



# THE TEACHING LIBRARIAN

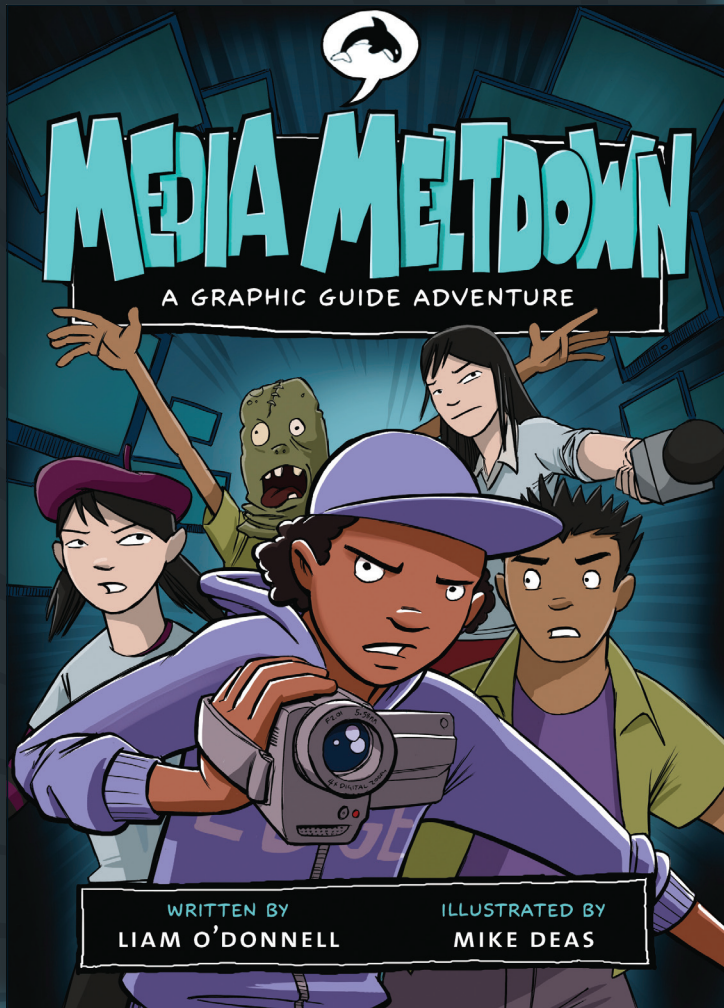
The Magazine of the Ontario School Library Association  
volume 17, number 2 ISSN 1188679X



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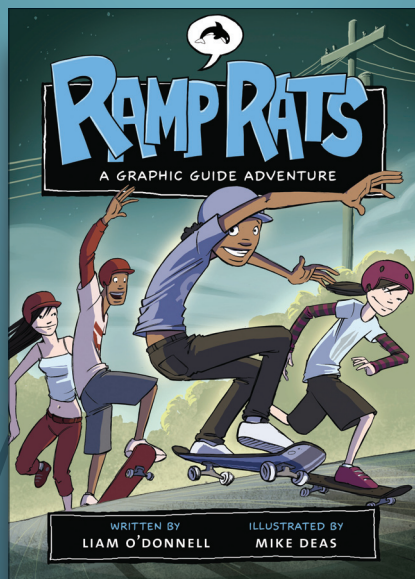


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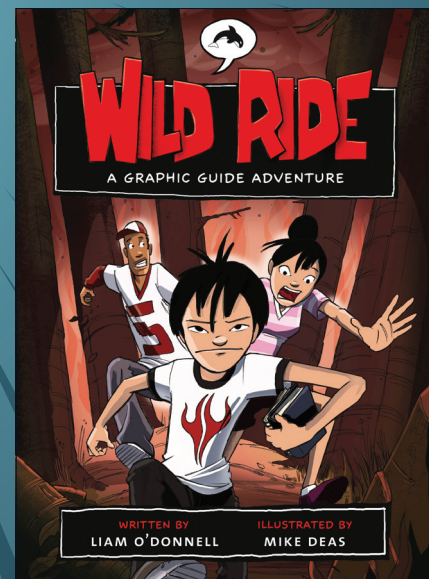
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*The Teaching Librarian* is the official magazine of the Ontario School Library Association. It is published three times a year to support OSLA members in providing significant and effective library programs and services. *The Teaching Librarian* promotes library programs and curriculum development that furthers exemplary educational objectives. The magazine fosters effective collaboration within the school library community and provides a forum to share experience and expertise.

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## **TL** guidelines

- V. 17, no. 3 "Celebrate @ your library"  
Deadline: February 2, 2010
- V. 18, no. 1 "What Works @ your library"  
Deadline: May 10, 2010
- V. 18, no. 2 "Listening and Speaking @ your library"  
Deadline: September 22, 2010

Articles of 150–250 words, 500 words, or 800–1,300 words are welcome. Articles, when approved, should be accompanied by good quality illustrations and/or pictures whenever possible. Text must be sent electronically, preferably in a MS Word (or compatible) file. Pictures can be printed or digital (minimum size and quality are 4" x 6" and 300 dpi, approximately 700 MB and in jpeg format, if electronic). With photos which contain a recognized individual, please secure the individual's permission in writing for the use of the photo. Photos taken at public events, or crowd shots taken in a public place do not require permission from the subjects. All submissions are subject to editing for consistency, length, content, and style. Journalistic style is preferred. Articles must include the working title, name of author, and email address in the body of the text. OSLA reserves the right to use pictures in other OSLA publications unless permission is limited or denied at the time of publishing. Any questions about submissions should be directed to the Editor of *The Teaching Librarian*: TingLeditor@gmail.com.

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*The Teaching Librarian* is a general magazine for OSLA members and not a scholarly journal. If your article does require citation of sources, please provide them within the text of your article or column with as much or as little bibliographic information as necessary for identification (e.g. book title, year). If you feel that the works you are citing require full identification, please provide a bibliography at the end of your piece, formatted according to the latest Chicago Manual of Style (15<sup>th</sup> edition) or APA Style.

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Photo : Julie Millan

**Cover Photo Credit** : Grade 8 student Morgan Leber, of Swansea Public School. In this photo, a Grade 1 girl hugs a veteran after the school's Remembrance Day ceremony.





# FREE @ your library™

## Diana Maliszewski



I am a child of the '80s, and having grown up in that era, I can't help but love some of the bands that came of age at that time. One of my favourite late-night pastimes is to get online with my friends Jennifer and Rum and look at old music videos together on YouTube.

What does this have to do with the theme of the issue? Bear with me.

One of the usual items on VJ Rum's playlist is Wham!'s "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go"—a light, upbeat hit that usually leads us to listen to more "mature" George Michael songs, like his 1990 hit, "Freedom". I can't remember all of the words to the song, but, like many fans, I can still hear the most important word ringing out loud and clear as George and the choir shout out "freedom" over and over.

I began to realize what a powerful word "free" can be. Even the overused sales pitch, *buy one, get one FREE* catches our attention. We want to be free—from harm, from debt, from stress. We like it when things are free. We seek freedom in all its forms—freedom to express ourselves, freedom to be ourselves, and, ultimately, freedom to live as we want.

