to-face instruction, online or distributed learning. The modules are based on pedagogical practice and the Canadian national and international information-literacy standards and literacy outcomes as outlined in the Canadian School Library Association’s and the Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada’s framework.

The second session, copresented with my colleague Marsha Hales, focused on building online libraries and repositories (highlighting the Calgary Board of Education library and Learn Alberta Online Repository), and how they can be used by following key information-literacy education models regionally, nationally and internationally.

The information and digital age presents many challenges. How do we prepare learners to become information-literate citizens, engage them in critical inquiry, creative thinking and self-assessment and construct personal meaning? How do we foster information-literate learning communities of practice? In response to these questions and issues around

information-literacy education in schools, Innovative Learning Services, Professional Development Division, will offer an electronic professional-development course beginning in the fall 2004. This online course is customized for elementary, junior high and senior high teacher-librarians, teachers and administrators. It has been developed in response to current Canadian standards from Canadian School Library Association and the Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada (Asselin, Branch and Oberg 2003) and the revised framework for the integration of information-literacy and inquiry-based learning (Alberta Learning 2004). This course recognizes the implications of technology and provides a framework and support for implementing information-literacy and inquiry-based learning activities in the classroom. The major project requires educators to build a learning strategy and an activity to implement within their unique educational context. A facilitator will guide and evaluate course work over a seven-week period, and a guest speaker in Canadian information literacy and inquiry-based education development will talk with course participants.

Upon completion of the course, teachers will receive a student information-literacy and inquiry module that resides in the WebCT environment. Teachers may customize this module and further develop information-literacy and inquiry-learning strategies and activities to meet their needs. To register or for more details, please visit www.cbelearn.ca/pd or e-mail djloveland@cbe.ab.ca.

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Inquiry as the Key to Great Teaching

by Jennifer Branch

Jennifer Branch, University of Alberta representative on the Learning Resources Council, gave the following keynote speech at Connect! 2004 in Banff, Alberta, April 16, 2004.

I FEEL AT HOME WITH THIS GROUP OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS teachers, computer teachers and teacher-librarians. I envy you a little bit for being able to get it right. I envy your access to the Online Reference Centre from LearnAlberta.ca. I envy your access to the Internet. I envy your access to library collections across the province through the NEOS library system. I envy your access to software such as Inspiration, PowerPoint and HyperStudio.

When I taught junior high, I used projects to integrate social studies, health and language arts, but I was missing some key things. I like to think I was a good teacher, but reading research, thinking about practice and talking to lots of people have helped me realize what it takes to be a great teacher. I have been thinking and worrying about this talk for months. Last week I received an article from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (<http://chronicle.com/>). It provided support for what I already knew and gave me a scaffold for this talk. There is new research from Northwestern University on what makes a great teacher. Admit it, we all want to be remembered as great teachers. We want the Oprah moment, when our students will talk about how we changed their lives. At least I do.

This Is How We Can Do It!

Create a natural, critical environment—natural because what matters most to students is tackling questions and tasks that they naturally find of interest, making decisions, defending their choices, sometimes

coming up short, receiving feedback from others on their efforts and trying again.

Grade 1: Does the world need flying insects? What does it mean to be part of a community?

Grade 5: Why is it important to take care of our environment, and what impact can environmental changes have on weather? Is it important for Canada to have good relations with other countries in the world?

Grade 9: Why is it important for me to make healthy and safe decisions about my sexuality? What technologies are being developed now that will impact future space exploration, and will it mean that I might get to go into space?

Grade 12: Right from the curriculum—to what extent should political decision making be restricted to a particular group in society? How are statistics used to present information about Canadian society and how can they be misused?

Create a critical environment, because by thinking critically, students learn to reason from evidence and to examine the quality of their reasoning, to make improvements while thinking, and to ask probing and insightful questions.

Five Essential Elements

First, an intriguing question or problem makes a good learning environment. In later grades, the most successful of these questions are highly provocative; for example, What if you came home from your first year of university to find your father dead, your mother married to your uncle and the ghost of your father saying that he had been murdered? Why did some societies get in boats and go bother other people, while others stayed at home and tended to their own affairs? Was the decision to stay out of the war in Iraq the right one for Canada?

Second, students need guidance to understand the significance of the question. This is true when the question is provocative but generated by another. The challenge in our classrooms tends to be on helping students find a focused question that is challenging and

provocative and engaging. For some students, this isn't a problem; for others, this can take time and energy. Many teachers never raise questions; they simply give answers. Northwestern's study found that the best teachers take an interdisciplinary approach. The teachers in this room are the perfect people to be leading the charge for great teaching and great learning. Who better to champion this than language arts teachers, technology teachers and teacher-librarians? Good teachers remind students how current questions relate to some larger issue that already interests them.

Jamie McKenzie's essential questions are perfect here. They touch our heart and souls and define what it means to be human. Life, death, marriage, identity, purpose, betrayal, honour, integrity, courage, temptation, faith, leadership, addiction, invention, inspiration. Let's be honest. This is why reality television is so popular: *Temptation Island, The Bachelor, Canadian Idol, The Associate, Fear Factor, Trading Spaces, A Wedding Story, A Baby Story*. (You can tell that I am a professor because occasionally I am home midday to watch the last ones.)

Third, a natural, critical learning environment engages students in higher-order intellectual activity and inspires them to compare, apply, evaluate, analyze and synthesize. It is not about simply listening and remembering.

Fourth, this environment challenges students to answer the questions themselves, to develop their own ideas and explanations and defend them based on research.

Finally, a good learning environment leaves students wondering, "What's the next question?" "What can we ask now?" A good learning environment is always about wondering.

The Chronicle of Higher Education article was so exciting for me because it confirms that great teaching and inquiry go hand in hand. *Inquiry* is the word I like to use for this teaching method though *research* is the word I used as a teacher-librarian. Sometimes, though, research in schools gets confused with "go to the library and find something out" or "go on the Internet and find something out." I have heard teachers tell me they do research with their class, and certainly, I thought I was doing research when my students explored archaeology and archaeologists or did a report on explorers.

It is very important that students get the opportunities in schools to complete inquiries based on their own questions and on provocative questions that come from the inquirer.

The teacher cannot assign the question, although the question can certainly come from curricular areas. For example, while studying China, students can be

encouraged to ask questions that will be recorded for inquiry later in the unit. Questions in the social studies curriculum lend themselves to inquiry, and that is certainly also true in health, science and problem solving in mathematics. CTS is another area where inquiry makes sense. Students can develop questions about manufactured wood products that they can answer later. Students can develop a small business plan that requires many questions and decisions. CALM requires students to inquire into different areas of their personal life and career plans.

