
YAA CING

SPRING 2009

The Newsletter of the Young Adult & Children's Services Section of BCLA

What's Inside....

Message from the Chair	.....	2
Message from the Editor	.....	3
Censorship	.....	4
Certificate in Family Literacy	.....	10
The Public Libraries Role in Todays Gaming	.....	12
The Bones Read report	.....	17
An Evening with a Star	.....	18
Bibliotherapy and the Role of the Children's Librarian	.....	19
Kaleidescope9 Report	.....	23
Red Cedar	.....	27
	
	

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We would love to hear from you!

YAACING is published four times a year and always looking for submissions that might interest our membership. If you have tried something new at your library, would like to write a column, report on a conference session, or know of an upcoming event for the calendar, please share it with us. Mail, email or fax your material to:

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Next issue - Summer for May/June – May 1st

Fall issue for September/October – Sept 1st

Winter issue for December/January – November 1st

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Message from the Co-Chairs

Hello Fellow YAACs members

It has been a productive fall/winter session. Currently, our vice-chair, Susan Redmond is busy getting our sessions and conveners ready for the BCLA conference in April, and the sessions look great. A new addition to the conference this year is a chance to meet with others informally to discuss issues of mutual interest. These sessions will be called "Birds of a Feather" and I have heard a rumour that there will be a session on teen issues plus lots more.

Susan is a wonderful new addition to our executive. In the fall, as many of you have heard, our vice-chair Karen Sharkey had to resign to accept exciting new opportunities in Europe. Susan very bravely stepped in, and it is great to welcome her to the section.

We are working on a full slate of candidates for the executive for the upcoming year, plus a chance to nominate others for positions on the executive. Look for information on this coming to you shortly.

In order to focus on other priorities, such as continuing education, we have decided that we will not participate this year in hosting the coat check at the annual conference. In the past we have done this to raise money for the Sheila Egoff BC Book Prize. We do plan however, to fundraise for the prize at the YAACs table at the conference, where we will also be promoting the section and all our activities. Make a point to stop by and say hello!!

We are also taking a break from selling literacy cards for fundraising at events such as Serendipity or the Children's Literature Roundtable Illustrator Breakfast. This was done in previous years with the outstanding help of our SLAIS rep. Janet Mumford, and the wonderful photographic talents of YAACs supporter Earla Legault. Thank you to both for your ongoing help, and for your passion for children and literacy.

Kathy Reid-Naiman, the renowned "musician, teacher and inspiration" from Ontario is coming to BC thanks in part to sponsorship by YAACs. Sara Grant, Head of Surrey Children's Services, and our Lower Mainland Continuing Education Coordinator, worked with Tracy Kendrick, head of children's from Victoria to extend Kathy's tour originally sponsored in the Lower Mainland by Public Library InterLINK to the Island. A wonderful opportunity, and just the beginning we hope of great cooperative efforts that can extend workshops to the whole province with the help of your section and your association.

Take care and hope to see many of you at the conference.

Vicki Donoghue
Chris Kevlahan

Co-Chairs, Young Adult and Children's Services Section, BCLA

Message from the Editor

Hello Readers. Welcome to the Spring Issue of YAACING. Yes, Spring I say and I hope it will be well on its way by the time you read this. What an evil thing for me to say tucked here in Victoria whimpering at the temperature, which has dipped below.. what? ...+6 degrees? Ha! You answer (or maybe that's my sister's voice in Dawson Creek I hear) "try **50** below zero"! Isn't that a story? Which brings me all the way back to our current issue and the stories our members have to tell?

We start with the censoring of stories in MLIS Candidate Tara Williston's paper *Censorship*. Tara's research raises issues that many of us have struggled with and she challenges us to continue to keep libraries open to all stories. And that would include the stories of Gamers.

Maureen Bezanson discussed *The Public Library's Role in Today's Gaming Culture* for her final MLIS paper and shares her research with us in this issue. She raises some intriguing ideas that are worth exploring. Following Maureen's paper is a report by Margie Walser on a wonderful presentation that Gina McMurchy-Barber gave at the Fleetwood Branch of Surrey Public Library. In another SLAIS paper Patricia Scott brings us *Bibliotherapy and the role of Children's Librarians?*

We have Max Tell's report on Margaret Reid MacDonald's storytelling workshop this past December while Joanne Canow gives us another perspective on Kaleidoscope "Story: Bridging Worlds". Having attended one of MRM's workshops years ago and had the luck to go to the last Kaleidoscope conference I have to encourage everybody, if the opportunity arises to watch Margaret in action or attend Kaleidoscope grab it with both hands. So there you are.

Enjoy this issue and I hope to hear your stories of how you enjoyed the Conference, Serendipity and all the other events this spring. Please write and tell us or talk to me at the Conference.

Phillippa Brown
Co-editor Yaacing



Censorship

Submitted by Tara Williston, MLIS Candidate

Introduction

Citing the iconic Kurt Vonnegut – “the problem with standing against censorship [is] with some of the trash you appeared to be standing for” – Chris Crutcher, a frequently banned American YA author, explains why he chooses to stand against censorship in the foreword to YALSA’s Hit List 2:

Being against censorship doesn’t mean you don’t think there is a lot of trash out there or that there is a lot of material you’d simply ignore if get the chance. Being against censorship, in my opinion, is more about respect; not respect for the material, but respect for humans and their abilities to make decisions, and find quality in books and movies and television, and have intelligent questions. In the end, it’s simply hard to see how we can protect people by keeping them ignorant.
(vii)

Ultimately, I believe that the question of censorship in the public library comes down to precisely this issue alluded to by Crutcher: is it the public library’s job to “protect people”? Or is it the library’s job to inform people, and then trust that they will use that information to question, examine, and finally decide for themselves?

It seems safe to assume that most of those who have chosen the career of public librarian, a profession proudly built on the tenet of equal and free access to information for all, feel strongly that the library’s job is the latter. In the case of children’s librarians, these professionals generally feel just as strongly that their role, though admittedly more complex due to the perceived “innocence of youth,” does not change simply because of the young age of their patrons. On the contrary, as Virginia A. Walter states in her “Five Rules of Children’s Librarianship”, “Children’s librarians are advocates for children’s access to books, information, information technology, and ideas” (123).

The censorship threat

And children’s librarians must indeed be active advocates, for challenges to library materials for children and youth are many and frequent. What is behind the high number of challenges to library materials for children and youth? And why are children’s librarians so concerned about resisting those challenges where possible (and where warranted, of course)?

One source of the complexity of the youth censorship problem, says renowned children’s librarian and author Adele M. Fasick, is that to begin with, public libraries have a highly ambiguous role when it comes to responsibility for their youngest patrons.

As a public institution in a pluralistic society, libraries have an ill-defined relationship with children. Unlike public schools, they are not compulsory and charged with providing formal education. Because they are funded by tax money, libraries are not free to cater entirely to majority taste but are expected to provide services that are, in some sense, a social good. They must offer recreation and entertainment to entice children to use their facilities but, at the same time, serve as quasi-education and cultural institutions. (75)

Furthermore, Fasick goes on to explain, often challenges to “questionable” children’s material come from adults who believe that children’s behaviour will be influenced by what they read, and that therefore if the public library simply does not make available books which portray undesirable behaviour, children will remain blissfully ignorant of it. Children’s librarians who support intellectual freedom, however, believe that children and youth have the right to know about all kinds of behaviours so that they can then judge for themselves and make informed choices. As Fasick says, “These two beliefs rest on different assumptions about the nature of reading and using materials, so conflicts between the proponents of the two beliefs will always occur” (77).