Just a few keystrokes away from George Michael's videos on YouTube, lives Martin Luther King Junior, famously quoting the spiritual at the end of his historical speech: "free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, free at last". While some might call it crass to compare an artist who wants to be free from the constraints of an image fabricated by his record label with the exultation of a people oppressed for generations rejoicing in opportunities denied to them, I mean no disrespect. There is freedom to, and freedom from. I believe the idea of freedom, in every sense of the word, makes people want to sing out loud.



"Free to read, anywhere, anytime"

Photo Credit: Myra Collins  
(Yukon River, 2009; from right to left: Rosemary Ganley, Bev Assinck, Pat Parnall, Ali Farlow)

**So what is free at your library?** We don't charge for the privilege of borrowing the books, nor do we charge to access our digital resources. And I know many a librarian who is ready and willing to offer top-notch, relevant advice for free. Read in this issue about giving freely, being free to learn, what's copyright free, and about people who gave their lives so we could be free from tyranny. I just hope you are able to find enough free time to enjoy this issue from cover to cover. ■

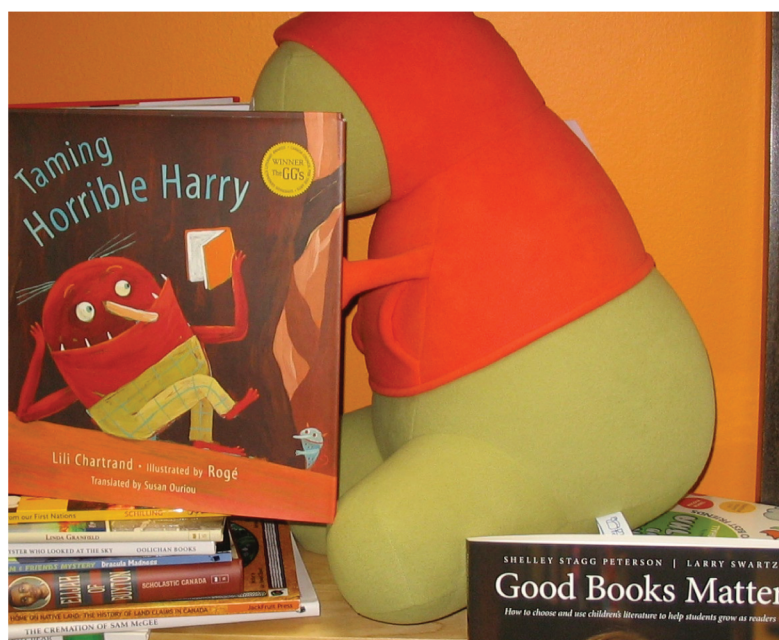






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ONTARIO SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

# President's Report

Ruth Hall



Free, or almost free...

## Library Camp OTF: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library Learning August 5, 2009, OISE

This summer, 38 teachers with various levels of experience in the school library came together in Toronto for the first ever OTF (Ontario Teachers' Federation) Library Camp. For a minimal \$50 registration fee, participants were provided with three days of workshops, two nights accommodation, breakfast, and lunch. That's about as free as it ever gets to stay in Toronto, even if you have relatives. Under the nimble leadership of facilitators Diana Maliszewski and Ruth Hall, participants worked their way through workshops ranging from Lance/Loerstcher's 5 Key Things to Do Every Day to Make a Difference to Carol Koechlin's work on the Library Learning Commons model, to educational gaming and the report on exemplary practices in school libraries.

*As part of our opening morning I shared some of my thoughts on the future direction of school libraries—provided to you here, (relatively) free of charge.*

There is significant discussion “out there” about the disconnect that students, and even their parents, as digital natives, feel toward the education system. “What If: Technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom”, a report by the Ontario Public School Board Association says, “We are educating a generation of children and youth who have no memory of a world without the Internet, without instant access to information, without an array of media at their fingertips.” But when students come to school they feel “they have to ‘power down’ to fit into an environment that offers fewer options for learning than are available in the life they live outside of the school” (7). This is happening at the same time as schools and boards face pressures to continue to raise graduation rates and standardized test scores, while coping with shrinking school populations and pressures from a weak economy. We are seeing an increase in the use of virtual schooling and demands to embrace mobile technologies. In a world where more than half the population owns a cellphone, what does it mean for school environments when, to quote Carly Shuler, “children under 12 are one of the fastest growing segments of mobile technology users in the U.S.?”

The changes demanded in education require a shift from: teacher-centric to learner-centric; classroom-based teaching to “anyplace, anytime” learning; mandated courses to individualized learning and students producing knowledge rather than only consuming it (Frey). This isn't news to many of us, but there is an increasing sense of urgency to get started, if we have not already done so, in shifting our professional practice and in recognizing the need to address this shift in focus in our library classrooms. We may face challenges in our school boards because of restrictions on our ability to download or access certain sites or tools. Yet working with these technologies is essential, if we are to build our capacity to assist classroom teachers and understand how to use technology to engage students in deeper thinking and understanding. The 2009 report *Beyond the Bubble: Technology and the Future of Student Assessment*, expresses concern that technology, in spite of its potential, has in many cases not changed core practices and methods in education (Tucker, 7). School libraries have a key role to play in supporting use of technology that help teachers move beyond simply putting a new wrapper on the same old “bird unit”, which is nothing more than reciting facts.

If school libraries are embracing technology, are we giving up on books? When we advertised this session we said, “libraries are radically different from the past.” I don’t know that it is so much that libraries are radically different as it is that technologies continue to evolve and that libraries continue to embrace technologies, new and old. This is the good news story for school libraries and the Internet technologies we call Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is “about giving people the opportunity to reach out to others, overcome differences, and make the world seem a little smaller”(Steiner). It isn’t a competition about print or digital resources, it’s about personalization, connection and hopefully making meaning—all of which fit perfectly into the role of school libraries. Libraries are still about reading, but we aren’t just the book people anymore. The opportunities for us to extend resources to be used simultaneously by multiple learners in the library, from any networked computer in the school building and from home, open up tremendous possibilities to give more equitable access wherever and whenever resources are needed. This is the promise of Knowledge Ontario: that of providing all school libraries throughout the province with access to a common bundle of database subscriptions. It has arguably done more to create equity in our school libraries than any other project in recent years. The challenge still remains to ensure that students and teachers receive the training and support they need to be able to use this tremendous resource to its full potential.

Will Richardson, OSLA’s Spotlight Speaker at Super Conference 2009, estimates that only about 5% of educators are really thinking about the big shifts that Web 2.0, also known as the Read/Write web, brings to the way kids learn. This is a conversation of which school libraries should be part. It doesn’t mean that we all need to be experts on the use of the new technologies. We have colleagues in the classroom that may be experts; we have kids who are often experts. Our role is to be facilitators and risk takers, to try out at least some of these tools and to share the work going on in our midst. This is what the new vision of school libraries, encompassed in the library learning commons, suggests. Our work isn’t limited to that room, the library. Our work is to facilitate connections throughout our buildings, to students’ homes, and into the community.

I’ve been tossing around a lot of names and I’m going to add one more. At OLA’s annual meeting, Michael Ridley, Chief Librarian and Chief Information Officer at the University of Guelph, delivered a keynote entitled “Do Libraries Matter?” One of the central thrusts of his talk was the concept of the library’s role in sense making. Traditionally, libraries have been repositories, from which to guard and to control access to resources. Ridley suggests that this role is no longer needed when information is so easily found outside of the physical library setting. Where libraries make the difference is in “sense making, by helping people to make sense of the mass of information available to them.” This fits with a 2005 Media Awareness Network survey of research preferences of grade four to eleven students. They found that most students prefer the Internet over books from a library as their primary research information source. However, when students are asked what Internet-related subjects they would like to learn about in school, the top choice for 68% is “how to tell if information you find on the Net is true or not.” This is the school library’s “sense making” opportunity.