Alberta's Curriculum Is Built on Inquiry

The curricula that I have looked at use the language of inquiry or, at least, a language that sounds a lot like inquiry to me. Science, the new social studies curriculum, General Outcome 3 in the language arts curriculum, specific modules in CTS, mathematics, health, the information and communication technology outcomes. They are all about inquiry. So why aren't teachers teaching using the inquiry method? Here are some of the reasons I have heard:

1. "I have to prepare the students for provincial achievement tests or departmental exams." My sources at Alberta Learning tell me that process learning is 60 per cent of these tests, and there isn't a better way than inquiry to engage kids in their learning and also teach the process. My sources tell me that kids won't remember you for preparing them for tests but will remember you for opening their eyes to inquiry, engaging them in discussions about the process of inquiry and helping them to be critical thinkers. I will never forget my Grade 7 inquiry on pioneers. I interviewed my next-door neighbour, Mrs. Rivett, who came to Canada and went to Porcupine in Northern Ontario. She told me all about her early life there: her beds and her family interactions with Native peoples. My favourite story involved waking up and finding one candy stick for each child hanging from a tree near her cabin. It came from the Native traders, but she never saw them. And guess what? Research tells us that kids who learn the skills and strategies associated with inquiry do better on achievement tests.
2. "I don't have the resources." Certainly many of you won't have the benefit of a well-stocked, well-funded, well-staffed school library with a trained teacher-librarian. And in this province, that is something about which we should be ashamed. I could go on for hours about this national tragedy. I will give you

some figures: 550 teacher-librarians then; 72 now. However, you do have access to a wonderful collection of resources through the Online Reference Centre. You can access materials through the public library system, and you can help your students be critical users of the Internet to locate quality information. You can also encourage students to talk to experts electronically. You may also be lucky enough to have a trained teacher-librarian in your school to work with on developing inquiry units with your students. Go ask them for help.

3. "I won't be rewarded for it." You may not be rewarded in this life, but I hope in the next one. Certainly, you will be rewarded by the passion your students will demonstrate while they are involved in their inquiries. I like to think that your students' test scores will also be a reward. When I finally did get it right with a group of Grade 9 students while doing research, it was a joyful experience. And guess what? Those kids went on to high school, demanding to do inquiries in other subjects.
4. "It is loud, messy, hard and frustrating." My mother always told me that the rewards would be great if I worked hard. Everything worth doing involves risk. Inquiry-based learning is all about risk. It is a different way of teaching. It isn't something that most of us were taught how to do when we were in our B.Ed. programs, and it certainly isn't something we often see modelled by other teachers. It requires teachers to rethink their roles, and those roles may

be new ones. Some research on inquiry in a science classroom indicates that these are just some of the roles: motivator, diagnostician, guide, innovator, experimenter, researcher, modeller, mentor, collaborator, learner.

5. "I don't know how to assess it." We spend a lot of time assessing the product, and we learn little about how to assess the process. However, we can use rubrics, journalling, checklists and conferencing. It is imperative that students submit rough drafts and collected resources to see their progress. Certainly, at the university level, we see faculty members ask students for all the rough notes, articles and so on to be submitted along with the final essay to discourage plagiarism.
6. "It will take too much time." It will take time, but it is part of the curriculum, and by doing inquiry-based learning activities, you are actually fulfilling the requirements set out by Alberta Learning, General Outcome 3 in language arts, the Information and Communication Technology outcomes, the inquiry outcomes in the other subject areas. They aren't just about knowledge; there are also skill and attitude objectives in the curricula.

If you are keen to try it out, take a look at *Focus on Inquiry*. This document highlights the whys and hows of inquiry and is available in draft form online.

Please feel free to get in touch if you have any other questions. Thank you, and I hope that you go back to your schools and work toward your Oprah moment!

Anne Letain

LRC member Anne Letain has accepted a primary teacher-librarian position at the Inter-Community School in Zurich, Switzerland. It is the largest and oldest international school in that country and offers a complete IB program for 700 students, from nursery to Grade 12. There is also a teacher-librarian in the secondary school.

Children's Audiobooks: The Choice of the Voice

by Sharon Thompson

Sharon Thompson holds a B.Ed. from Brandon University, Brandon, Manitoba. She taught Grades 5 and 6 for three years in Red Sucker Lake, a fly-in reserve in northern Manitoba, and Grade 1 at an American school in Kuwait for three years. In 2004 she received her M.L.I.S. from the University of Alberta and will be working as a full-time teacher-librarian on the boys' campus of the American Creativity Academy in Kuwait.

IN PRIMARY CLASSROOMS, LISTENING TO AUDIOBOOKS IS A common occurrence. Many classrooms are equipped with listening centres: tape recorders connected to a jack box with multiple sets of headphones. Students listen to stories while following along in the text. Often the audiotapes have a bell or other signal that tells the youngsters when to turn the page. Listening to stories at a listening centre may be one of many educational experiences available for children in their classrooms. Although audiobooks are not used in upper grades as frequently as in primary grades, they are equally as useful in middle school or even high school. In my own teaching, I occasionally used the book and tape sets designed for listening centres as a substitute for storytelling when I lost my voice, a malady that happened far too frequently.

While listening centres generally provide children with an alternative avenue through which to experience picture books, audiotaped versions of chapter books are sold with or without an accompanying print version of the story. Audio picture books are 10 to 20 minutes long, but audio chapter books can be quite lengthy:

Robert C. O'Brien's unabridged *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimh* is 7.25 hours long. These productions are presumably intended for personal, rather than classroom, use. A well-crafted production will be captivating from start to finish, regardless of length.

Listening to an audiobook can be an engrossing and entertaining literacy activity. Audiobooks can also provide an alternative means of accessing literature for those who find reading difficult or dislike it. Many factors contribute to the appeal of this format of literature, but voice, above all others, is the most noticeable. The reader and the vocal qualities he or she exhibits are paramount. Regardless of the person chosen to read the book, other aural factors contribute to an effective production.

Who Should Read?

Choosing the best person to perform a text is critical. The performer could be an actor, a cast of actors, the author or even nonprofessional readers. Many factors influence the decision as to which voice is most appropriate.

Actors

Actors are quite often chosen to read audiobooks. They are trained in the technical aspects of performance and are well practised in the delivery of narration. "The best narrations are often those done by professional actors and actresses, who are trained to interpret characters and deliver clear, well-enunciated readings" (Casbergue and Harris 1997, 53). A well-voiced production renders the listening experience that much better. Glenn Close's reading of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor and the Nightingale* and William Hurt's rendition of Chris Van Allsburg's *The Polar Express* exemplify the intonation and expression necessary for an engrossing audiobook experience. This is not to imply that any actor is appropriate for the telling of any book. Cooper (July 6, 1993, 15)

comments on the suitability of John Lithgow as the narrator of Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities*, while Zoglin (1994) laments the selection of Lithgow for Michael Crichton's *Disclosure*. Personal preferences aside, certain voices suit certain texts.

Voicing audiobooks with actors provides publishers with an added benefit, above and beyond their high quality performances: marketability. Well-known actors can attract listeners to audiobooks by virtue of their names. "Read by Brad Pitt" may attract certain listeners to Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses* in ways that the author's reputation and the cover of the book or cassette might never achieve. As Cox (1996, 23) rather cynically puts it, "the tape is sometimes marketed on the back of a 'personality.'"

Authors

Authors are also popular choices for the voicing of audiobooks. While some lack the polish of trained actors, others bring a palpable level of devotion to the characters and the story in their performances. When an author sets a story in a geographical region where the inhabitants have distinctive drawls, brogues or cadences, the audiocassette production may benefit from having the author replicate the voices as he or she imagined them. Zoglin (1994) lauds the match of *Forest Gump* author Winston Groom's appropriately husky southern drawl with his text.

Robert Munsch, storyteller extraordinaire, reads his books with unequalled exuberance and expertise. Ted Hughes authoritatively reads *The Iron Man* in an unhurried fashion. The rise and fall of his voice perfectly conveys the mood of the story. In these cases it is hard to imagine a more appropriate voice than the author's own. Other children's authors are not as successful in their attempts. Paulette Bourgeois's reading of her Franklin books is reminiscent of an enthusiastic, well-prepared teacher or parent, but not a polished raconteur. In reading *Superfudge* or *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great*, Judy Blume does not do justice to her characters. Despite Blume's enunciation and expression, her voice has a distracting quality to it: soft *r*'s or perhaps a slight lisp. It is hard to identify just what is so grating about the author's performance.