As for the determination of children’s librarians everywhere to fight censorship, children’s librarians are bound by the same professional code of all public librarians, best summed up by the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights. In Article 2 of this code, the ALA states “Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval” (qtd. in Lesesne & Chance 60).

In Canada, the Canadian Library Association’s “Position Statement on Intellectual Freedom” confirms,

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, libraries shall acquire and make available the widest variety of materials.

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee the right of free expression by making available all the library's public facilities and services to all individuals and groups who need them. (Canadian Library Association)

As Judith F. Krug of the ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom so aptly put it: “Free access to information is a core American value that should be protected. Not every book is right for each reader, but an individual’s interpretation of a book should not take away my right to select reading materials for my family or myself” (“Tango” 133).

The sentiment that no one person has the right to determine what another may or may not read, however much the material in question may stray from one’s own moral code or point of view, is echoed over and over in the responses of authors whose work has been challenged. Regarding one school library controversy over her novel *Sandpiper*, Ellen Wittlinger, author of several YA works touching on themes of teen sexuality (both gay and straight), said “Of course, the bottom line, as always, is that [the student who complained] did not have to read the book if she didn’t want to. But no doubt there are other students who do want to read it and she should not be able to decide what anyone else can or cannot read” (“Censorship Dateline” 7).

At its core, this is what censoring others’ reading material comes down to: censoring their freedom of choice, their freedom of expression, their freedom to access knowledge.

What is being challenged?

Fasick provides a clear breakdown of the types of children's materials most often challenged in the public library, and the categories that these challenges fall into, paraphrased below:

- i. "Family values" – a term used by many people who want library materials to reflect a traditional pattern of marriage and sexual behaviour. (Even though the "family" in question are two male penguins and an orphaned egg, *And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson, mentioned again below, is a good example.)
- ii. Materials considered damaging to traditional religious beliefs – those characterized as promoting secular humanism or as being antireligious, i.e., materials about witchcraft and the occult. Fasick cites Eve Merriam's *Halloween ABC* (Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, and the infamous *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling are other recent examples).
- iii. Political views – some adults object to communistic or socialistic books and other materials. (Although Fasick focuses on these two political viewpoints in particular, this category could encompass any political stance, however mainstream or marginal, whose presence in a children's book a patron objects to.)
- iv. Minority rights – some adults object to materials that they see as perpetuating stereotypes or as critically portraying a particular group. The popular *Indian in the Cupboard* by Lynne Reid Banks has been questioned on these grounds. (Another well-known example, still making the Top Ten Challenged list for many many years now, is Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.) Also under this category are materials which are perceived by some to perpetuate gender stereotyping, such as *Pomeroy's Girls and Sex*. (76)

In YALSA's 2002 publication *Hit List 2*, authors Lesesne and Chance call recent years "the best of times and the worse of times in young adult literature" (ix). They explain that after undergoing a marked decline in the 1980s, YA literature has enjoyed a revival from the 1990s on. "Publishing houses began to extend the audience for young adult literature by publishing grittier and edgier books for older teens. Young adult literature, it seemed, was not only alive: it was thriving.

"However, with renewed vigor comes renewed scrutiny, it seems. Never before has young adult literature been under such ferocious attack from censors. Between 1990 and 2000, 6,364 challenges were reported to or recorded by the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom" (ix). (In the equivalent volume regarding challenged children's books, the OIF's *Hit List: Frequently Challenged Books for Children*, editor Judith F. Krug states that her "rule of thumb – based on research – is that for every incident reported, there are as many as four or five that...are not reported" [ix].)

Of these reported challenges, 1,607 were for "sexually explicit" material; 1,427 were for "offensive language"; 1,256 were for material "unsuited to age group"; 842 were for material with "an occult theme or promoting the occult or satanism"; 737 were for "violent" materials; 515 were for material with a homosexual theme or "promoting homosexuality"; and 419 were for material "promoting a religious viewpoint" (ix-x). Most often, challenges were to items in the collections of school libraries (or items used in schools), and most challenges were brought forth by parents (x).

The OIF newsletter of January 2006 reported that "three of the top ten most challenged books in 2004 were disputed for homosexual themes, a higher percentage than in any other year in the last decade" ("More" 5). This alarming trend of increasing challenges to youth literature with "homosexual themes" has not abated since 2004; quite the opposite, in fact, with Richardson and Parnell's *And Tango Makes Three* topping the OIF's Top Ten Challenged Books list for the second straight year in

2007 (“Tango” 133). The other “gay” books in the 2007 Top Ten were Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* and Stephen Chbosky’s *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (“Tango” 133, 164-65).

Censorship and the Internet

The issue of intellectual freedom as it relates to children’s Internet use at the public library is such a vast and complex one that I will touch on it only briefly here, hoping to draw out what I feel are the key considerations when

One interesting point brought up in the OIF’s newsletter of January 2006 by North Carolina university librarian Lynn Sutton, who conducted a study on the effectiveness of Internet filters in schools, is that students themselves see Internet filtering as “an impediment...to their academic freedom” (“Overzealous” 5). Because of this impingement many prefer to do Internet research at home, where they have unfiltered access to information online. Add to this the fact that that some students don’t have access at home, and the situation quickly becomes unjust:

...when you have a digital divide, some kids only have filtered access from school on a wide variety of issues – from abortion, to sex education, to world history. The real problem is that the school is only letting through one view of society that the school deems appropriate for children to see. And that...is discrimination (“Overzealous” 5).

Sutton’s mention of the filtering of sites dealing with issues such as sex ed and abortion leads us to the very important matter of access to health information for children, and in particular, teens. The public library can be a safe place for youth to go to freely access the information they need to make healthy decisions about the roles of relationships and sex in their lives – but if their local public library employs Internet filters, they may have extreme difficulty in reaching this much-needed information. I believe few teens would feel comfortable approaching a library staff member to ask for help locating information on such personal topics as puberty, sexuality, sexual health, and contraception. And if those teens should happen to come from a home environment where these issues are not openly discussed, or where their questions simply are not answered in full, then their options for finding accurate answers are greatly diminished. As Vancouver Public Library youth librarian Chris Kevlahan stated emphatically on a recent visit to VPL’s Central Library Children’s Department, Internet filters may have their place in protecting young children from inappropriate materials, but at times they can do more harm than good by also restricting access to valuable information that kids need.

Dealing with challenges to library materials

Lesesne and Chance recommend that youth librarians, to borrow from Boy Scouts’ philosophy, “be prepared” (57). One method for doing so put forth by the authors is to write a “book rationale” for frequently challenged items in your collection, or items you suspect may be challenged in future. The book rationale “is a document which outlines the content of the material, discusses the usefulness of the content to the reader or educator, lists awards or accolades the material has won, lists reviews of the work, notes potential objections to the material, and finally offers alternative titles to the work” (58). Once created, the rationale can be kept on hand as a resource in case of any challenges, as some evidence of the item’s merit to offer to those who may object to its inclusion in their library’s collection.

Lesesne and Chance also include “Tips for Dealing with Censorship and Selection,” drawn from Henry Reichman’s highly recommended *Censorship and Selection: Issues and Answers for*

Schools. Tips include “Be aware of today’s controversial issues;” “Prepare a selection policy;” “Understand the law;” and “Have access to basic intellectual freedom documents” (57).

In *It Comes with the Territory: Handling Problem Situations in Libraries*, author Anne M. Turner names five clear actions that library staff should take when faced with a serious censorship threat (i.e., a challenged that has proceeded all the way to the Library Board). Her recommendations are: first of all, to be plain in calling the challenge what it is, that is, an attempt at full-on censorship. (That said, it is important for the library to be “proactive, not reactive.”) Second, she recommends that the library director notify the ALA’s OIF of the situation (in Canada, the CLA could be made aware), for these groups are experienced in dealing with serious challenges and will be able to offer good advice. Third, make sure all library staff are fully informed of the challenge and what response the library has made to it so far. Fourth, ensure that the library’s governing authority is well-versed on the Library Bill of Rights and its implications. Fifth and last, be ready before a serious challenge pops up by building coalitions for intellectual freedom in the community (79-80).