So what does all of this say about future directions of school libraries and teacher-librarians? It says we need to reflect on where we put the energy in our practice: how we build collaboration within and outside of the library, and frame lessons which are relevant to the world outside of school. It says we must create those opportunities for sense making, personalization, and for students to engage us as teachers, while we engage with them as learners and knowledge creators. Only by focusing on these things can we ensure strong library programs in the future.

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The theme of this issue of *The Teaching Librarian* is **free @ your library**. With news headlines constantly shouting recession and cutbacks, most people are becoming more budget conscious than ever before. So how can educators keep delivering great programming that uses technology when we are watching our budgets dwindle before our eyes? Well, we are a creative lot: check out the Idea File in this issue to see how your colleagues are using their research skills to locate fabulous freebies. We are also a helpful lot: click on the links below to see how some libraries are helping other libraries by offering free resources and training through the Internet.

#### **The Clearinghouse**

<http://www.sols.org/links/clearinghouse/index.htm>

The Clearinghouse will be of interest to anyone who works in a library. It is a great source of information on a wide range of library topics from funding to technology to French resources. Hosted by Southern Ontario Library Service, there is a link to Ontario Library Service North, plus many relevant external sources. The site is easy to use and full of Canadian content. I found the “technology” link to be of interest; particularly the Adaptive Technology section that showcased free downloads for products like Browsealoud (reads websites aloud while highlighting words for the reader) and Dewey Pictograms (helps people with developing literacy skills to better locate items in the library).

#### **OPAL (Online Programming for All Libraries)**

<http://www.opal-online.org/archivelis.htm>

OPAL, described as an “international collaborative effort” by libraries and their partners, provides training and web programs to library users as well as library staff. OPAL’s programs include live online events, during which participants interact using technologies such as voice-over-IP, text chatting, synchronized browsing, and more. Everyone is welcome. There is no need to register; you can join a session that is in progress, or you can check the archive for previous sessions. This site is hosted by TAP Information Services, a small technology company in the business of innovation.

#### **Ministry of Natural Resources**

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species/2ColumnSubPage/262180.html>

The Ministry of Natural Resources offers free “nature” screensavers (for Windows and Mac) and an endangered species colouring book for children that highlights Ontario’s endangered plants and animals.

#### **Curriculum Services Canada**

<http://www.curriculum.org/tcf/teachers/projects.shtml>

Curriculum Services Canada offers free, top-notch, teacher-developed resources on a variety of subjects, at both elementary and secondary levels. Many of these lessons are cross-curricular. For example, the “Eco Footprints” lesson plan (created in 2009 for grades

1-8) could help teachers meet the new environmental curriculum requirements.

#### **FREEDOM TO...**

The following links may not offer anything for “free,” but they do have the word “free” in their titles so they count (okay, that may be a stretch). A techie friend recommended Freedom to Tinker (their catchphrase is “Freedom to Tinker... is your freedom to understand, discuss, repair and modify the technological devices you own”), and I’m a regular visitor at both the Freedom to Read and Freedom to Write sites in an effort to keep abreast of challenges to intellectual freedom.

#### **Freedom to Tinker**

<http://www.freedom-to-tinker.com/>

Freedom to Tinker is hosted by Princeton’s Center for Information Technology, a research center that studies digital technologies in public life. There are many different threads of commentary, ranging from very high level techie talk (I saw one recently on androids!) to open dialogue on banning online communities (such as Twitter and Facebook) in public workspaces. The online community issue is becoming increasingly relevant in our schools and libraries since students want, and expect, to be able to log on and tweet or write on someone’s wall whenever they want. The site is academic in nature, but is largely accessible to those who might call themselves “developing” techies.

#### **Freedom to Read**

[http://www.freedomtoread.ca/freedom\\_to\\_read\\_week/index.asp](http://www.freedomtoread.ca/freedom_to_read_week/index.asp)

Freedom to Read Week is an important annual event that should be highlighted in every school library. Most students are shocked to hear that the Harry Potter books were challenged in the US for the inclusion of “wizardry” or that *The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny* were banned in parts of England because the stories “portrayed only middle class rabbits”. This site encourages Canadians to “think about and reaffirm their commitment to intellectual freedom”, which is guaranteed under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This year, Freedom to Read Week will be celebrated February 21-27, 2010. For a small fee, you can order a Freedom to Read kit that contains a poster, a 40-page review, classroom activities, and relevant clip art.

#### **Freedom to Write**

<http://www.pencanada.ca/>

PEN is an international organization which works on behalf of writers forced into silence (or even into prison) because of government opposition to their work. Since many school and public libraries are hotbeds of ongoing debate about censorship, this site will be of interest to those who want to learn more about both the national and international censorship situation as well as those who want to know how to become more involved with advocacy efforts. ■

**Dear Rita,**

*I want to carry a wide variety of resources in my library but my school community is ultra conservative. When I go shopping for books, I'm always worried about what some of the parents, students, or teachers will say about my selections. They wouldn't hesitate to complain to the administration about books they find controversial and to push for their removal from the library. They get upset because they think some books are too violent, too sexually explicit, too immoral, or too rude. I don't want to antagonize my community, but I believe in freedom of choice and feel I am neglecting to provide a balanced collection for all of my students. I want to have the kinds of books that other schools in my board have on their library shelves. Any advice?*

*Censored by the Community*

**Dear Censored,**

This is one of the biggest issues that arises at one time or another for teacher-librarians. But don't despair, many of your colleagues have been in this situation and have found ways to deal with challenged materials.

First of all, point out that it is your obligation to uphold the rights and freedoms of the students in your school, and not to censor. The Ontario Library Association states, "intellectual freedom requires freedom to examine other ideas and other interpretations of life than those currently approved by the local community or by society in general and including those ideas and interpretations that may be unconventional or unpopular". In addition, "freedom of expression includes freedom for a creator to depict what is ugly, shocking and unedifying in life." (Go to [www.accessola.com](http://www.accessola.com) link to About OLA/Membership and then to OLA Issues for the complete statement.) Where else can our students go to find information on sensitive issues and be provided with balanced and unbiased answers?

Secondly, stress that the school library serves all students from a variety of different cultures, religious backgrounds, and family sexual identities and needs to have resources that address all students. Also, stress that students are never forced to take out any one book. They are always encouraged to choose from a wide variety of materials in the school library.

Having said this, a teacher-librarian will have a much easier time involving challenged materials if his/her board has a selection policy to refer to for support. It usually states the main reasons materials are purchased, and covers such arguments as supporting curriculum and providing balance in the collection. It often points out that materials are

selected for their whole, and not for individual words, pictures, etc., which may be taken out of context. There is often a procedure to follow in the case of challenged materials. If your board does not have one, perhaps you can initiate the process.

The Cass City School Board (Michigan) provides an example of a "Challenged Book Procedure": <http://www.casscityschools.org/Sec9Curriculum/CLibraryBooks/tabid/527/Default.aspx>.