Nonetheless, listening to an audiobook voiced by the author can "provide a rare glimpse into the authors' intention when the book was written" (Casbergue and Harris 1997, 53-54).

Full Casts

A cast of voices may be enlisted to perform audiobooks. Often the author serves as the narrator of these productions. Audiobook publisher Full Cast Audio

encourages authors to narrate their productions, an opportunity most accept and enjoy (Maughan 2002). Philip Pullman expertly narrates his *The Golden Compass*. In this production the cast of chosen voices are stunningly well matched to the characters, especially the actress who provides the distinctive voice of young protagonist Lyra Belacqua. I listened to the first section of the novel on audiobook and then read the two subsequent sections. As I read, the voices of the characters were those of the actors, an experience that thoroughly enriched my reading experience, owing to the exceptional quality of the production. Presumably, Pullman's involvement in the production ensured that the unique character names (for example, Pantalaimon), place names (for example, Bolvangar), and objects (for example, alethiometer) were pronounced correctly.

While unaccompanied actors or authors voicing an audiobook must rely on their own expertise to provide the vocalizations of different characters, a full cast production has the capacity to select a wide range of voices to represent the characters. In Elizabeth Winthrop's (1986) *The Castle in the Attic*, Bill Molesky, the voice of tiny knight Sir Simon, has an aptly regal and knightly voice. Unfortunately, Cynthia Bishop, who plays the English housekeeper Mrs. Phillips, has no British accent. The fact that Mrs. Phillips is British is key to the plot, so the lack of an accent is a glaring fault.

Nonprofessional Readers

Though not common, nonprofessional readers occasionally are enlisted to provide the voices for audiobooks, often as a promotional gimmick. Frontier College recruited members of the Toronto Maple Leafs to read Roy MacGregor's hockey story *The Screech Owls' Northern Adventure* as a fundraiser for literacy training. In this case, the audiobook serves as a novelty, rather than an engrossing literary experience. The players read with varying degrees of skill, but each sounds like a dad reading a story to his child. Awkward pauses, stumbles and poor enunciation (for example, *onta* for on to, *bringin'* for bringing) are common. The abridgement of the book takes the form of occasional summaries by a sports radio personality, who sounds as if he is recapping a hockey game.

Vocal Qualities

The choice of the profession of the people voicing an audiobook is important, but the vocal qualities that each person brings are equally vital. Casbergue and Harris (1997, 53) note the importance of the reader's voice and tone matching the text. On an episode of the *Vicki Gabereau Show*, actor David Ogden Stiers

described his experiences narrating children's video productions. He noted that, for an upcoming production of *Winnie the Pooh*, his vocal quality will be much more active than the deep, solemn voice he employed for *Beauty and the Beast*. When listening to audiobooks, we do not just hear the words; we hear rhyme, tone and tension ("Golden Voices" 2003).

Accents

Distinct accents are used for different reasons. Accents can differentiate or convey separate characters. They can ground the production in a particular regional or historical context. As well, accents may be required to replicate the original text.

In a book with many characters, it may not be feasible or necessary for each to have its own unique voicing, but when the main characters have distinctive intonation, the listening experience is more interesting and comprehensible. Frequent audiobook narrator Laurie Klein asserts, "Characters who interact often need to be easily distinguished and interesting. Perhaps the most challenging task is to play numerous characters of the same sex and age conversing" (Hoffman 1991, 42). Reading Beverly Cleary's *Beezus and Ramona*, Stockard Channing gives each title character her own distinct yet childlike voice and presents a prim sounding grandmother. Interestingly, the mother's voice is the same as the narrator: Channing's own deep bass voice.

A performer's accent, whether regional or national, natural or affected, is often one of the first vocal qualities that listeners notice. As mentioned earlier, a role that demands a particular accent is weakened when none is offered. Publisher Books on Tape even goes so far as to require that works by British novelists be voiced by Britons (Hoffman 1991, 42). Actors who are skilled in replicating accents add extra depth to the audiobook experience. Actor Patrick Stewart's range of voices not only differentiates characters in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* but also conveys the social class of each (Ames 1991). In *Bonfires of the Vanities*, John Lithgow adeptly switches from Hispanic, Irish and southern U.S. accents (Cooper 1993, 15). Though Glenn Close does a beautiful job of performing Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor and the Nightingale*, perhaps a Chinese actor would add an extra dimension to this tale set in China. Although Judy Blume's *Then Again, Maybe I Won't* is set in New Jersey, the reader, Blain Fairman, does not have the distinctive accent of this area.

Historical fiction is a burgeoning area of children's literature, and audiobooks are increasingly being produced in this genre. These productions can make historical events more meaningful and can provide children with an alternative avenue for exploring bygone

eras. Well-made audiobooks in this genre can "provide models of correct pronunciation of names and places and the representation of how language was spoken in different areas and other eras" (Harris and Austin 2000, 23). It is a disservice to the reader when stories set in the past, and audiobook productions based on them, attempt to modernize the characters' speech. Such productions convey to young readers and listeners "that children of different times and different countries all talk to each other in exactly the same way" (Mackey 1996, 11).

Some authors attempt to write dialogue in such a way as to replicate the dialects of certain regions. This is presumably an attempt to convey the nuances of the characters' speech to the reader. A skilled audiobook reader can turn the odd looking phonetic representations into "recognizable speech" (Cooper 1993, 15) which listeners can enjoy.

Gender

Representing the gender of different characters on audiobooks can be challenging. In a full cast production, this is not a problem, but in projects voiced by a single reader, the sex of the performer can be significant. Just as different accents may need to be assumed, projecting different genders will differentiate characters. Barbara Caruso's almost imperceptible British accent barely registers in her telling of Robert C. O'Brien's *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimh*. The voices she conjures for the female characters are fitting, and she delivers suitably masculine tones for the male characters. In fact, the main character, Timothy, is a sickly mouse. Caruso's wispy voice for this character would perhaps be better read by a female reader. It may make sense to match the gender of the main character with that of the reader, but the choice of reader must still be appropriate. The protagonist of Blume's *Then Again, Maybe I Won't* is young Tony Miglione. In providing Tony's words, Blain Fairman makes no attempt to mask his clearly adult voice. While he deepens his voice for Tony's dad and attempts a slightly feminine voice for the female characters, it is puzzling that Fairman does not endeavour to replicate a young boy's voice.

Other Aspects of Voice

Many words come to mind when describing the best audiobooks: passion, expression, intonation and inflection. Tim Behrens of Books in Motion Publishing suggests a number of qualities that audiotape performers must exhibit: "pitch, tempo, cadence, rhythmic variety, tonal quality, modulation, range, accent, emphasis, interpretation, sensitivity, timing, use of pauses, sweetness of sound, energy, enthusiasm, and

most importantly, effective understanding and transmission of the story” (Hoffman 1991, 40). A tall order, especially considering that audiobook readers may record their performances for as much as eight hours a day for days at a time (Tolkoff 2003). Some readers highlight the text with different colours to denote different characters (Hoffman 1991, 41). Writer and would-be audiobook narrator Sharon Glassman (2003, 31) described the process of auditioning for a chance to work in the field. She noticed that other candidates had their scripts marked to remind them where to place emphasis and emotion. Some readers even go to extraordinary lengths to make their presentations accurate. Professional audiobook reader Sandra Burr telephoned a particular author to listen to her voice and the pronunciation of certain words (Hoffman 1991, 41).