Is the librarian a censor?

In *Children & Libraries: Getting it Right*, Virginia A. Walter points out that “much of the library profession’s ideology about intellectual freedom rests on a notion of a balanced collection that gives its users the broadest possible points of view on the broadest possible range of topics” (23). Walter also asserts that “many children’s librarians consider collection development to be their most important work” (23).

Occupying the role of choosing what information to make available to children puts children’s librarians in a position of considerable power to, in fact, act as censors. By choosing not to add particular types of books, or works representing a particular point of view, to their collection librarians are effectively “censoring” those materials. While there are many examples of materials which most adults would agree merit exclusion from a public library children’s collection – items which blatantly promote a racist viewpoint, for example – there are other cases where the dividing lines between what “should” be excluded from the library and what should not become a little blurry. What about the much-contested *Indian in the Cupboard*, Lynne Reid Banks’ popular story about a rather stereotypical miniature “Indian” – is exposing children to such stereotyped portrayals harmful? Is that also promoting racist viewpoints? And, ultimately, should such a book be censored by keeping it out of the library’s collection? The answers, of course, will depend on each individual’s point of view. (It is perhaps worth noting here that a quick catalogue search of just a handful of Lower Mainland public libraries reveals that Vancouver Public Library, North Vancouver District Public Library, West Vancouver Memorial Library, North Vancouver City Library, and Burnaby Public Library all currently have Banks’ book in their collections.)

A similar debate over “quality versus popularity” in children’s literature has raged on for years, and shows no signs of stopping. Walter describes the challenge faced by librarians everywhere to keep their users happy by purchasing popular titles like those available at their local book stores, while still striving to achieve balance in their collections and offer “quality” literature as well. Budget constraints can worsen the dilemma: high circulation statistics provide convincing proof to municipal governments that citizens do indeed use the library, and, therefore, that the library needs funding to continue to operate. A collection with lots of popular materials available for loan is one way to ensure high circulation, though many librarians feel this represents “an abandonment of the traditional balanced collections based on quality” (24).

The same is true for children's collections, which, without a certain number of pop culture titles to draw young readers, may struggle to retain or grow their user base. While "the proud tradition of the field is based on nurturing children with the best possible literature," Walter says, "Increasingly...kids don't seem to want to read the best possible literature. They want Goosebumps or the Babysitters Club or whatever the current popular series happens to be. They want media tie-ins, the books generated by popular movies...and fads" (24). Walter goes on to give examples of two children's librarians on opposite sides of the debate, one who views popular materials as "good bait for reluctant readers" (25), and another who insists on only the best for her young patrons.

My own stance on this issue is this: while I cannot object to the sentiment behind the conviction that children deserve the best, I do object somewhat to the implied belief that children are not only incapable of, but should not even be granted the right to select their own reading material. For this reason, I am more inclined to align myself with the "popular" side of the debate, and see maintaining a selection of some popular titles (while still offering a wide selection of "quality") as the best solution to provide something for everyone...Not to mention allowing children to exercise their own freedom to read!

Conclusion

As the familiar tongue-in-cheek saying among librarians goes, "There's something in my library to offend everyone." This means there should be plenty in our libraries to offend even we "open-minded," intellectual-freedom-supporting librarians, too! Ultimately, it is our professional duty to ensure all points of view are available, and to protect our patrons' – including our youngest – right to equal and free access to information. Whether that information represents a widely-accepted mainstream opinion or an unpopular extremist one, a liberal, left-wing world view or a traditional, conservative one, libraries are meant to be places of discovery, a forum for all voices to speak – and be heard.

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CERTIFICATE IN FAMILY LITERACY

This new and unique Certificate Program is offered in partnership with Literacy BC, the Centre for Family Literacy, 2010 Legacies Now and Vancouver Community College.

The first of its kind in Canada, this Certificate offers the knowledge and skill base for those who are currently looking or wish to work in the family literacy field. Courses are designed to provide expertise to individuals who will be well prepared to design, develop, implement and administer community-based and school-based family literacy programs.

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- Family Literacy Across Contexts
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CERTIFICATE IN FAMILY LITERACY

CORE COURSE SCHEDULE

WINTER TERM 2009:

<u>Core Course #1:</u> (24 hours)	Foundations of Family Literacy Friday, February 6, 2009 17:00 – 21:00 Saturday, February 7, 2009 9:30 – 5:30 Friday, February 20, 2009 17:00 – 21:00 Saturday, February 21, 2009 9:30 – 5:30 CRN: 10490 Course Number: FAML 1102
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Core Course #2: Working with Adults and Families
(24 hours) Friday, February 27, 2009 17:00 – 21:00
Saturday, February 28, 2009 9:30 – 5:30
Friday, March 20, 2009 17:00 – 21:00
Saturday, March 21, 2009 9:30 – 5:30
CRN: 10491 Course Number: FAML 1103

SPRING TERM 2009:

Core Course #3: Child Development and Emergent Literacy
(24 hours) Friday, April 17, 2009 17:00 – 21:00
Saturday, April 18, 2009 9:30 – 5:30
Friday, May 8, 2009 17:00 – 21:00
Saturday, May 9, 2009 9:30 – 5:30
CRN: 20372 Course Number: FAML 1104

Core Course #4: Community Partnerships
(24 hours) Friday, May 29, 2009 17:00 – 21:00
Saturday, May 30, 2009 9:30 – 5:30
Friday, June 19, 2009 17:00 – 21:00
Saturday, June 20, 2009 9:30 – 5:30
CRN: 20373 Course Number: FAML 1105

CERTIFICATE IN FAMILY LITERACY

FALL TERM 2009:

Core Course #5: Family Literacy Across Contexts
(24 hours) Dates: To be announced

Core Course #6: Leadership in Family Literacy
(24 hours) Dates: To be announced

Practicum: Practicum – Various
(30 hours) Dates: To be announced

Please note: Each core course meets for two weekend intensive sessions:
Friday 5:00 PM – 9:00 PM AND
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TUITION FEES:

Core Course: \$220.00 Practicum: \$50.00

The Public Library's Role in Today's Gaming Culture

Submitted by Maureen Bezanson, LIBR 527 Final Paper

When I was a kid, my favorite part of any museum was the buttons to push and levels to pull. Anything interactive had me significantly more engaged than just looking at displays and reading the information panels. It is the inherent interactive nature of gaming that peaks my curiosity about how the library can incorporate gaming into the services offered to the community. In the following report I will be focusing on the computer or console gaming as opposed to traditional games like chess or board games. Although it is difficult to touch on gaming services in the library without talking about Teen services, my primary focus will be to evaluate the gaming resources and services available for younger children, from preschool through to tweens.

When evaluating any service for public library systems it is important to consider the mission statement. After a brief review of the mission statements of the local libraries to BC's Lower Mainland, there are a few common elements found (although with varied wording for each library). There is a theme of connecting the community to information and ideas, supporting lifelong learning, and some libraries include providing access to technology in their mission statement. To determine how computer or console games fit with this mission, we need to investigate the purpose of the games.

Educational Gaming

As Mary Poppins says, "in every job that must be done there is an element of fun. You find the fun, and snap! The job's a game" (Stevenson, 1964). Of course games are fun, but in order for a library to build a collection or offer services does there need to be more than just fun? Not necessarily, plenty of libraries offer popular movie collections for entertainment. However there are games developed for specific educational purposes: reading, math, or development of problem solving or fine motor skills.