Some boards go so far as to have equity policies that require resources to be available on a variety of sensitive issues. To heighten awareness of our role in providing choices of materials for all of our patrons, why not celebrate Freedom to Read Week by making it an event in your library? For more information, go to <http://www.freedomtoread.ca/>.

**Rita**



**Do you have any school library concerns or gripes? Need advice?**

**Just ask Rita! contact Rita at [rita@accessola.com](mailto:rita@accessola.com) You'll never regret it!**

**She's reliable, reasonable, rich in experience... and always right!**



# TL Professional Resources

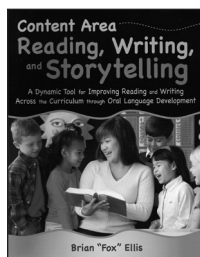
## Content Area Reading, Writing, and Storytelling: A Dynamic Tool for Improving Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum through Oral Language Development

Brian "Fox" Ellis  
2009  
9781591587019

Ellis argues that it's important for both teachers and students to become storytellers and that storytelling can improve listening, reading, writing, and reasoning skills across the curriculum. In *Content Area Reading, Writing and Storytelling*, Ellis presents all the information K-12 teachers need to incorporate storytelling into their classroom practice.

In only seven chapters, Ellis covers everything would-be storytellers have to know, from storytelling basics to connections to various subject areas, creating thematic units, and building learning communities. Two appendices provide story sources and lesson plans listed by subject-area standards (note: standards are American). A detailed table of contents and an index make information easy to find.

Highly recommended



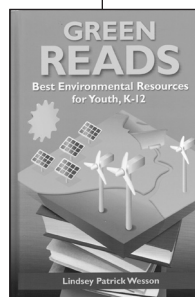
for any teacher interested in incorporating storytelling into their programs. An essential purchase for board professional collections.

## Green Reads: Best Environmental Resources for Youth, K-12 (Children and Young Adult Literature Reference Series)

Lindsey Patrick Wesson  
2009  
9781591588344

Divided into five chapters, *Green Reads* suggests titles about Global Warming, Pollution, Earth's Resources, Recycling, and Conservation for students in Kindergarten through grade 12. Each chapter covers fiction, non-fiction, storytime, and non-print resources, with publication information and subject headings all published after 2004. Most chapters also include a selection of still-relevant older titles. A detailed table of contents as well as two appendices and author, title, and subject/grade indexes give easy access to information.

*Green Reads* is a useful tool for both collection and



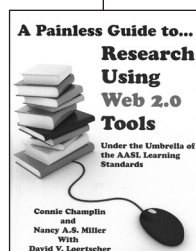
curriculum development, especially considering the current emphasis on environmental education.

Highly recommended for board-level professional collections. Schools with an environmental interest/focus will likely want to purchase a school copy for easy reference.

## A Painless Guide to... Research Using Web 2.0 Tools Under the Umbrella of the AASL Learning Standards

Connie Champlin and Nancy A.S. Miller, with David Loertscher  
2009  
9781933170428

As teacher-librarians, we know we're supposed to be teaching students how to use a research process model. And we know we're supposed to be using—and advocating for student use of—Web 2.0 tools. But how do we coherently connect all these pieces together? Well, reading this book would be a good start, because that's exactly what the authors do—demonstrate how Web 2.0 tools can be integrated into inquiry using a research process model. While the authors recommend *The Savvy 7*, a model they've developed, they do say this book can be used with any research process model and review several, including the 4-stage model recommended by the OSLA.



The introduction, "Inquiry in a Web 2.0 World", provides a sampler of research models, suggests resources for finding and exploring research models, and introduces *The Savvy 7*, the model recommended by the authors. Chapters 1 through 7 present a variety of Web 2.0 tools which can be integrated into the research process, as well as suggestions for further exploration of the Web 2.0. These tools include Webnote, Gliffy, iGoogle, del.icio.us, ZOHO Wiki, Chinswing, and Survey Monkey, all of which are free (an important consideration).

A quick, practical read. Highly recommended. You'll want your own copy of this book!

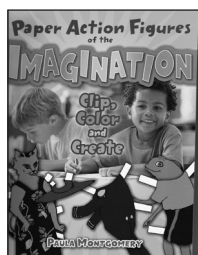
## Paper Action Figures of the Imagination: Clip, Color and Create

Paula Montgomery  
2009  
9781591587514

Chapter 1 includes a brief history of paper dolls and suggestions for making and using them for instruction. Chapters 2 through 17 present various themes (cats, cows, frogs, dinosaurs, giants, Santa Claus, etc.)—each with suggested titles, sources of paper dolls (both print and online), a lesson plan, and some ready-made paper dolls with costumes to cut and colour.

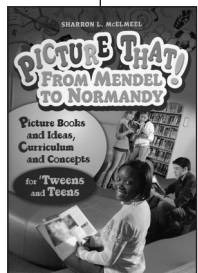
Teachers and teacher-librarians interested in exploring the use of paper

dolls as a class activity will find this book useful simply because it's a compendium of information, ideas, and sources. However, I suspect they will be disappointed by the quality of many of the paper dolls which are, frankly, unattractive with an old-fashioned look and blurry lines; and the animals are anthro-morphized (e.g. they walk on their hind legs and wear human clothes), even though this doesn't fit many of the recommended stories.



titles by Linda Granfield, but that was it). The list of books recommended by McElmeel is VERY American. True, no one list can satisfy everyone, but I was disappointed.

That said, McElmeel has put together an interesting list of picture books suitable for use with students in grades 4 through 12. Chapter 1 covers both how to use this book and how to use picture books with older readers. Chapters 2 through 63 each present a picture book. Each chapter includes a suggestion for using the recommended title as well as publication information, an annotation, background information, extension ideas, and a list of related books for further exploration. A quick list of picture books and two general indexes (authors, titles, and subjects), one to the book and one to the quick list, as well as a detailed table of contents, make information easy to find.



While some of the suggested titles could be used in Canadian classrooms, interested teachers and teacher-librarians would

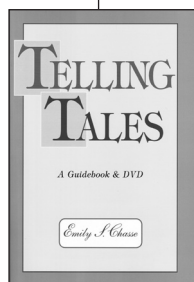
have to develop a similar list of Canadian titles (and there are LOTS available). This is exactly the sort of project that would make for a neat wiki!

Useful starting point, especially as it validates the use of picture books with older readers. Recommended purchase for board-level professional collections.

**Telling Tales: A Guidebook and DVD**

Emily S. Chasse  
2009

9781555706456



Chasse has been teaching storytelling for the past 20 years and shares that wealth of experience in *Telling Tales*.

The first three chapters provide "how to" information, including an introduction to storytelling, how to locate and select tales, and how to prepare and tell tales. Chapters 4 through 8 cover different types of tales, including classical mythology, family and life experience tales, legends and epics, ballads, and folktales. Chapter 9 covers digital storytelling. Chapter 10 introduces resources. Chapter 11 covers telling tales with children, both in school and in community settings. Chapter 12 covers ways to make storytelling even more fun and interactive, such as tandem

telling, plays, and puppetry. Chapter 13 covers additional considerations, such as setting up a storytelling course, planning events, and professional storytelling.

Chasse includes both information about storytelling and lots of tales. The accompanying DVD allows readers to see and hear tales, an important part of learning to be a storyteller.