An all but untapped source of reading talent is musicians. Their natural predisposition to using rhythm, cadence, intonation and other aspects of voice can be well suited to audiobook performance. Rhythm-and-blues great Ray Charles’s playful enthusiasm is well suited to the jazzy style of *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault. The lines, “Skit skat skoodle doot, Flip flop flee,” would hardly seem out of place in a smoky jazz club.

While not an element of voice per se, the inclusion of music and sound effects can make a discernible contribution to the overall auditory experience. In Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Emperor and the Nightingale*, the music of Mark Isham is so integral to the mood and atmosphere of the production that it might be considered one of the storytellers. There are pauses in the narration when the listener can simply experience the music. The music in the background of Van Allsburg’s *The Polar Express* has a magical quality that matches a young child’s trip to the North Pole with Santa.

The Polar Express and Bourgeois’s *Franklin’s School Play* both contain sound effects (for example, bells, train sounds, cheers, the crack of a whip, classroom sounds, a door opening) that add to the listening experience, but for young listeners (not to mention the not-so-young) they also help convey additional meaning.

Picture book page-turn signals are an important cue for young listeners who enjoy book and tape sets. Often, the stories are short enough that one side of the cassette has signals and the other does not. The listening experience can be altered by the inclusion of these signals. This is evident when listening to Martin’s and Archambault’s *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. The story is read first without signals, then retold with a single drumbeat as the indicator. The inclusion of this simple sound disrupts the flow of the story.

Bringing It Together

Outstanding audiobooks vary widely, but certain factors contribute to every quality production. Whether the reader has a well-known voice or is anonymous to the listener, a good dramatization draws the audience into the story. The voice of the narrator disappears, and the listener only hears the story, as told by the characters and the narrator. This level of absorption is what makes listening to audiobooks excellent diversions for mindless tasks like driving long distances or sitting on an airplane. The reader should be invisible. According to Jim Dale, narrator of Random House’s unabridged *Harry Potter* audiobooks, “If you know something’s going to be around for a long time and millions of people are going to listen to it, you want it to be your best” (Maughan 2003, 29). One would hope that all narrators are as dedicated and professional as Jim Dale.

The reader, director and editor must ensure that no extraneous noises detract from the story. “Distractions must be avoided. ... the slightest noise (rustling papers, breathing) is distracting. So are mispronunciations” (Tolkoff 2003). Stumbling over words, adding ums and aws, and awkward pauses are not acceptable. The production must be seamless.

Troublesome Issues

When we read stories, we create visual and aural pictures of the characters. Movies based on books are often criticized for usurping the reader’s vision and interpretation and presenting one single version of the story. The same can be said for listening to audiobooks. The listener is a passive participant: “Hearing a book in the voice of another amounts to a silencing of that self—it is an act of vocal tyranny. With an audiobook, everything ... is determined for the listener. The collaborative component is gone; one simply receives” (Birkerts 1993, 111). Cox refers to this as the “intervention of the external voice” (1996, 32). The intense pleasure I experienced hearing the cast of Pullman’s *The Golden Compass* in my head as I read would have been highly objectionable if the production had been poor.

Much has been written about abridged and unabridged versions of texts. When paring down a story to a manageable length, elements of plot, character development and dialogue can be lost. Again, the parallel of turning a book into a movie is obvious. Sometimes abridgements cut so much out of the author’s original text that “the voice of the author... has been obliterated” (Cox 1996, 26). No matter how skilled readers are, they can only work with what is given. If the flow of the story is interrupted by a poor abridgement, the overall effect will be negative. Brad Pitt’s voice was well suited

to the telling of Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses* (with the notable exception of his poor pronunciation of Mexican place names), but the abridged audiobook version left me confused about some pivotal plot details.

No matter who the readers are, readers and producers must be wary of one particular danger: overacting. An unnaturally enthusiastic telling with exaggerated character voices can grate on the nerves of listeners and may even drive them to turn the tape off. While "a good reader... brings a dimension of performance to a novel that you can't get when you read it yourself" (Cooper 1993, 15), a poor performance is not worth your time. On long trips I often bring a few audiobooks to choose from to suit my mood in case one of my selections doesn't measure up.

Conclusion

Audiobooks are often selected based on the listener's knowledge of the original book or author. While these are important selection criteria, listeners would be well advised to consider the voice they will be listening to for the duration of the production. As listeners listen to more and more audiobooks, they will develop a familiarity with the readers who lend their talents to these productions. Just as many people have favourite authors, listeners may develop preferences for certain voices. They will become attuned to the appropriateness of certain voices for particular texts.

Audiobooks have a long history of use in primary classrooms. Middle and high school students can also benefit from the introduction of this media format into their classrooms. However, care must be taken to ensure that the audiobooks selected are quality productions with appropriate and captivating readers that bring the stories alive for the listeners. The choice of the voice can make all the difference.

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Professionally Speaking

2004 AGM Minutes

April 16, 2004, Banff, Alberta

by Pat Ropchan

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 4:06 P.M.
Jennifer Branch moved to accept the agenda.
Seconded by Donna Grove.

Linda Shantz-Keresztes gave opening remarks. Forty-nine LRC members are delegates at this conference.

Linda Shantz-Keresztes introduced the 2003/04 executive.

Pat Ropchan presented the 2003 AGM minutes. Jennifer Branch moved to adopt the minutes as presented. Seconded by Val Hartney

Reports

Treasurer Donna Grove reported on the balance sheet as of April 7. Donna moved that the proposed budget be accepted. Seconded by April Tilson. Motion carried.

President Linda Shantz-Keresztes presented the annual report. (See "Past President's Message" in this issue.)

Past President Lois Barranoik read a portion of the letter from Lois Hole.

PEC liaison Greg Jeffery provided information about the discrepancies in awards to jurisdictions (from 1.8 per cent to 20 per cent) because of the funding formula. These awards will not be reflected in the number of teachers being hired. Media coverage about the unfunded liability is misleading. Discussions have been going on, but there have been no negotiations. LRC executive responded to the questionnaire about the new timeline for diploma exams and provided a different and important perspective.

Staff advisor Lyle Krause gave an update on school boards and the collective bargaining process.

Publications editor Dianne Dunse reported that June 1 is the new submissions deadline because we are publishing in October. Publishing in April is too late to

be effective or meaningful to members. Dianne asked for submissions from the membership.

Alberta Learning representative Teddy Moline gave an update on *Focus on Inquiry* and the novel listings for Grades 4–12.

University liaison Jennifer Branch reported that SLIC is online as of early April. The CLA conference is in June in Victoria. The Canadian School Library Association (CSLA) and Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada (ATLC) will be united after 16 years of being two separate organizations (to be stronger together and have one united strong voice).

LAA representative Anne Carr-Wiggin was absent.

Webmaster April Tilson requested that information be sent to her for posting.

Conferences

ALC Conference 2003, Linda Shantz-Keresztes: Collaboration is valuable as a form of professional development. Irene Masciuch will be LRC cochair for conference 2005.



l-r: Lois Barranoik, past president; Linda Shantz-Keresztes, president; Rhonda Hunter, incoming president at the AGM.