Kebritchi and Hirumi (2008) looked at literature about educational games and investigated the pedagogical foundations behind specific games classifying them either as experiential learning, discovery learning, situated cognition, or constructivist learning. Looking primarily at games targeting adults or older teens, they found the majority of the games were based on experiential learning (Kebritchi & Hirumi, 2008). Among those, was the game Quest Atlantis.

Quest Atlantis is a game developed by the Indiana University School of Education to provide "a 3D multi-user environment to immerse children, ages 9-12, in educational tasks" (Barab, Research: Quest Atlantis, 2008). The idea behind the development of this game was to take the lessons learned in educational theory combined with what is successful in commercial video game design (Barab, Thomas, Dodge, Carteaux, & Tuzun, 2005). The real success of the Quest Atlantis project is that students are playing this game on their own time and completing educational tasks without being required to do so (Barab et.al., 2005). According to the Quest Atlantis website, over 20000 children have participated in quests from classrooms in four continents (Quest Atlantis: Educators, 2008). Although not insignificant numbers for a research study, I suspect Nintendo isn't afraid of the competition quite yet. The primary market for the Quest Atlantis project is schools and after-school spaces and I couldn't find any examples of implementation at a public library. They seem to have a per-student licensing setup that is unlikely to accommodate the needs of serving the general population like a public library does. However this is definitely a game that should be considered for school libraries (Quest Atlantis: Educators, 2008).

Then what should be considered for public libraries? Back when my local library started to collect movies, I can recall observing that the collection started with films based on books (which I can only suppose made it easier to justify bringing in this non-print media to the library's collection). If we take the same approach with games we can look at games that are based on books. Stern (2007) explored the concept of games as an extension of the literature experience. She proposed that games (board games or computer games) would increase the factors that motivate children to read. Fiction-based games increase children's motivation to read by providing "opportunities for problem solving; prestige, in the case of the winners; aesthetic appreciation of game board illustrations and game pieces; escape or further escape into the world of the story through the game; intellectual curiosity, not only about the subject of the story, but about the story itself, its sequel (or sequels), and other books by the same author; and understanding of self." (Stern, 2007). Stern also explains that, for children who have already read the book, games provide the opportunity to continue to explore the fictional world in their imagination (Stern, 2007). This extension of the literature experience is what we see happening regularly in book clubs or any form of conversation post reading.

Looking beyond games that are developed for educational purposes, Jenny Levine compiled a special issue of Library Technology Reports on "Gaming and Libraries Update: Broadening the Intersections". The subtitle of the work is aptly named because Levine explores case studies of how all types gaming, from traditional board games to online or console computer games are being used in library services (Levine, Gaming and Libraries Update: Broadening the Intersections, 2008). She challenges us to broaden what we think of as gaming in the library and who we think of as the audience for games in the library. In an interview about this work (Levine, Interview at UGame ULearn Conference, 2008), Levine talked about how games like Dance Dance Revolution™ and Mario Kart™ provide kids the 21st century skills they will need for the future: "they have to be able to read lots of information on a screen, they have to be able to see patterns, they have to be able to interpret data, and they have to be able to multitask" (Levine, Interview at UGame ULearn Conference, 2008). Educational gaming doesn't have to mean the game was created with educational goals in mind.

But will opening the door to games in the library turn them into arcades? Nicholson (2008) explored this, and other, common misconceptions about games in the library. He explains that "the world, the rules, and the interaction between a player and the game, as well as the player and other players, all create different experiences" for the player (Nicholson, Reframing Gaming, 2008). So essentially, so long as the game is providing a new experience or ideas it would be furthering the mission of the library. Additionally, games that allow the player to shape the story based on the choices they make can be considered an expansion of storytelling events we already see in libraries; but the patrons are an active part of "participatory storytelling" (Nicholson, 2008). Ward-Crixell (2007) further expands on the concept of storytelling in games when looking at MMORPGs (massive multi-player online role playing games). MMORPGs aren't played in isolation; they involve significant reading and writing to follow along with what other players are doing in the game (Ward-Crixell, 2007).

Gaming to foster a sense of community

Most of the research done around gaming in the library being used to foster a sense of community has been done looking primarily at the teen demographic. Creger (2008) discussed the successes seen in the teen community of Flemington Free Public Library in New Jersey with the

launch of their Mediatech gaming and electronic classroom. Similarly in Columbus Ohio, setting up a gaming program helped to "promote the library as an authentic part of the teen's social network" (Scordato, 2008). Scordato found that not only did teens come into the library for games but they also found increased circulation, increased participation in other events (like summer reading club), and improved behaviour of the teens in the library (Scordato, 2008).

At the Public Library of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County (House & Engelbrecht, 2008) they found their gaming program not only improved the library's status among the teens but by creating cross-generational gaming events they helped a wide range of patrons become more comfortable in the library. Teens volunteered to help out both younger and older gamers during the programming and all participants, young and old, found staff more approachable outside of the gaming event having seen them in this more casual environment.

If it is so great, why aren't all libraries jumping on the bandwagon? There definitely are dissidents out there. Grosso (2008) frets that gaming in the library is just another step further away from the initial role of libraries as a place of education for the masses. Nor is he alone in this implication that there is nothing educational about games. However the numbers show that despite the dissident opinions, most public libraries are, in fact, at least part-way on the bandwagon. In a survey of 400 public libraries in the US approximately 70% of the libraries financially supported gaming (Nicholson, *The Role of Gaming in Libraries: Taking the Pulse*, 2007). Although gaming was defined in a broader sense (from board games, to chess, to computer or console games), when asked specifically about PC or online games, 82% of the libraries allowed users to play them in the library. Therefore even if the financial support is not there specifically for computer gaming, it is not being restricted. In this same survey, they found that 13% of the libraries ran console gaming programs (Nicholson, 2007).

Online gaming, game collections, or gaming programming?

Nicholson's study showed that most libraries allow computer gaming to occur in the library but the adoption of console games for collection or programming is much lower (Nicholson, 2007). It comes back to looking at the mission of the library and the community served to determine what collections and services are needed and/or desired. There is an ever-growing list of resources available for libraries looking to start gaming programming or a game collection. Huber (2008) provides a review of the common games that are must-haves for libraries starting a gaming collection. Neiburger's 2007 book "Gamers... in the library?!" emphasizing the importance of gaming programming over collection development, which may be counterintuitive to traditional library collection development. Neiburger explains that libraries are unlikely to have enough funding to immediately build an impressive game collection. Like any library collection, the most popular items are often checked out, therefore a non-library user coming to browse the collection of games will be disappointed and not return to the library again. In contrast, if the non-library user comes to a gaming event that they are able to participate in, there is a much higher likelihood they will return the library at a later date (Chapter 1, Neiburger, 2007).

Earlier I talked about game programming that went beyond the pimple-faced teenage boy audience by planning cross-generational gaming. But gaming programming doesn't even have to include playing games. Libraries often hold writing contest or workshops so why not take the same approach with games and hold workshops on designing games? Mulligan, Kelsey, and Davis (2007) looked at three examples of game design workshops including Broward County Library System who found that participants in their Youth Digital Arts CyberSchool "began to see that the library was

relevant to their interests, and several joined other teen programs offered by the library, checked out game design books, and began using the library's databases" (Mulligan, Kelsey, & Davis, 2007). Elthon Library, in Melbourne Australia, formed a focus group of boys aged 11-14 to assist with the planning of a new gaming area for a specific MMORPG game (Osborne, 2007). The boys not only came up with the rules for the new gaming area but they also created an introductory website and volunteered as experts to help new users (Osborne, 2007).