While not written for teachers, *Telling Tales* will be of interest to any teachers and teacher-librarians interested in incorporating storytelling into their instructional practice. Chasse emphasizes that storytelling can be used with audiences of all ages—this isn't just for primary students!

Recommended for anyone interested in learning to use storytelling. Probably best as a personal purchase as it will be referred to often. ■

An interesting idea for grades 2 through 6. Optional purchase.

**Picture That! From Mendel to Normandy: Picture Books and Ideas, Curriculum and Concepts for Tweens and Teens**

Sharon L. McElmeel  
2009  
9781591585886

Given my love of picture books and my passionate belief that they have a place in high school classrooms and libraries, I was quite excited to have the opportunity to review *Picture That!* Unfortunately, the richness and depth of Canadian children's books is virtually ignored (I did spot two



# AGENTS OF POSITIVE CHANGE

## The Placement of GLBT Books in Our Libraries

**Ken Kosowan**

**A**s we all know, running a library is hard work. The list of responsibilities and tasks we accept seems to be never ending. While ensuring that our bookshelves are neat and tidy and our patrons find what they need is important, the power of advocacy should be in the foreground of our planning.

Many times, it is difficult to see what is going on in our collection, as the sheer volume of books can be overwhelming. While undergoing a massive weeding program, we discovered a problem with the categorization of books on our shelves. The Dewey system had determined that books dealing with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) issues would be listed under 306.76. This is in the area concerning sexuality, which initially seemed to make sense. However, when we had our noses firmly planted in the stacks as we weeded, we realized something further. Books on the very same shelf dealt with subjects such as prostitution, incest and divorce. At first we believed that these books had been shelved incorrectly or mislabeled. As a group, we were all quite surprised that books about GLBT issues would be grouped with such potentially dark and negative themes. When we went back to the source, the Dewey classification system, we realized it was an issue with the classification system itself.

We decided to collaborate with Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Gay-Straight Alliance, Youth Embracing Sexualities (YES). YES worked together with the teacher-

librarians to find a new, more inclusive and positive space for these books. The decision was to place books about GLBT social issues under 305.49, between women's rights and just before the social status area. Books that explored the rich history of GLBT peoples were placed in 905, an area that was listed as "social publications" and unused. Moving these books to another shelf seemed small, but did wonders to make our library an accepting and GLBT-friendly place.

By working with YES, the library staff was able to empower themselves as well as the student members of that group. Even this year, YES feels proud of their participation in such a worthwhile endeavour. Imagine if all libraries could move towards being the agents of positive change for our students. Our libraries reflect our communities, and all should feel welcome. The power of advocacy is available to all of us. ■

### DEWEY CALL NUMBERS

306.74—**Prostitution**  
306.76—**Homosexuality**  
306.777—**Incest**  
306.8—**Divorce**

# FREEDOM AND CHOICE

## Connecting Students and Books



Janet Challis

### Do you choose a book by its cover?

At Falgarwood Public School, students are choosing their next great read by choosing the bookmark.

Student Choice Bookmarks are found in books that have been recommended by the students in grades 5–8 for other students. Beginning last May, students have been indirectly participating in the reader advisory process by sharing books of particular interest to their peers. Using their chosen book, student book advisors fill out a Student Choice Bookmark with their own name, the title and author of the book, the genre, and any comments they wish to make. The bookmarks go into the book and the book goes onto a Student Choice display for other students to browse and select.

Our Student Choice display has had a huge impact on our students. The display is located in a prominent place in the library. Students report that it is helpful to them to see what their friends are reading, because it helps them in making a good book choice. Students make excellent book advisors because they are very effective at identifying the likes and dislikes of their peers. By using the bookmarks to promote their own interests and favourite authors, student book advisors have begun to build reading relationships with their peers.

Students at Falgarwood Public School have begun to see how freedom of book choice builds community and promotes reading. Also, the opportunity to express one's own reading interests encourages student book advisors to develop a sense of ownership, which I believe encourages them to browse the library collection to find new titles to read and recommend to others. The Student Choice Bookmarks Program is a catchy and appealing way to highlight great books and the joy of reading while promoting the freedom of choice and expression in your school library. ■

CHOICE!	
Class _____	
Title _____	
Author _____	
Circle the genre:	
Mystery	Adventure
Fantasy	Science Fiction
Humour	Animals
Classic	Historical Fiction
Sports	Horror
Nonfiction _____	Subject _____
Comments: _____	

### Or by its bookmark?

*The Teaching Librarian* volume 17, no. 2 15



# Reading and Remembrance 2009: Medals and Memories

## Angie Littlefield



Since its inception in The Year of the Veteran in 2005, Reading and Remembrance ([www.readingandremembrance.ca](http://www.readingandremembrance.ca)) has attracted some 100,000 students and an astronomical number of visitors. In addition to providing educators with reading and arts-based materials for Remembrance Day, this collaborative project by the Durham West Arts Centre continues to draw new partners. In 2009, the Ontario Library Association and the Ontario Historical Society joined Ontario Power Generation, founding sponsor, to promote the project provincially.

Reading and Remembrance has been mentioned in federal parliament and twice had the involvement of Ontario's Lieutenant Governor. We've reached schools in every corner of the province. Because teachers tell us how excited students are to learn new facets of what Canadians should be proud to remember, we want to spread the magic further. Each year we search out stories that personalize Remembrance Day for young people. Educators may select materials from four archived themes: In Flanders Fields; Anti-Racism and Holocaust Education; Women and War; and Art of Dissent. Research is underway for ten totally bilingual lessons for Medals and Memories, the 2009 theme.

Some of the current lessons include Victoria Cross recipients; diversity in service from First Nations to new Canadians; fighting anti-Semitism; animals awarded the Dicken Medal ("the animals' V.C.": [www.rafpa.com/Dicken.html](http://www.rafpa.com/Dicken.html)); Canada's decorated female combatants; and the medals and memories of Canada's Cadets and Junior Rangers.

Pre-reading questions are suggested to create readiness, with prompts during the reading and viewing to stimulate analysis, and post-reading activities to

encourage explorations in writing, reading, research, and the arts. The site also has stand-alone readings and links to websites that provide Remembrance-related materials for teachers to follow their own lines of research.

The "value added" piece of the Reading and Remembrance site is the handy access to multiple resources in a format friendly to the Ontario curriculum. The lessons go well with Civics, History, English, Visual Arts, and a wide array of elementary curricula.

Although teachers may download the ready-to-use lessons for Remembrance Day or to use at any time during the year, the Project Managers ask them to sign up for the Reading and Remembrance Honour Roll. A high participation rate ensures continuing support to develop more student-centred resources. We also want to do that to promote a greater awareness of the values Remembrance Day represents for school-aged children.

To encourage participation, the website introduces a new interactive feature this year. Young people may submit the profile of a local veteran or current service person and teachers and librarians may submit a lesson.

"We've set an October 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline, as we hope that young people and professionals alike will add to the body of knowledge for this year's theme; we would like to see their research and reading validated through on-line publication," says Project Manager Mary Cook. The website has a submission template.

Shelagh Paterson, Executive Director of the Ontario Library Association states, "Libraries have participated in this project in the past. We want to step forward a little more this year to promote a project that places a high priority on reading, research, and community collaboration. There are memories of veterans in all communities served by public libraries and we want to stimulate the search for the reading materials that honour the men and women who created those memories."