Connect! 2004, President-Elect Rhonda Hunter: After a shaky start, the preparation process has been wonderful. Jennifer Branch's keynote speech will be posted on the website. Rhonda Hunter thanked April Tilson for the website and Pat Ropchan and Barb Galeski for looking after registrations.

Kaleidoscope 8, Jane Magee: Cathy Yusep projected a DVD presentation promoting K8. Website: www.kaleidoscopeconference.ca. The presentation will be available for viewing at the registration/information area. Many authors are on the new novels list.

ALC Conference 2005: Irene Masciuch has nothing to report. The committee begins work in June.

Regional Reports

Southeastern, Jane Bahnmilller

Calgary, Irene Masciuch

Central Alberta, Pat Churchill

Greater Edmonton, Cheryl Querengesser

Peace River, Sherry Nasedkin

Fort McMurray, Christine Baxter

Jane Bahnmilller moved that regional reports be accepted as distributed. Seconded by Irene Masciuch.

Election of Officers

Lois Barranoik reported that we have a full slate for 2004/05.

Past President: Linda Skantz-Keresztes

President: Rhonda Hunter

President-Elect: Irene Masciuch

Treasurer: Donna Grove

Secretary: Pat Ropchan

Publications Editor: Dianne Dunse

Webmaster: April Tilson

Awards

Lois Barranoik reported that Lynda Lyster will receive the Award of Merit at the June banquet in Calgary.

New Business

No new business was reported.

Cheryl Querengesser moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:10 p.m.



Connect! 2004

Live in Fragments No Longer

by Rhonda Hunter

CONNECT! 2004, A JOINT CONFERENCE WITH ATACC, ELAC and LRC, was a great success in Banff this past April.

The theme and goal of our 2004 conference was to allow teachers to connect with colleagues inside and outside their specific discipline to connect the prose and the passion, the technology and the pedagogical practice, the resources and the opportunities to share. Our focus was to offer workshops, sessions and opportunities for cross-discipline connections, cross-divisional connections and cross-province connections. It is through the connections we make with others that we rise above the fragmentary and overwhelming nature of teaching practices with its changes in technology and communication.

—Peter Weeks,
Connect! 2004 conference coconvenor

This conference provided a forum to make those connections.



Keynote speaker Barry Duncan

Keynote speakers Barry Duncan and Jennifer Branch were very well received. Barry Duncan, an award-winning teacher, author, consultant and founder of the Ontario-based Association for Media Literacy and coauthor of the best-selling

textbook *Mass Media and Popular Culture*, discussed media and media education. Jennifer Branch, coordinator of the Teacher–Librarianship by Distance Learning Program and an expert on information-seeking processes, information-literacy education, and electronic reference sources, launched the revised *Focus on Inquiry* document. This document, an excellent vehicle to make connections among disciplines, can be retrieved at www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/resources/focusinquiry/pdfs/FOI_Draft.pdf.

The majority of presenters incorporated library, English and technology into their sessions. Of the more than 60 workshops and sessions, several presenters were from the LRC executive, including Dianne Dunse (“Connect with the Native Culture” and “Picture Books Are Everybody Books”) Cheryl Querengesser (“The Best of the Best”) Linda Shantz-Keresztes and Glenn Armstrong (“Collaborative Leadership Model”) Donna Grove and



Teacher-librarians from Elk Island Public Schools: Rhonda Alberts, Jean Wishloff and Jill Usher.

Ewa Sniatykc (“Learning to See the World Through New Eyes”) and Irene Masciuch and Jaquie Vincent (“Wired for Words”). Each concurrent session had 12 to 15 choices for delegates to choose from. In fact, one of the complaints was that there were too many choices!

Kathy Wajda and Michelle Speight presented a session on how inquiry-based learning and virtual reality can be incorporated into telecollaborative projects. Kathy is a teacher-librarian with the Calgary Board of Education and a member of the Learning Resources Council. Michelle is an innovative-learning specialist with the Calgary Board of Education.

Some questions addressed included: How do networked technologies connect children both in and out of the classroom? How can virtual-reality technology be used to explore essential questions as we inquire, learn and share with others? Examples of past and ongoing projects were shared and a quick demonstration of the ease of use of virtual reality software was demonstrated.

Two members from “Three Dead Trolls in a Baggie” entertained us, using improv to embarrass various members of the audience. This was followed by a sumptuous reception where Marv Machura, guitar in hand, sang his own compositions. Both the reception and entertainment were compliments of Polycom’s generous donation.

ATACC connected with other sponsors as well, including Apple Canada Maplewood and Prism. Banff High School supplied their Mac and PC labs.

The committee members from all three councils used their individual capabilities to help make this a great conference. I enjoyed working with Peter Weeks (ELAC) and David Teasdale (ATAAC) and all the committee members. It was a truly wonderful experience and opportunity to connect with other councils. More information concerning the conference can be found on the LRC website: www.learningresources.ab.ca/connect2004.htm.

Conference cochairs (l-r) David Teasdale, Rhonda Hunter and Peter Weeks.



*LRC 2003/04 executive: back row: Cheryl Querengesser, Pat Ropchan, Rhonda Hunter, Linda Shantz-Keresztes and Lois Barranoik
Front row: Dianne Dunse and April Tilson*

Canadian Association for School Libraries

by Jennifer Branch

REALIZING THE DREAM OF BEING STRONGER TOGETHER HAS been a commitment by both the Canadian School Library Association (CSLA) and the Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada (ATLC) this year. Executives of both associations have now completed the necessary actions for the creation of the Canadian Association for School Libraries (CASL). The CSLA annual general meeting took place on June 18 in Victoria at the annual Canadian Library Association Conference.

Interim Executive

Copresidents

Marlene Asselin and Gloria Hersak

Councillors

Rick Mulholland and Jennifer Branch

Secretary/Treasurer

Dianna Gauthier

Objectives

- Provide a national voice for school libraries
- Promote excellence in all aspects of school libraries
- Provide members with opportunities for professional growth
- Promote all forms of literacy including information literacy (skills and abilities in research, comprehension and dissemination) among Canada's youth, through the formal school system

- Unite library and media personnel and other interested parties in furthering and improving school library media service throughout Canada
- Provide for the exchange of ideas and experience among members
- Cooperate with internal and external groups and organizations in the advancement of education and librarianship and library, information and media service
- Support and promote the objectives of the Canadian Library Association (CLA)

The most exciting news is that you can now join CASL for a reduced rate. Members of the CLA may enrol as members of the division without payment of a membership fee other than that charged by the CLA, if the member chooses, in conjunction with his membership in the CLA, membership in the division as provided in the bylaws of the CLA, or in other cases, on payment of the required fees.

Categories of Membership

1. Full CLA member, as classified in the CLA's constitution and bylaws
2. Corresponding member:
 - a. Corresponding membership is open to individuals only. Vendors, school boards, school trustees (as a collective board) are not eligible for corresponding membership.
 - b. Corresponding membership is open to practicing or retired teacher-librarians, school librarians or teachers at the elementary or secondary school level. Membership is \$50 a year.

Contact the Canadian Library Association at www.cla.ca for more information about becoming a member.

2005 Alberta Library Conference

by Irene Masciuch

The Alberta Library Conference 2005 planning committee invites you to attend next year's conference April 28 to May 1 at the Jasper Park Lodge, Jasper, Alberta. The theme "Alberta Libraries: Celebrating Our Past, Embracing Our Future" recognizes the 2005 Alberta centennial celebration and the role that libraries have played in our province's history while looking forward with enthusiasm to the future of library service in Alberta. Please look for further information about registration and sessions on the ALA website: <http://freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/alconf/>.