MODELLING GAMING

Libraries provide modeling for parents in many areas of children's services so why not provide guidance about gaming? At the 2007 TechSource Gaming, Learning, and Libraries symposium, Elizabeth Lawley raised this concern in her keynote speech: libraries are about evaluation; yet, when searching online for information about video games for kids, the reviews returned are unlikely to come from an authoritative source like a library or school. Lawley's hope is that in future years libraries will come up first in the list of hits for searches about video games for children (Lawley in Ward-Crixell, 2007).

So if parents aren't finding out information about games for children from the library, what are children doing online? Buckleitner, from MediaTech Foundation, compiled a report for Consumer Reports WebWatch earlier this year that chronicles the online activities of 14 children from 10 New Jersey families (Buckleitner, 2008). Although the study was not specifically about gaming, the majority of the sites frequented by children were sites with a gaming component. The study involved capturing video recordings (typically done by the parent or an older sibling) of the child online. Although a very limited sample size, the study provides a fascinating observation of what children ranging from 2 ½ to 8 years old are accessing online in their home environment.

Amongst other findings, Buckleitner found that sites with high educational quality (like PBS Kids or Sesame Street), did not provide as much appeal for kids as other more commercial sites (like Club Penguin or Webkinz). He observed that younger children (2-6) are more interested in games that don't continue from day to day since they are focused on what they are doing in the present, that pay per use services have absolutely no meaning to them, that anything that stops the game (like a free trial running out) can be very upsetting, and that they desire a social experience and are less likely to play by themselves but want a sibling or parent with them. He also observed that older children (5-8) are starting to understand the concept of avatars and the social context of online play, they are more concerned with the rules and they are starting to understand the difference between good sites and bad sites. However they are still unable to identify banners as advertisement except by trial and error: one child describes that banner advertisements as "don't do anything," because it disrupts the continued play of a game (p15, Buckleitner, 2008). The videos that accompany this report show disturbing images of children begging parents to pay for subscription services to online games and of one child entering a parent's email address without their knowledge into an online contest. Most of the games had a commercial aspect where tasks were accomplished to earn points or coins that could be spent on features within the game. However, you needed to be a paying member of the game in order to spend the points. So kids can play for free but they will want to join as members to enhance their experience (Buckleitner, 2008).

Teaching information literacy skills to a 4 year old isn't going to happen. But we can teach the parents. Why can't the library have installed (or linked to for web-based games) a set of age appropriate games for children? At a minimum, libraries should provide parents with game evaluation techniques and specific game recommendations to help them navigate the gaming world together with

their children. Surely providing our patrons access to this information fits in the mission statement of the public library.

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THE BONES READ

Amazing is the best word to describe the presentation that Gina McMurchy-Barber gave to an enthusiastic room full of grade five, six and seven students from Berkshire Park Elementary at the Fleetwood branch of Surrey Public Library. To begin, the children entered a dark “sacred cave” to the haunting sounds of Coast Salish chanting. They smelled sage smoke and were surrounded by the sight of large tapestries depicting pictographs and petroglyphs found in B.C. After listening to a short reading from her book *Reading the Bones*, the children heard about how Gina developed one of her main characters.

Over twenty years after working on an archaeological dig in Crescent Beach, and actually “reading the bones” of a Coast Salish elder, McMurchy-Barber has developed an intriguing book for preteens. Her presentation, with hands on activities for the students, included analyzing historic artifacts and learning how to develop characters for stories based on these objects. Covering such topics as archaeology, local history and creative writing in one session made for a memorable learning event for the listeners, myself included. I would highly recommend her as both an author and educator for library and school outreach.

Gina McMurchy-Barber won the 2004 Governor General’s Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History. She is writing a sequel to *Reading the Bones*, entitled; *Broken Bones, Broken Dreams*.

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An Evening with a Star

Robert Stelmach a.k.a. Max Tell

Margaret Read-MacDonald needs no introduction, at least not to librarians, especially those who truly love a good story. The name *Read* says it all. It hints at her many years of experience as a librarian, professional storyteller, and presenter, inspiring young people to read through the art of storytelling. *Read* also speaks of her long bibliography of published works. These include picture books, storytelling collections, reference books, and CDs.

On December 11, 2008, at the Metrotown Library in Burnaby, British Columbia, everyone anticipated an inspiring evening of storytelling and many tips on how to tell a story well. No one left disappointed. The workshop was sponsored by The Children's Services Committee of Public Library InterLINK of British Columbia.

Margaret is neither tall nor short, but somewhere in between. She reminds me a little of my grandmother, as I remember her many years ago. Margaret's dress was simple, with a light blue pattern. Her hair was on the short side of medium and gray in colour. One's first impression might be that she is a quiet, unassuming, little old lady, nothing more. But first impressions can be deceiving, and in her case, they certainly are. When Margaret tells a story or conducts a storytelling workshop, her demure brightens from that of a single candle to a festival of lights.

In spite of her natural ability to make a story come alive, her style is simple and direct. The voice of a dog barking, a duck quacking, and a snake hissing, or any one of them talking is as natural as her every day speech. She sings a song here and makes waves in the heavens with her hands there, helping her audience to feel the story as much as listen to it. Her entire body turns a story into an experience, a true to life experience that captivates her audience completely.

During her workshop, her presentation style is just as simple, yet rich with examples and performance possibilities. On this occasion, she told a story, and then re-told it, as if running a tape recorder on fast forward. Then, she had us to tell it. We amazed ourselves with our own abilities to memorize a story so quickly.

She followed this by teaching us two more stories in the same fashion, with slight alterations. In the first case, we worked in groups of three, in the second, in pairs. And in the third, every one of us took part in an experience of gleeful mayhem. Still, Margaret had more to share with us. She told an echo story, where we echoed every phrase, in some cases every word. And she told a white board story, drawing on the board as the story unfolded.

Between each story, Margaret threw in anecdotes, personal experiences as a librarian and storyteller. One most recent gem tells of an experience in a New York library. She had just finished a session. The audience had just dispersed, when suddenly Senator Hillary Clinton poked her head in the door. "Have I missed it all?" she said. "Would you be so kind to tell me a story?"

Margaret satisfied her guest by telling the first story that came to mind, *Two Goats on a Bridge*. However, the story is about cooperation, and ends with the teller turning to the audience and asking, "What kind of a goat are you?" Senator Clinton smiled and replied, "I hope I'm the cooperative kind." Then Margaret turned to us and smiled like a mischievous elf, "We're never too young to learn a good lesson," she said, "nor too old."

I began by introducing Margaret Read-MacDonald with one work, the word *Read*. Now I would like to end with just two, because nothing more needs to be said - *Fire Ball*.

Robert Stelmach, a.k.a Max Tell, recently published his fourth CD and Audio Book, "Little Johnny Small and Other Stories" which will be launched at the 2009 Ontario Library Association Conference to be held in January in Toronto. www.maxtell.ca.



Bibliotherapy and the Role of the Children's Librarian

Patricia Scott

For LIBR 527:Service for Children

Some might argue that we have been self-medicating ourselves with books since the creation of the codex. However, it is only in the last century that the term bibliotherapy has come to represent an organized and legitimate field of therapy that uses literature to heal (Jones 2006). Recognized and practiced by doctors, nurses and psychologists, bibliotherapy is also being practiced by "lay professionals" such as the public librarian. In particular, the children's librarian is becoming more and more involved in the practice of bibliotherapy through parent and teacher requests for materials that help their children or students cope with every kind of problem from getting new glasses, to sexual abuse. Because the issues addressed by bibliotherapy can include serious mental or physical health issues it is important to examine the role of the children's public librarian in the bibliotherapy process and where the public librarian's scope of practice begins and ends.