Don Terry, Manager of Community Affairs, Pickering Nuclear Generating Station concludes, "This project models excellence in public education. We are proud to be the founding and continuing sponsor of a project that this year will reach even further into Ontario communities to support veterans, reading, history, and diversity." ■

Photo : Naz Ahmed-Baty



**D**o you work in a school district where meeting face to face is limited by distance? Are you searching for challenging, job-embedded professional learning to meet your own needs? Would you like to connect with professional learners across Ontario? If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, then Learning Connections is for you.

Learning Connections (LC) is an online, networked, professional learning community for teachers from K–8, principals, vice-principals, district trainers, and supervisory officers across Ontario. It connects educators with the common goal of improving student achievement in literacy and numeracy. Using a blended learning approach of face-to-face sessions and an online learning community, Learning Connections helps educators connect with like-minded individuals across the province. The program is funded through the Literacy & Numeracy Secretariat and has been steadily growing over the past five years. It is affiliated with the award-winning ABEL (Advanced Broadband Enabled Learning [www.abelearn.ca](http://www.abelearn.ca)) program based at York University, Toronto. The Learning Connections program has grown out of the innovation and research process that has been fundamental to the success of the ABEL program.

The Learning Connections online community is accessed at [www.learningconnections.on.ca](http://www.learningconnections.on.ca). To enter the community as a school team or individual, you must first send your name and your school district email to [lchelp@yorku.ca](mailto:lchelp@yorku.ca). When you have your username and password, you have access to a rich and vital professional learning community where teachers share resources; collaborate with each other within districts and across districts; participate in professional development activities both in real time and in the online environment; and have access to cutting edge software tools to enhance teaching and learning at any level. LC resources and tools are also available for teachers to use with their students as they apply their learning in classroom practice.

Teacher-librarians, aware of the power of online learning communities, are collaborators, sharers of information, and, most importantly, school leaders. The Learning Connections community offers the opportunity for teacher-librarians to share their expertise provincially.

During the 2008-2009 school year, teacher-librarians in the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) began exploring how they could best make use of the LC learning community. Initially, teacher-librarians spent time browsing through the resources and sharing them with teachers in their individual schools. Towards the end of the school year those participants began thinking about how they could share expertise within the LC community in order to first, model exemplary practice in school libraries and second, promote online

# Learning Connections

Deb Kitchener

discussion with school library staff in school districts beyond YRDSB.

This idea of professional learning is promoted by Will Richardson (<http://weblogg-ed.com/about>), an avid proponent of networked learning communities and a blogger about educational issues. Richardson believes that, as educators, we need to change the way we learn before we change the way we teach. He defines Professional Learning Practice as a professional development model that immerses educators in environments and practices that allow them to learn and own the literacies of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning and teaching (<http://plpnetwork.com>). Learning Connections is the online forum for Ontario educators to help them make this shift in professional learning and move their learning practice forward.

Through participation in self-directed, online professional learning, educators must take responsibility for their own professional learning; develop meaningful professional learning relationships; and engage in learning in a manner that is much different from top-down district-determined “sit ‘n’ git” professional development. Our challenge is in changing how teachers think about learning and using Web2.0 tools for information sharing: the concept of giving information to get information. Teacher-librarians are familiar with this framework as they work with teacher peers in a face-to-face everyday; I know that many school library personnel are involved in this type of learning already, and that all teacher-librarians have the skills to best make the leap to an online collaborative teaching and learning cycle.

If you are a teacher-librarian, classroom teacher or any type of system leader looking to learn more about how you can access this self-directed professional learning community, Learning Connections will meet your needs. I look forward to meeting many new learners in our blended professional learning environment. ■





# FREED M

## Preserving Canadian Heritage for about

There have been questions within the educational community concerning the Copyright Board's recent tariff decision regarding the photocopying of printed works in Canada's elementary and secondary schools. The new tariff rate of \$5.16 per student—about the cost of a bag of popcorn—will cover the more than 250 million photocopies made in classrooms across the country each year; reproductions of printed materials that come from a repertoire of roughly 20 million published works including books, newspapers, magazines, and journals.

Since 1991, Access Copyright has provided a licence to Canadian schools based on a royalty rate that was arbitrarily set, and did not reflect what was actually being copied. In 2004, after a series of failed negotiations aimed at renewing the licence, Access Copyright applied to the Copyright Board to set a fair and equitable tariff to cover the photocopying of printed works in its repertoire.

In an effort to build its case in determining fair compensation for rights holders, Access Copyright commissioned and funded an extensive photocopy study, which ran from 2005 to 2006 and examined the actual volume and types of works being photocopied in classrooms across Canada (excluding Quebec). The study, based on data from nearly 900 elementary and secondary schools, revealed that over 250 million pages

of published works were copied over the course of a year. Not surprisingly, textbooks produced by Canadian publishers represented the vast majority of what was being copied.

After careful consideration of the evidence, on June 26, 2009, the Copyright Board of Canada made a decision to establish a tariff (royalty) rate of \$5.16 per student, per year—a fairer price for the hundreds of millions of photocopies used in schools. In many cases, these copies were used as substitutes for buying books. (Note: the new tariff covers only materials requiring royalty payments being copied in schools, and does not include the photocopying already permitted by the Copyright Act.)

With ever-increasing education costs, Canadian teachers have come to rely on having the ability to copy published content for their curriculum requirements. The tariff is not meant to replace the purchase of books but to augment the resources in the classroom and to provide the opportunity for each student to have a copy of the required reading. The tariff is what makes this practice possible; a viable, legal solution that gives teachers the freedom to copy portions of the resources they need, without having to consult individual copyright owners for permission. The tariff is paid for by the provincial ministries of education or local school boards, and the proceeds are passed on to copyright owners—Canada's



# M

## out \$5 per Student

creators and publishers—in the form of royalties.

In terms of education budgets, the total tariff is very small. However, it will make a huge difference to publishers and the creative people they employ. Canadian governments spent 38.5 billion on education last year. The amount of incremental increase in costs due to the tariff is extremely small in comparison, representing less than a tenth of one percent. The education system willingly pays market value for other required materials: desks, computers, maps, globes, sports equipment, etc. The Copyright Board decision merely confirms that the resources produced by Canadian writers and publishers for use in schools have just as much value.

The new tariff would also help sustain the “made-in-Canada” publishing industry. With fewer books being purchased, photocopying on such an enormous scale without regard for compensation will erode the ability of Canadian publishers to provide current and relevant resources for Canadian students.

The tariff decision is currently under appeal (judicial review) by the Ministers of Education and Ontario school boards, and as such, it could be months or even years before the final outcome is determined and rights holders are paid. Despite the delay, Maureen Cavan, Executive Director of Access Copyright remains confident that the outcome of the appeal will support the

Copyright Board’s decision and creators and publishers will be compensated fairly.

Ms. Cavan states, “The tariff acknowledges the valuable contribution of Canada’s book publishing industry. This is important to Canadians everywhere, because only these publishers produce the books that bring Canadian values and our Canadian heritage into Canadian classrooms.”

Because the Access Copyright tariff is paid for at the provincial ministry or school board level (in Ontario), most students and teachers aren’t aware that it’s in place. Students and teachers get the benefit of its coverage, enriching the learning environment. Other benefits of the tariff are obvious; with fairer compensation for thousands of Canadian writers, illustrators and publishers, creativity is fostered, helping to reinforce our national identity through their artistic efforts. All this for \$5.16 per student—not a bad deal.