Another Study Confirms Importance of School Libraries

Nearly 100 per cent of Ohio students who took part in a recent research study indicated that the school library and librarians have helped them learn.

The "Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries" study complements the considerable research showing the positive impact of effective school-library programs on test scores by providing students' own evaluation of their libraries. Researchers say it is the first statewide research study "to examine the multi-dimensional dynamics of learning through effective school libraries from the student's perspective."

96.8 per cent of students said the school library had helped them "know the different steps in finding and using information"; 92.4 per cent said computers in the school library had helped with their school work; and 85.7 per cent said the school library had taught them to be more careful about information found on the Internet. Qualitative responses from students emphasized the school library's role in inspiring students to build their own understanding and knowledge.

More than 13,000 students in Grades 3–12 participated in the study between October 2002 and December 2003. The survey was conducted by Dr. Ross J. Todd and Dr. Carol C. Kuhlthau of Rutgers University and the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL).

For more information: www.oelma.org/studentlearning/default.asp.

School Library Programs

Teacher–Teacher-Librarian Partnerships for Developing Units That Marry Language Arts Curriculum and Technology

by Lana Black and Margo Johnston

Lana Black is the International Baccalaureate program coordinator and an English teacher at Jasper Place High School in Edmonton, Alberta.

Margo Johnston is the teacher-librarian at Jasper Place High School.

The following article is based on a presentation given at Connect! 2004, a joint conference of the English Language Arts, Computer and Learning Resources Councils, held April 15–17 in Banff, Alberta.

This article was previously published in Alberta Voices, a publication of the English Language Arts Council, Volume 2, Number 2, 2004.

THIS ARTICLE RECOUNTS THE TEACHER–TEACHER-LIBRARIAN partnership that we have cultivated over the last decade while working together at Jasper Place High School in the Edmonton Public School District. We aim to share with other educators how collegial teaching partnerships develop and the many benefits gained by teachers and students as a result of teacher collaboration for curriculum delivery.

Margo’s Story

The work of the teacher-librarian is to cooperatively plan lessons with teachers. To facilitate this process, I

offer to work with teachers whenever the opportunity arises. Through speaking up at staff meetings, attending department meetings and networking, I make myself available to teachers interested in working with their students on assignments requiring library research.

As it became more and more necessary for school librarians to be proficient in technology, I upgraded my computer expertise by taking university courses and participating in inservice activities. Currently, I serve as a TELUS Learning Connection teacher leader with Edmonton Public Schools. In this role, I help teachers integrate technology into their courses by working with them individually, in small groups and in inservice sessions. I also provide inservices to help parents use technology with their children.

Lana was a teacher at our school who showed an interest in working with me to implement technology in her classroom teaching, and over the years our partnership grew.

Lana’s Story

At Jasper Place High School, I have been a classroom teacher and an English department head, and I am currently the International Baccalaureate (IB) program coordinator. In all these roles, I have had to ensure that the research and technology outcomes of my courses have been met.

From my first day at Jasper Place High School, I realized that Margo had exceptional skills in the areas of research and technology and that she would be able to work with me to ensure that I provided the best possible instruction to my students. My own technological

abilities were slow to develop and my interest even slower, but I knew that the resources available in Margo's brain and in our school library would help me provide what my students required, and our partnership quickly materialized.

We began collaborating on units for my English classes. The first was an English 20-2 unit on disasters, and we kept going until we had developed units for all the English courses. We moved from computerized card catalogues to PowerPoint presentations as technology developed. Our students were given the opportunity to learn the research and technology skills required by the curriculum.

In my role as English department head, I encouraged the other English teachers to work with Margo. Inviting Margo to attend English department meetings and work as part of our department further supported this collaboration. When I became the IB coordinator, Margo attended IB librarian workshops and began to assist IB teachers in all subject areas in working with their students. Margo and I provided the leadership necessary to ensure that our students acquired the research and technology skills necessary to become lifelong learners.

Margo and I have presented our work at conferences throughout Alberta and in the United States. As well, we have been published in publications such as *Alberta Voices*. Our partnership continues.

How We Work Together

Lana brings the idea for an assignment to me (Margo), and then we meet to discuss it. We decide what will be included in the assignment and who will be responsible for the tasks required to prepare the assignment for the students.

My first task is to gather the information and prepare a pathfinder or a resource list for the assignment. Then, Lana writes the assignment and determines the assessment strategies and rubrics to be used. I prepare all the required library resources and run off the photocopies, and we then book the library time.

When the students are in the library, I teach, and Lana does the classroom teaching. We both assist and supervise the students when they are working in the library. Lana does all the assessments except those that are library and research related. I pass on my assessments to Lana for inclusion in her mark book.

Every time we teach an assignment, we update and modify it for the new group of students. Lana has copies of all the assignments in her files, and I keep copies of all our work in my library files. We keep both hard copies and computer files of our work. Sometimes we create websites, which are available to all interested teachers. Visit <http://tlc.epsb.ca/connect2004/> for access to three of our units.

Focus on Inquiry: A Teacher's Guide

by *Teddy Moline*

FOCUS ON INQUIRY IS A REVISED VERSION OF *Focus on Research: A Guide to Developing Students' Research Skills*, which was published by Alberta Learning in 1990. *Focus on Research* was developed in response to suggestions from Alberta teachers during the implementation of *Focus on Learning: An Integrated Program Model for Alberta School Libraries* (Alberta Education 1985).

Although *Focus on Research* is no longer in print, it is still extensively used as a research model and is available online at www.library.ualberta.ca/documents/focusonresearch.pdf.

Research, as well as suggestions from teachers and teacher-librarians, indicated that it was time to enhance and rethink the 1990 research process model. Although the essential elements of the *Focus on Research* model are strong, changes in curriculum, students, technology, professional development, research findings and the world of work all point to the timeliness of this update. Additionally, research and practice point to a need for a deeper consideration of the implications of technology and the implications of the affective nature of inquiry-based learning.

Alberta Learning was fortunate that two world leaders in effective school library programs, Drs. Jennifer Branch and Dianne Oberg, both of the University of Alberta, developed this document. With the support from teachers and teacher-librarians provincially, they were able to bring together 13 years of research, practice and reflection. Feedback to the January 2004 draft copy has been incorporated into the final edition, which is available online through the Alberta Learning webpage (www.learning.gov.ab.ca) and in hard copy through the Learning Resources Centre.

Why Would Teachers Use Inquiry-Based Learning?

Administrators and teachers need to know that what they do in the classroom makes a difference to student learning. Inquiry-based learning positively affects student success, but both teachers and administrators need to ask the following questions as they consider how to implement it:

- Will inquiry-based learning increase my students' understanding of the learner outcomes mandated by the curriculum I must cover?
- Will inquiry-based learning increase my students' ability to read, write and reason?
- If I allow students to spend time on inquiry-based learning, what do I remove from my program? How do I make time?
- Which strategies are the most effective in teaching inquiry-based learning?
- What are the biggest obstacles I must overcome to implement inquiry-based learning?
- When is inquiry-based learning worth doing?
- Will inquiry-based learning help me meet the curriculum standards?
- How do I manage an inquiry-based learning activity by myself?
- Will inquiry-based learning improve my students' test scores?

How Can Teachers Use This Document?