First described by Samuel Crothers in 1916 in *The Atlantic Monthly*, bibliotherapy was defined as a means of "bringing troubled persons together with books (Jones 2006 24)." Over the years this definition has been further developed, expanded and made more specific. Heath *et al.* refers to many authors including Cohn, Corr, Doll and Doll, and Paradeck when defining bibliotherapy as "sharing books or stories with the intent of helping an individual or group gain insight into personal problems (2005 564)." Beyond this, bibliotherapy has been further broken down into clinical and developmental bibliotherapy (Doll and Doll 1997 10).

This distinction between developmental and clinical bibliotherapy is important in clarifying the role of the children's librarian. Both developmental and clinical bibliotherapy involve steps in a therapeutic process (Doll and Doll 1997). However, the number of steps, and what those steps are specifically, is what distinguishes the two kinds of bibliotherapy. Clinical bibliotherapy consists of 5 steps: readiness, material selection, presentation of materials, comprehension-building and follow-up and evaluation (Doll and Doll 1997). Developmental bibliotherapy on the other hand consists of only 3 steps; material selection, presentation of materials, and comprehension-building, and does not include the preparation and follow-up steps that clinical bibliotherapy requires (Doll and Doll 1997). The two extra steps in clinical bibliotherapy, which include, examination of the client's problem, additional assessments, building a rapport with the client, and developing, monitoring and revising a plan of action, are typically the work of the medical or psychological clinician. (Doll and Doll 1997). The

other major distinguishing aspect of clinical and developmental bibliotherapy is found in the “presentation of materials” step. In clinical bibliotherapy “monitoring and defusing excessive distress and unhealthy emotional responses to the book” is part of the clinical bibliotherapy process—a step not included in developmental bibliotherapy (Doll and Doll 1997 11). Doll and Doll firmly and clearly distinguish the two kinds of bibliotherapy and those involved when they state; “when a program is clearly clinical, involvement of mental health specialists is mandatory (1997 13). However Doll and Doll do go on to confirm, “In either case [that of developmental or clinical bibliotherapy], collaboration among and within professions can only strengthen a carefully planned session with young people (1997 13).

This being said, although the children’s librarian may have a place in clinical bibliotherapy as a collaborator with a mental health specialists, most bibliotherapy work performed by librarians is developmental bibliotherapy in the library. Other names given to developmental bibliotherapy include “the art of bibliotherapy” (as opposed to the science), implicit developmental bibliotherapy and non-medical bibliotherapy (Jones 2006 25). In her exploratory study of children’s librarians’ reference services, Lu uses the term “coping assistance” to describe the work of developmental bibliotherapy in the public library setting.

With all this terminology one may ask what about readers’ advisory as a reference service? Isn’t readers’ advisory what children’s public librarians “do” when they recommend a book and how does that differ from bibliotherapy? Lu describes readers’ advisory as “interest –oriented” and as being “for pleasure reading...oftentimes it deals with a patron’s favorite fiction type or genre, author, or favorite book (2008 20). For example, “I loved the Narnia series, what do you recommend I read next?” The developmental bibliotherapy or coping assistance service is “problem–oriented—it deals with a patron’s personal problem rather than serving his or her recreational needs (Lu 2008 20).” For example “I need a children’s book on divorce (Lu 2008 20).” For the children’s librarian this means that “how the problem can be solved therefore dominates the librarian’s decision-making and selection of material” when addressing inquiries requesting coping assistance (Lu 2008 21). Doll and Doll describe readers’ advisory as a “widespread and firmly established part of library service to youth”, and as a “commonly accepted and integral part of library work with children and young adults (1997 45).” This being said, Lu’s study found that “children’s librarians provide coping assistance in a fashion different from what is defined in traditional reader’s advisory (2008 22).”

Lu found that the most frequently asked coping-assistance questions fell into one of five categories: behaviour, emotion, relationships, achievement and empathy (2008 17). Examples of coping–assistance topics as they relate to behaviour were improving manners, handling bullying and solving bed-wetting (Lu 2008). Emotional coping-assistance questions included handling anger or grieving a death (Lu 2008). Relationship questions involved coping with relationships with parents, siblings, friends or teachers and issues of divorce, sibling rivalry, new classmates and difficulties with teachers (Lu 2008). Achievement questions were more practical such as how to solve problems such as reading difficulties and lack of computer skills (Lu 2008). And empathy questions were related to helping children empathize with those who have disabilities or injuries (Lu 2008). Although Lu’s study was an exploratory one, an understanding of the kinds of inquiries posed to a children’s librarian is important in validating bibliotherapy as a distinctive part of reference service. Distinguishing bibliotherapy questions also helps in better understanding the information needs of children. Lu quotes Walter and Kuhlthau’s finding that “children’s information needs arise not only from school assignments but from their personal lives (2008 19).”

Although this distinction between bibliotherapy and reader's advisory may validate bibliotherapy as a separate kind of service provided by children's librarians, bibliotherapy has been further validated by supportive research within the mental health field. Jones refers to several meta-analyses studies by mental health specialists including Apodaca and Miller that support the efficacy of bibliotherapy particularly for those "whose mental health issues are minimal to moderate in severity (Jones 2006 25)."

These positive research findings support the kind of developmental bibliotherapy or coping assistance typically provided by children's librarians to their patrons in a library setting. These findings also support a resounding "yes" to the question "but does bibliotherapy belong in the public library?", particularly since bibliotherapy already appears to be happening (Lu 2008). Heath *et al.* write about J.T. Pardeck, a significant contributor to research in the area of bibliotherapy who,

"...supported adults, such as teachers and parents utilizing the techniques of bibliotherapy to facilitate children's understanding and emotional healing for commonly occurring problems, including difficulties with friendship, anger management, fear, adoption, foster care, moving divorce, blended families, single-parent families and alcohol abuse (2005 564)."

Heath *et al.* also write that Pardeck "envisioned bibliotherapy as a resource and support for children facing a variety of problems on a continuum of severity (2005 564)." The notion of a continuum of severity is important particularly when discussing the success of bibliotherapy for users with minimal to moderate mental health issues or struggling with the problems that arise in normal development. Children's librarians can play an important role in bibliotherapy for the general public especially in terms of assisting with book selection (Gold 2001).

If children's librarians are to conduct bibliotherapy using their knowledge of children's materials it may be helpful to understand how bibliotherapy works. Heath *et al.* refer to Nickerson when describing the five stages of bibliotherapy(2005). The first stage is called *involvement* in which the child becomes "caught-up" in the story (Heath *et al.*2005 567). Following involvement the child then goes through the *identification* stage in which they "identify with characters of the same age who are experiencing similar circumstances (Heath *et al.*2005 567)." The third stage is *catharsis* in which the child is "further pulled into the process of recognizing and vicariously experiencing the character's feelings (Heath *et al.*2008 567)." The next stage of *insight* is that at which the children reflect upon the events in the story and apply them to their own lives (Heath *et al.* 2005). And the final stage is *universalism*, in which children see that others have similar problems, that they are not alone in their challenges, clearing the path to access their own "personal resources and coping skills (Heath *et al.*2005 568)." It is to this final stage that the bibliotherapist hopes to lead their clients.

The process as described above may seem fairly straight forward, however, for many librarians knowing where their job begins and ends in the bibliotherapy process isn't always so clear. In fact, the responsibility can be distressing for the public librarian. Jones writes,

Even though most librarians wholeheartedly believe books can heal there is confusion about their role in the process. Principally, librarians worry about overstepping their bounds. They worry that a book suggested by them could heap additional distress on a patron who is already suffering (2006 24).