To learn more about the K-12 tariff, or to find out what Access Copyright does, please visit our website at [www.accesscopyright.com](http://www.accesscopyright.com) or call us at 1-800-893-5777. ■

**Karen Smythe**

# Leading the Way in th

## Carol Koechlin



Photo: Julie Millan

**T**he Learning Commons is so much more than a room. As you might guess, it is about common places and spaces to experiment, practice, celebrate, learn, work, and play. But much more than that, it is about changing school culture and the way we do business in schools. The school library is now more than the hub of the school, where learners and teachers gravitate to find materials they need and work on projects. As well, the school library is transformed into a vital catalyst for school improvement for staff as well as students. This transformation calls for physical, virtual, and pedagogical changes in addition to a shift in mindset for all players.

We are at the crossroads of an unprecedented opportunity. Demands for school improvement, the call for 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills instruction, the growth of

Professional Learning Communities, and the potential of emerging technologies and Web 2.0 tools to re-engage the passion of teachers and the interest and learners cannot be denied. Alison Zmuda and Violet Harada say it best, “The power of the library media specialist (teacher-librarian) to contribute to the school has never been more vital, more feasible or more exciting than it is today” (2008).

Keeping pace with change is nothing new to school libraries and teacher-librarians. School libraries in Ontario have evolved over the past fifty years, from “book rooms” (built by caring parents and distributed on book carts that travelled from class to class), to designated libraries brimming with books, to the multi-resource facilities we take pride in today. Enriched print, multimedia, virtual collections, and high-tech solutions changed everything about the way we access, circulate, and use information and ideas, but it wasn’t new media types or even technologies that were the biggest catalyst for change in Ontario school libraries. It was the 1982 Partners in Action document that dramatically changed teaching and learning in those schools that fully embraced its philosophy. Scheduled classes and information skills taught in isolation were replaced with open timetables and teaching partnerships that designed and delivered inquiry learning experiences in the library. Since then, the global shift in education to programming heavy on classroom and school accountability has caused many educators and educational leaders to overlook the positive effects these programs had on both teaching and learning, school-wide. Many elementary school library programs have shifted back to scheduled classes, book exchange, and isolated computer and information skills instruction. Many secondary school librarians work hard at teaching referencing to ward off plagiarism and frantically try to address the requests of students to find the “stuff” they need to complete classroom teacher-designed assignments. We find ourselves moving backwards on the evolutionary scale. That should ring alarm bells.

We can no longer wait and let “nature” take its course. Students and teachers need our expertise and support now. We have all the “right stuff” to lead schools into sustainable improvement of teaching, learning, and learning to learn. Just as collaboration drove change in the 80’s, learning to learn is the pedagogical gold mine that must drive the change today. Successful schools will



# 1e Learning Commons

embrace learning literacies and work at developing skills, habits of mind, and responsibilities conducive to learning how to learn in both content knowledge and learning processes. As Michael Fullan says in his brilliant book, *The Six Secrets of Change*, “learning is the work” (2008).

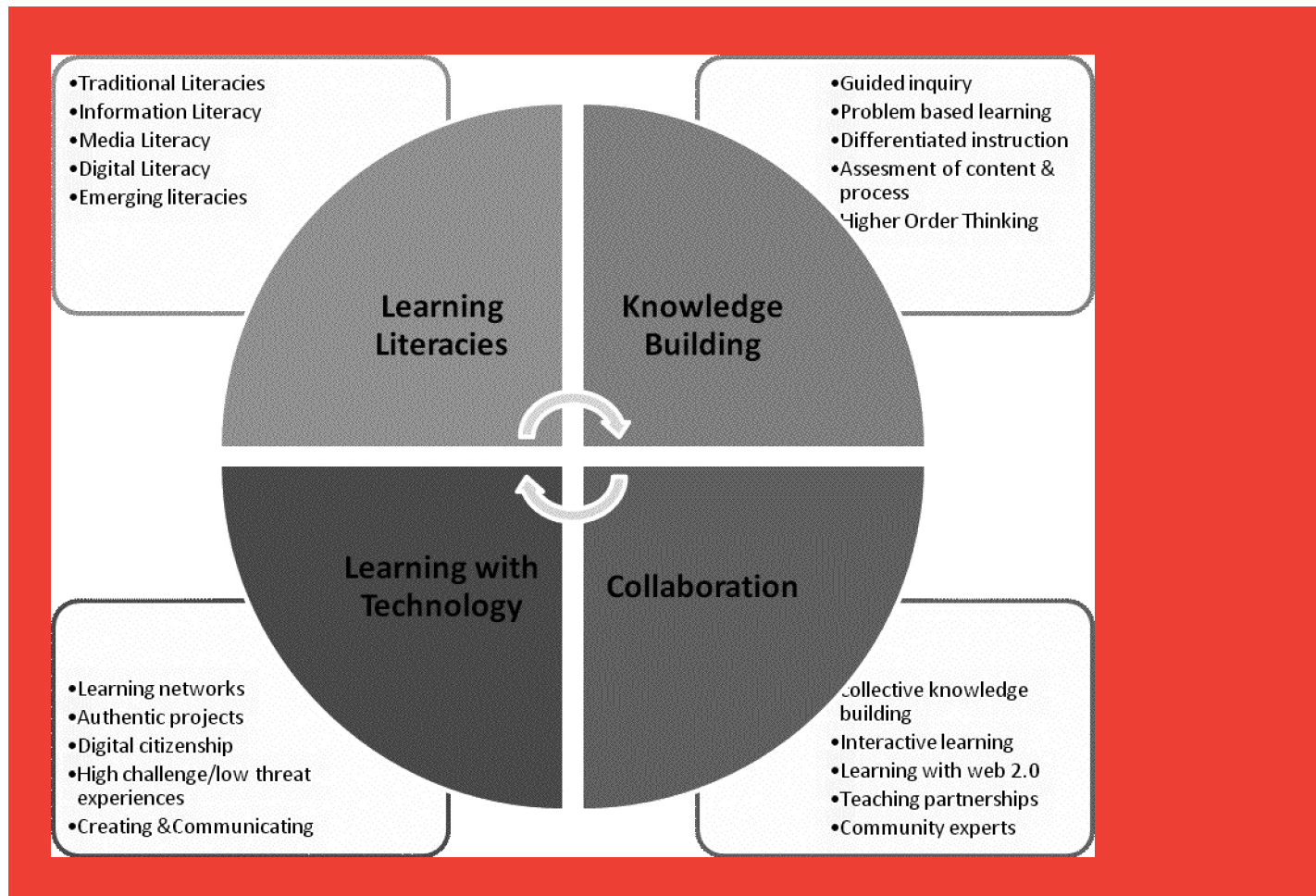
Now our “work” begins. So what is a Learning Commons? Where and how do we start the transformation?

The “work” of the New Learning Commons is to facilitate and lead a new culture of learning that truly addresses the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners. Learning to learn is critical to student success in our shifting social, economic, and information landscapes. The Learning Commons provides both physical and virtual spaces that

are rich in resources as well as technologies and support for evolving needs. Through the Learning Commons, interactive, relevant, differentiated instruction is infused to support school initiatives and sustained school improvement. Under the leadership and expertise of the teacher-librarian, various learning partnerships, and Professional Learning Teams, we can develop the centre and showcase for best practice and ongoing school improvement.