Inquiry-based learning is not an add-on; rather, it is a way to achieve the goals of the Alberta programs of study since inquiry-based learning is a component of all Alberta curricula. This document provides supports for implementing inquiry-based learning activities in the classroom and is intended for teachers working on their own or in teams, with or without the support of a

teacher-librarian or other library personnel. It provides an instructional model that can be used by all teachers, Kindergarten to Grade 12, in guiding inquiry with students.

The intent of the resource is to give teachers strategies to use as they work to improve student learning and achievement through the integration of technology with the curriculum and through inquiry-based learning. The document includes information on how to build a culture of inquiry, an inquiry model, connections to the curriculum, planning and implementing effective inquiry-based instruction, as well as sources of further information.

Inquiry-based learning activities can be used in various ways to accomplish the learning outcomes of Alberta programs of study

- within core courses,
- within optional programs,
- across two or more curricula, and
- within the Information and Communication Technology curriculum.

Reference

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Reading Aloud

The following is a review of Mem Fox's session, Reading Aloud, at the Early Childhood Education Council conference 2003. This review was previously published in Issues, Events & Ideas, Number 106, February 2004, a publication of the Early Childhood Education Council of the ATA.

Read with love. Read over and over again. Never interrupt a first reading. This advice comes from this writer who asserts that children need to hear a thousand books before they will read. They need to hear the patterns of language, make images to help give meaning to words and feel the pleasure of words by listening. Do not worry about teaching prediction and other comprehension skills: "We are all predicting throughout the story" when it is read without stopping, explained Mem. She recommends discussion and probing after the third or fourth or even fifth reading—but never during the first reading.

How a text is read is critical for literacy learning. Read musically to allow the development of the listener to imagine the story. And never rush the story's last line. Let the listener's mind work toward a satisfactory conclusion and savour the pleasure of the story.

Mem Fox explained, "Most of what I learned about writing I have heard." Speech patterns learned from stories may turn up in writing the next week or 40 years later. When a person might use what had been learned is unknown. But, as Mem asked, "If our storehouse of language is empty, how will we ever write?" Her advice is to fill children's storehouses by reading all types of stories so that what has been read before will lend meaning to current reading. Children should be exposed to a wide range of characters and settings, various genres, different ways of selecting and arranging words, the power of repetition, the power of three, the nature of the quest in literature, the difference between literary and everyday language, and other literary effects. There is no knowing what will happen when one's literary storehouse is full. "Connections from the past are made over and over again throughout the construction of a story," Mem declared, because all stories are intertwined.

Whether a child becomes a reader and writer hinges on early literacy experiences. Make reading aloud an enjoyable and valuable experience.

Educationally Speaking.....

Not So Distant: Understanding the Lives of Distance Students in the TL-DL Program

by Jennifer Branch

A RECENT SPECIAL SECTION IN THE *NEW YORK TIMES* (Education Life, April 25, 2004) focused on “Scholarship in Space” and the move to online/digital programs in the United States. Schwartz (April 25, 2004, 28) states that current advertisements “make the process of getting a degree online look almost cozy: earn an M.B.A. in your pajamas and fuzzy slippers. The reality is a little, well, blearier.”

The Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning (TL-DL) program at the University of Alberta began in 1997 and for seven years has provided online education for teachers and teacher-librarians from across Canada and from several countries around the world. More than 50 students are currently in the program, and more than 10 have recently graduated from the program with either a diploma in elementary education or a master of education with a focus on teacher-librarianship. These students are in our classes, yet we know very little about their lives away from the keyboard.

Many of our students are drawn to the program because they are unable to access teacher-librarianship education in their own province or country. After a few lean years, when we struggled to find students to run classes, we are now receiving applications from more students than we can possibly supervise.

As the coordinator of the program and also an instructor, I have an image of a typical student in our program. She works full-time as a teacher, teacher-librarian or a combination of both. She is middle-aged, married and has children either still at home, in junior

high or high school or just off to college or university. She cares for elderly relatives and is involved in professional associations, volunteer activities and a religious organization. She accesses resources online from the university databases and the Internet but does not use the document-delivery service or an academic library to do research.

However, this image is not based on any real data. Rather, it is drawn from student introductions and online postings from our WebCT learning space.

This study evolved because of my continuing interest in understanding the lives of my students (Branch 2003a, 2003b). Research presented by Henri et al. (2003) at the International Association for School Library Conference in Durban, South Africa, challenged me to also look to the whole TL-DL program and to a better understanding of the lives of our students.

Method

This study seeks to understand the lives of our distance education students. An online survey asked participants to describe their academic background, current teaching position, work and family responsibilities, community volunteer activities and any other activities in which they are currently involved. The study also gathered some baseline data about number of hours spent each week on courses, broken down into reading time, Internet and other research time, writing time and online discussion time. Also included in the survey were some questions about accessing resources. Students were also encouraged to provide concerns, suggestions, ideas for improvement for individual courses and for the program as a whole.

Findings, Implications and Conclusions

The surveys are still arriving but initial findings indicate that my image of the typical student isn't too far off. Watch this column for more information on the study.

It will also be important to examine the comments and suggestions about the structure of the program and the instructional approaches used by our instructors. As a librarian, I am also interested in the data about how students access resources to support their learning. Oppenheimer (2004) writes about three challenges of only using online resources: the occasional unavailability of full-text articles, the policies for distance students using interlibrary loan services, and the difference between searching online and searching the stacks in a library.

The study will examine the research on teaching approaches, building an online learning community, teaching the skills we want our students to have and meeting the needs of distance students. Included in meeting the needs of distance students is the challenge of preparing them to work in libraries when they may not have physical access to library resources during their program. As a librarian, I am very interested in what distance learning will mean to the policies and procedures for interlibrary loan and document delivery in academic and public libraries.

Significance

The data gathered from this study will be used to inform our program, teaching practices, library policies and course development. In addition, it is hoped that the findings will help other universities interested in developing or modifying distance learning programs.

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The Dianne Oberg Graduate Prize in Teacher-Librarianship

by Dianne Oberg

*Dianne Oberg is a professor in teacher-librarianship in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta. Before coming to the university, she worked as a classroom teacher and teacher-librarian in the public school system. Her research focuses on teacher-librarianship education and on the implementation and evaluation of school library programs. Her research includes an international study, with colleagues James Henri and Lyn Hay from Australia's Charles Sturt University, on the role of principals in developing information-literate school communities. She is also working on a Canadian study of the use of Internet in schools with University of Alberta colleague, Dr. Susan Gibson. Dianne is the editor of an international journal, *School Libraries Worldwide*, and an active member of school library associations at local, national and international levels. She is currently chair of the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. She previously held a joint appointment with that Department and the School of Library and Information Studies.*

THE DIANNE OBERG GRADUATE PRIZE IN TEACHER-LIBRARIANSHIP is funded by Dr. Dianne Oberg, chair of the Department of Elementary Education, University of Alberta. This prize has a value of \$1,000.

Eligibility

The prize is awarded annually on the basis of outstanding performance, based on a minimum of four completed courses, to a student registered in the M.ED. in teacher-librarianship in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. Other factors to be considered are leadership potential and contribution to the community.

Application

Eligible students should submit a letter of application and a curriculum vitae to the Graduate Coordinating Committee, Department of Elementary Education, 551 Education Centre South, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5. The Graduate Coordinating Committee will make the final selection. The deadline for applications is September 1. Part-time students are eligible to apply.