For children's librarians this means that they might need to "reexamine their duties and responsibilities in another context, that of providing information as a healing tool and not just as an educational or recreational device (Lu 2008 21)." For some children's librarians this might mean becoming more

aware of current community concerns so that they are prepared for questions that arise from the public (Jones 2006). It also may be necessary to link-up with other community organizations, to which librarians can refer patrons with more serious mental health needs (Lu 2008). Children's librarians, may also be helped by understanding the normal developmental needs and stages of children and youth in order to better assess whether or not the service they are providing falls within the boundaries of developmental bibliotherapy (Halstead 2002).

Understanding the dangers of bibliotherapy may also help children's librarians clarify their role in bibliotherapy. Doll and Doll give "four essential cautions" in the use of bibliotherapy (1997 17). The first is that a "too-casual prescription of books to children with serious problems can back fire (Doll and Doll 1997 17)." If a recommendation fails, it might discourage a child, or make them reluctant to try again (Doll and Doll 1997 17). Second, a plot or character that "resonates too closely with a child's own painful memories or experiences can be traumatic (Doll and Doll 1997 17)." Doll and Doll's third concern is that a "fictional plot may lead children to expect unrealistic outcomes for their problems (1997 17)." And lastly, "the bibliotherapy may simply be ineffective", meaning the child may not apply the gained understanding from the book to his or her own experience and never "create a plan of action" for change in their own lives (Doll and Doll 1997 17).

With all these cautions we are reminded that bibliotherapy is not a magical fix, suitable for all people in every situation. It is one of many therapeutic modalities and often works best combined with others (Heath *et al.* 2005). In order to assess one's level of involvement, Heath *et al.* offer the following "basic rule: the adults knowledge, training, experience and skill must be adequate to address the type and severity of the student's difficulty (2005 566)."

Librarians know their books. They are up to date on the latest and greatest of children's literature and are involved with children, teens, parents and teachers on a daily basis. The skills and knowledge possessed by children's librarians, as well as their accessibility to the public, makes them important contributors to the practice of bibliotherapy. When we understand the "most common purpose" of bibliotherapy, which is "to foster personal insight and self-understanding among children and youth who read", the children's public library reference desk seems a natural place for the practice of bibliotherapy (Doll and Doll 1997 7).

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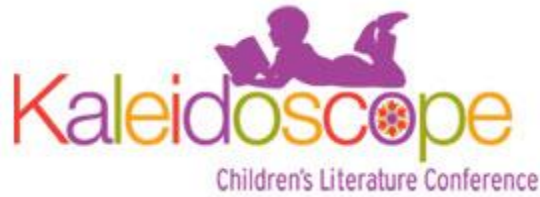
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Kaleidoscope9

Joanne Canow: December 30, 2008

If anyone has the opportunity to attend a Kaleidoscope conference, a magical gathering of children's literature artists, authors, and editors offered only once every four years – GO! I am very grateful to have had the experience and can't recommend it highly enough.

Over the course of two days and two evenings there were three plenary speakers (Dr. Ron Jobe: Keynote -Thurs. night, Dr. Jack Zipes: Fri morning, and Janet Stevens: Sat morning). During this intense period we were able to attend five conference sessions out of potentially thirty internationally renowned speakers addressing the theme, **Story: Bridging Worlds**.

I chose to see Shaun Tan (I did not go to see him at the **UBC Roundtable** event as I knew I would see him at this event), George Littlechild, Lois Lowry, Tom McLeod with Mindy Willett and Tessa Macintosh, and Michael Morpurgo.

I wanted to see everything related to aboriginal resources, so chose to see George Littlechild (whose art and illustrations I have adored since the early 1990's). He has illustrated some of Richard Van Camp's books, was adopted by a foster family from a reserve in the same town where my great-grandparents farmed in Alberta, and went to the same art school as I in Halifax, Nova Scotia. It was wonderful to hear the story of his personal struggles as an aboriginal and an artist, as well as the iconographic and symbolic meaning of many of the motifs he uses in his work. He consciously lightens intensely political messages in his paintings with brilliant colour, whimsy, and humour.

I attended the presentation about, *The Land is Our Storybook*, a children's series that presents the diverse voices of the many official indigenous nations in the Northwest Territories. The theme of this series is the important relationship the people have to their land. One young speaker was Tom McLeod (now 14), who was only eleven years old when he originally recited the stories that became, *The Delta is My Home*. There were numerous other speakers including the storyteller/facilitator/editor, photographer, and one more young native storyteller. George Blondin, a prolific Dogrib storyteller, was involved in developing this series before he passed away earlier this year. The many officially recognized languages and nations of the NWT, including Dene, Gwich'in, Tli Cho, Chipewyan, and Slavey (for example), will be represented in the series as both book and CD resources.

I felt it important to take the opportunity to hear the grand dame, Lois Lowry, whose lecture was very proper and dry, but nonetheless, interesting. She was decidedly autobiographical but shared interesting thoughts about some of her inspirations over the years. Lowry talked about how important the 'fragments of human memory' were to her storytelling, as well as the importance of dreams.

Lowry told an amazing story of meeting Allan Say in 1994 when he received the Caldecott for *Grandfather's Journey* and she received the Newberry for *Number the Stars*. As a young

child, shortly after the end of World War II, she and her family lived in an American military compound called 'Washington Heights' in Tokyo. She was there for three years, and disappointingly but not surprisingly, had little interaction with the Japanese. She described herself as a 'solitary observer' who loved to ride her bike and watch Japanese children playing in their schoolyards. After the awards ceremony, Lowry told Allen Say about having lived in Tokyo fifty years earlier, shortly after the war. He stared at her and said, "Ah, so you were the girl on the green bike." She was. Coincidentally his school was very close to Washington Heights, long since demolished. Since then, they've become very close friends.

I was not surprised by Shaun Tan's brilliance. In fact, I would have been shocked if he had not been as interesting as he was, given the attention and press he's been receiving lately. He was a lovely, gentle, and odd 'duck', almost as odd as some of the characters in his books. His illustrative strategies were clearly articulated. As he spoke, I felt as if I was holding his camera for him and looking through his lens, so clearly did he describe the reasons for his storyboard layouts. His compositions were eerie but insightful depictions of alienated people in strange lands. I believe Tan's work is highly autobiographical, representing his own unenthusiastic perceptions and feelings about his hometown and Australia. His stories closely reflect an immigrant's experience (perhaps even those told to him by his father and his partner).

For me, the conference highlight was Michael Morpurgo, one of the most amazing humanitarian storytellers I have ever heard. He blew me away, reduced me to tears, and inspired me to thank him with a kiss on his cheek!

Morpugo and his wife operate a charitable organization that oversees three farms in England and Wales. These farms accommodate inner-city school students for week long visits. Once a teacher himself, he is convinced that children spiritually benefit from experiences with animal husbandry and farm food production. Many of his stories are inspired by the children who visit their farms, and he magically weaves touching relationships, story, research, and passion into his books. Morpurgo is a charming man who cannot hide his farm boy roots, compassion, and sense of outrage over unjust acts to others, especially to animals. He has a powerful love for all animals that he clearly demonstrated to the audience during his storytelling 'swagger'.

Morpugo told of his life-long desire to write a story about a boy riding an elephant. Unfortunately, Rudyard Kipling beat him to it. While reading about the tsunami in Thailand and Southeast Asia, he was gripped by the story about a boy whose life was saved by an elephant. Just before the wave hit land, the elephant with the boy rider charged into the jungle. The boy's entire family died on the beach, but he emerges from the jungle a few days later, still riding the elephant. Voila, there was the inspiration for his boy on an elephant story!