Awards

Lois Barranoik—CSLA Teacher-Librarian Award Winner

by Dianne Oberg



Lois Barranoik has contributed to the development of school-library programs through her work in many professional roles—teacher, teacher-librarian, school-district consultant, school-library educator, researcher, and conference and workshop presenter. Previous to

admission to the doctoral program in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta, she was the full-time teacher-librarian at Centre High School, located in Edmonton's Boardwalk. Lois was a key member of the instructional team, providing an innovative high school program designed to help students who have had difficulties in regular high school programs to upgrade their education and complete Grade 12. While she completed the writing of her doctoral dissertation, she served as a half-time teacher-librarian at Windsor Park Elementary School. In her first year in the school, she initiated a rich and exciting program at Windsor Park. This past year Lois has worked as a half-time teacher-librarian in two schools: Windsor Park Elementary and Rideau Park Elementary (a German bilingual school).

All of Lois's assignments as teacher-librarian have shown that she has an outstanding ability to participate as a teaching partner in developing exemplary school-library programs that support and enhance student learning. Lois has demonstrated originality in her professional work, designing (and helping others to design) library programs and facilities that are suited to the unique demands of the students and teachers who use them. As a thoughtful and reflective practitioner, she has drawn on the research literatures of education and

of library and information studies to address problems of practice. She faces tasks with openness and a readiness to develop new and fresh approaches. When I taught the resource-based teaching course for preservice teachers and international visitors want to see exemplary school-library programs, the schools where Lois was the teacher-librarian were always on my list.

As her very long list of professional workshops and conference presentations indicates, Lois has been very active for more than 10 years in developing and promoting the use of the library through inservice education programs. Many of these sessions have drawn on her work on district curriculum committees. For example, the Project Pegasus presentations came out of work done by Lois as part of a committee that planned and implemented a research into practice initiative. Project Pegasus was an action-research project designed to analyze how technology can improve opportunities for student learning. When a professional conference or workshop is being planned, or when an advocacy presentation needs to be made, Lois is there, offering to contribute. She recently cochaired the organizing committee for the Alberta Library Conference, which brings together professionals from all of the library sectors in Alberta. Last year she was Learning Resources Council president and showed a strong commitment to school library advocacy in that role.

Lois's work at the university as a doctoral student and as a school library educator has been enriched by her successful professional experience as a teacher, teacher-librarian and school-district consultant. Lois has taught the undergraduate course Resource-Based Teaching for me when I was on leave a few years ago and received excellent teaching evaluations. Her guest lectures in graduate courses have been equally well received. She has cotaught a graduate course, Instructional Practices in Library and Information Services. As a teacher, Lois demonstrates exemplary

planning and presentation skills; she uses active learning strategies to help students grasp unfamiliar concepts. Lois's exemplary teaching skills have been recognized in two nominations by her peers for Alberta Learning's Excellence in Teaching Award. Lois has taught the online graduate course School Library Collection Development in the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program at the University of Alberta. Through that course and through her publications and presentations, Lois reaches teacher-librarians across Canada and beyond. Lois's doctoral research, for which she was awarded the University of Alberta's most prestigious doctoral scholarship, extends the current research related to the research process, or inquiry-based learning. She presented her doctoral research at the research forum held in conjunction with the annual conference of the International Association of School Librarianship held last July in Durban, South Africa. Dr. Ross Todd, director of Research at the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries at Rutgers University, in New Jersey, was the external examiner for Lois's doctoral defence in January 2003. He was impressed with the quality of her research and has asked

Lois to write an article about her research for a research column that he edits for an Australian journal in school librarianship. Without a doubt, Lois's work will continue to have a positive effect on the development of school library programs in Canada and around the world.

Lois meets all the criteria for the CSLA National Book Service Teacher-Librarian of the Year Award. She has demonstrated achievement in planning and implementing collaborative programs in six schools, from elementary to high school, over a span of more than 25 years. She has led numerous inservice activities, served on local and district curriculum committees, shared strategies for using learning resources with people outside her schools and outside her districts, and served in executive roles for professional education and library associations. In addition, Lois has contributed to research in school librarianship and served as an educator of future teachers and teacher-librarians. She has also been a warm and supportive mentor for other teachers and teacher-librarians.

In all respects, Lois Barranoik is an outstanding winner for the 2004 CSLA National Book Service Teacher-Librarian of the Year Award.

Glen Huser—2003 Governor General's Literary Award Winner



Congratulations to Glen Huser of Edmonton for winning the Governor General's Award, Canada's top literary award, in the category of children's literature. Glen won for his young adult novel *Stitches* (Groundwood Books/Douglas

and McIntyre; distributed by University of Toronto Press; ISBN 0-88899-553-9, bound; ISBN 0-88899-578-4, paperback.)

Glen's depiction of two small-town kids struggling under the weight of being labelled different draws us into their world of unwilling exile. Glen's seamless writing explores the deep reservoirs of human strength, refusing to submit to the quirks of fate.

At the Greater Edmonton Regional's annual general meeting in Edmonton, Glen shared some his experiences of going to Ottawa to receive his award from Governor

General Adrienne Clarkson. He had to dust off his tuxedo because it was a very formal affair at Rideau Hall. His amusing story of buttons popping on his tuxedo was delightful. He did enjoy the many fringe benefits to this award: he stayed in the Chateau Laurier on the Rideau Canal and Ottawa River, and received a beautiful leather-bound decorated copy of his book, signed by the Governor General. Along with the excellent scotch served at Rideau Hall, the protocol at the gala, the dinner and the presentations were most memorable. There were public readings of winning novels and writing workshops with Ottawa students.

Glen is one of ours. He is a former instructor of library and information studies at the University of Alberta, was a teacher-librarian for Edmonton Public Schools for many years and a speaker at many of our conferences. Glen is enjoying retirement and using his time to write these great novels. He has also been writer in residence for a couple of the Edmonton schools. Congratulations, Glen.

Guidelines for Contributors.....

Teacher-Librarian Today is published to

- enhance the competencies of learning resources professionals;
- increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of the role of learning resources programs in education; and
- stimulate thinking, to explore new ideas, to offer various viewpoints and to share information about learning resources and school library programs.

Articles from all educators are welcome. Teacher-librarians are especially invited to write about aspects of teacher-librarianship and school library programs that interest them and to share ideas with colleagues. Submissions are requested that will stimulate personal reflection, theoretical consideration and practical application. Articles that present differing perspectives; innovative, cooperatively planned and taught programs; trends and issues in teacher-librarianship; research findings; or reviews or evaluations of learning resources in all media are appreciated. From time to time, the editors may identify specific themes or topics for special issues and invite submissions on these topics.

Manuscripts should be submitted by e-mail with an accompanying hard copy mailed to the editor. A cover page should include the contributor's name, professional position, degree(s) held, address and telephone and fax numbers. A recent photograph and related biographical information are also requested.

Manuscripts may be up to 3,500 words long. References to literature made in the text of the

submission should appear in full in a list at the end of the article. Literature not cited in the text but providing background material or further reading should be listed similarly.

Photographs, line drawings, diagrams and other graphics are welcome. To ensure quality reproduction, photographs should be clear and have good contrast. A caption and photo credit should accompany each photograph, and people in photographs should be clearly identified on a separate sheet of paper submitted with the photograph. (Note: do not write on the back of a photograph or attach information to it in any way that could mark its surface.) The contributor is responsible for obtaining releases for the use of photographs. Only original drawings should be submitted, and the source of the drawings must be credited. Disks and photographs will be returned. Contributors whose manuscripts are accepted will receive two copies of *Teacher-Librarian Today* containing the published article.

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