His writing, reading, and life always happen in parallel - in a fusion of events that culminate with what he calls the 'tingle effect.' Morpurgo claims the 'tingle moment' is always felt distinctly at the very bottom of his spine (he happily pointed to the 'tingle spot' while standing on a chair with his back to us). Only then is he ready to write. His stories are written while lying propped up in bed. While he was the Writer Laureate of England he lived in the Savoy Hotel and wrote in 'a bed the size of Ireland'. He claims to be terrified by the blank page, which he beautifully described as the "open sea of the empty page".

Morpurgo offered us an unexpected gift! He read a story he had written for us the night before. It was a short changeling piece about a boy who, while watching a pigeon scratching on the sill outside his window, wished to experience the pigeon's life. The boy didn't imagine that this would be his final wish. After an amazing flight over his home and then high above the city, he returned to find himself scratching at the sill outside his window, looking at a young boy lying in his bed.

Some attendees found Dr. Jack Zipe's plenary presentation dour and pessimistic. I was inspired by it. His premise was that all children's writers/storytellers have a moral and social responsibility to build communities, inspire others, and positively change lives. He argued that many current books are dishonest – they present values that correspond with current social, corporate, economic, and political values in North America. One of his examples was *Gossip Girls*, a teen series about extremely wealthy American girls who push materialism, narcissism, and peer pressure to an extreme. In libraries, these series serve to attract young reluctant teen readers, despite our (librarian's) recognition that this is often their only redeeming value. As librarians, we promote the importance of developing literacy, regardless of the ethical implications, accepting the role that many genres and series play in increasing circulation statistics. Zipes believes that many highly popular books and magazines help to reinforce systemic social problems intrinsic to contemporary society. He attributes publishing trends to the current global economy which has merged international media companies, publishing houses, and political interests. Zipes suggests that we seriously question the 'truths' in stories that support and rationalize specific interpretations and values over others, mitigate humanity and hope, and limit and reduce the publication of truly great stories that might encourage social resistance and honest debate.

Zipes is an academic whose reputation has been built on an examination of traditional fairy tales (and for that matter, stories) that, when removed from their original historical context, are changed and transformed into very different stories with very different messages. Many examples of this type of cultural appropriation are found in the stories produced by Disney. Zipes is concerned for the generations of North Americans who believe they have read (and watched) traditional European fairy tales such as *Sleeping Beauty*, when in fact they are Disney stories (middle class American fantasies). He argues that viewers do not 'know' the original stories, because the stories have been altered to correspond with the values of the corporate cultures (Disney, for example) that dominated the twentieth century. Given his research interests, it is not surprising that he is alarmed by the potential impact that twenty first century globalization, homogenization, and corporate marketing strategies might have on the hearts and minds of our vulnerable children and youth.

Interestingly, both Zipes and Jobe addressed the same phenomenon - the role of current global economics on publishing houses (though from the perspective of different disciplines and nations). Jobe was bitter about the economic changes that have altered a once vital Canadian publishing industry. As an advocate of, 'only the best will do for our children,' Jobe was clearly disheartened by the increasing emphasis on international sales and marketing in Canadian publishing. He argued that generic books are chosen to appeal to children everywhere - in the USA, the UK, and Australia. Consequently, our publishing industry no longer takes risks, produces materials with Canadian regional or multicultural voices, nor supports the artistic integrity of our first class Canadian authors and illustrators.

Both Zipes and Jobe had a similar message. Because the 'medium is the message', it was easier to understand, interpret, and accept Jobe's message compared to that of Zipes. Many of us have heard Jobe address roundtables and conferences before. We appreciate that he has worked tirelessly to promote wonderful Canadian authors and illustrators while helping to establish many Canadian children's and youth literature awards. We listen to him when he complains about the impact of marketing economies on the quality of Canadian publishing.

We find it more difficult to grasp Zipes' argument. He is an American academic and researcher whose work is premised on media, culture, and critical theory as well as literary and aesthetic criticism. Many of us do not understand the language of these discourses. They are hard to comprehend in an hour long presentation. However, his argument has similar value and merit - because of the economic relationships between publishing houses, corporate media, and world politics, we are too easily seduced by stories that have the potential to change and corrupt the values of our children and youth – stories that place capitalism and materialism above that of the human spirit, truth, and inspiration.

The messages of Jobe and Zipes made me reflect on the power of story – the power to either bridge or destroy worlds. They reminded me of my role as both an individual and a librarian to support stories that give rise to honesty, diversity, and inspiration.

<http://www.kaleidoscopeconference.ca/presenters.html>



2008 Presenters:

[Linda Bailey](#) [Tom McLeod](#), [Mindy Willett](#) and [Tessa Macintosh](#) Elizabeth Bicknell - Editor, Candlewick Press [Ben Mikaelson](#) [Betty Birney](#) [Michael Morpurgo](#) [Janell Cannon](#) [Beverly Naidoo](#) [Sneed Collard III](#) [Allen Say](#) [Wallace Edwards](#) [Bill Slavin](#) [Gayle Friesen](#) [Eileen Spinelli](#) [Robert Heidbreder](#) [Janet Stevens](#) Ron Jobe - Professor of children's literature, University of British Columbia [Shaun Tan](#) [Julie Lawson](#) [Ian Wallace](#) [Betsy Lewin](#) [Melanie Watt](#) [Ted Lewin](#) [Tim Wynne-Jones](#) [George Littlechild](#) [Werner Zimmermann](#) [Lois Lowry](#) Jack Zipes - Scholar, folklorist, authority on fairytales



Red Cedar & Stellar 2008/2009 Book Awards

Vancouver - Thousands of children in Grades 4 – 12 across the province are cracking spines and flipping pages as part of BC's Red Cedar and Stellar Book Award free 5-month "read-a-thons." The process is now in full swing as students rank the short-listed titles in preparation for online voting in April.

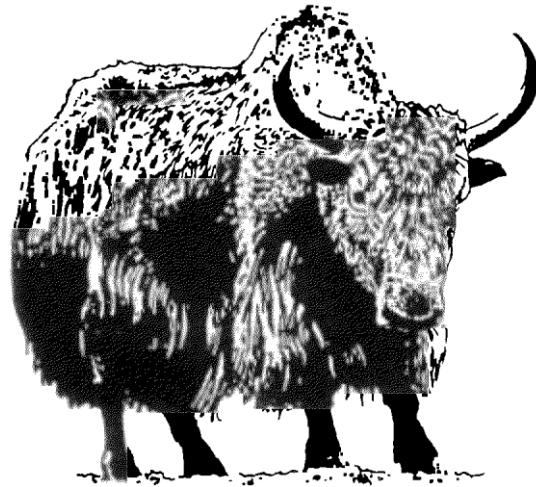
The Young Readers' Choice Awards Society founded Red Cedar, for students in Grades 4 – 7, and Stellar, for students in Grades 8-12, to promote quality Canadian children's literature and to increase literacy among youth. The Red Cedar Awards and Stellar Award are all administered by the Young Readers' Choice Awards Society.

Nominees are announced during Canadian Children's Book Week in November. Between November and April, participants are invited to read and review at least five of the nominated books from each category. Students then vote for their favourite titles in April. Red Cedar and Stellar Award winners are announced in May at regional Red Cedar galas around the province with readers and authors in attendance.

There will be three Red Cedar galas on Saturday, May 9th in Victoria, Cranbrook and Coquitlam.

For more information about this year's titles and authors, student reviews, teacher's resources, online voting and galas visit www.redcedaraward.ca or www.stellaraward.ca

Contact Kate Adams, co-President of the Young Readers' Choice Awards Society, at yrcapres@gmail.com or 604-278-9811 ext 634 to speak with representatives from the Society, selection committees, or students participating in this year's competition.



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