This visual provides an overview of desired program as developed in *The New Learning Commons: Where Learners Win*, by Loertscher, Koechlin and Zwaan.

*continued on p. 22...*



As schools work to build a true Learning Commons, they will soon embrace the many benefits for all.

The New Learning Commons will serve many functions in a school. We are not throwing anything away, but rather adding value to what we already have. Some possibilities are noted in the chart.

<b>Multiple Functions of a Learning Commons</b>	
<p><b>Traditional Library</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access for students throughout the school day</li> <li>• Teacher-librarian instruction and support</li> <li>• Rich curriculum resources and technologies</li> <li>• Fostering of independent reading</li> <li>• Inquiry learning</li> <li>• Support for differentiated learning</li> <li>• Comfortable areas for work and play</li> <li>• Independent, small group, and class work areas</li> <li>• Displays of student achievement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Virtual Library</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access 24/7/365</li> <li>• Digital curriculum support resources</li> <li>• Classroom and library project/assignment development</li> <li>• Collaborative work spaces for students and teachers</li> <li>• Learning tools and tutorials/advice</li> <li>• Creation and communication tools and spaces</li> <li>• Connections to community experts</li> <li>• Client-based support</li> </ul>
<p><b>Knowledge Building</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided inquiry and problem-based learning</li> <li>• Relevant real world learning assignments</li> <li>• Design for both content and process learning</li> <li>• Continuous assessment and metacognition</li> <li>• Development of multiple literacies</li> <li>• Seamless technology integration</li> <li>• Higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• Collective knowledge building</li> <li>• Teaching and learning efficiency; efficacy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sustained School Improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstration lessons</li> <li>• Embedded professional development</li> <li>• Center for professional learning teams</li> <li>• Evidence-based practice</li> <li>• Collaborative assignment design and implementation</li> <li>• Culture of inquiry</li> <li>• Coordinated implementation and accountability of school-wide initiatives</li> </ul>

**Now, where and how do we start our transformations?**

**Guiding Principles**

First, you need to develop your vision and the guiding principles for how best to proceed. Start by studying the needs of teachers and learners today. Ask where you and the facility fit in designing and supporting teaching and learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Consider how to turn your library “client side” by involving teachers and students in development. Determine how to free up space to ensure the flexibility needed in this common learning lab. Collaborate with staff to ensure that your program provides “just in time” support and skills development. Design a program in the Learning Commons that aligns with school improvement initiatives. Think about how you can involve other learning specialists, classroom teachers, administrators, parents, and students in the development of learning partnerships. Move to the centre of teaching and learning!

**Infrastructure**

Consider your current staffing, time, and budget. Take inventory of collections, furnishings, technologies, and connectivity. Investigate wireless networks, cloud computing, and best communication systems. If your school has isolated computer labs consult with the staff and students and think creatively to determine how you

might marry your library facility and program to deliver coordinated learning and space for everyone. Develop virtual calendars that will help your school community plan for multiple uses of the Learning Commons. When you have done your homework, write a proposal/action plan. You are ready to begin the transformation. It’s time to reinvent!

**Physical Spaces**

Don’t let books and computers get in the way of active learning opportunities. Because the Learning Commons facility will be used for many functions, the space needs to be as flexible as possible. The smaller the library, the more flexibility you will need. If at all possible, relocate shelving so that it is on the walls. Free up as much space as you can by getting more resources into circulation. Consider allowing classes to borrow more books for their classroom collections and rotate them often so the students always have lots of new books to choose from right at their fingertips. Assess how much of your print reference section is still relevant and useful. Be rigorous about weeding. Think about the 24/7 access you can provide to learners by investing in excellent databases and interactive reference resources and the space this will free up in your facility for other functions. Use your new-found space for flexible, multipurpose teaching and working areas for both staff and students.

Put everything you can on rollers and keep furnishings lightweight so they can be moved into many different configurations. Consider laptops or net books housed on rolling carts instead of heavy desktop computers for students. Develop a high tech production centre for creating and publishing projects. Create lots of display areas for book promotion and celebrations of student work. Plan for innovative, active play. Get creative with space!

### Virtual Spaces

How can you turn your current school library webpage into a Virtual Learning Commons? Apart from digital resources, consider what else teachers and learners need to operate effectively in your virtual spaces. Work with classroom teachers to post projects, provide pathfinders, link students to research support and presentation tools, and offer tutorials and tips. Students will appreciate this 24/7 support for their learning. Connect to classroom webpages and blogs. Use Web 2.0 tools to facilitate conversations between students, between teachers, and among students and teachers. Develop collaborative workspaces and professional development support. Provide calendars and spaces for administration to follow. Encourage the “work” of the Learning Commons. Make use of all the free tools and workspaces available to build a virtual Learning Commons. See how close you can get to paperless. Create places for students to play with information and ideas and don’t be surprised if they start to hang out in your library! Invite students and teachers to help you build your virtual Learning Commons. If they build it, they will use it.

The best thing about the Learning Commons is, that once it starts rolling, teachers, administrators, students, and parents will dive in and help build common places and spaces to learn.

- You will be able to collaborate in the design of learning experiences, teach students what they need when they need it, nurture the reading habit, and concentrate on results in the Learning Commons. The management of the library is no longer a yoke to bear, but a shared responsibility. Under the expert guidance of the teacher-librarian, everyone contributes and collaborates to building an environment rich in resources, technologies, and knowledge-building experiences.
- Teachers become more passionate about teaching, knowing they have all the tools and excellent resources they need at their fingertips.
- Students, with a vested interest, see learning as more relevant and take on more responsibility for their own learning.
- Administrators are able to build effective professional learning teams under the umbrella of the Learning Commons and track results in one space common to all teachers and specialists.
- With this vision, the fluidity and transparency

of the Learning Commons has the potential to drive the changes needed to bring schools into the future and sustain improvement.

Plant the seeds today and cultivate a new flowering hybrid, a library/learning lab, a common high think, active learning sphere for the benefit of your school community. Lead the way! !

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# Inspiration: Tag Clouds to the Rescue!

Leslie Whidden

A student comes to your library and wants another book just as good as the one he or she has just finished. The student tells you it Orwell's *1984*, and you can't think of a single related title because of brain overload. Struck by inspiration, you turn to a handy Internet application, a "social app" in computer parlance, called **LibraryThing.com**.

In the search field you enter a descriptive word, or tag, such as "dystopia," and up pops a list of books most often associated with the idea: *Brave New World*, *Oryx and Crake*, *Never Let Me Go*. Another section titled, "Using the Tag" provides a group of related descriptors in a "tag cloud" such as: speculative fiction, post-apocalyptic, totalitarianism, and more. These tags link to members' personal reading lists that offer a treasure trove of possibilities.

Another tab on the site, "Zeitgeist" calls itself "fire hose meets mouth" and provides links to reviews, authors, and top book ratings.

**Caution:** this site will not only be of great assistance when you draw a blank helping students find the perfect book, but it is also potentially addictive for librarians. The chat portion of **LibraryThing.com** has a section just for librarians who want to talk about the books they love, and once they get started... **!**

## National Research Symposium Calls Canadian School Librarians to Action

Carol Koechlin

Just prior to the Canadian Library Association Conference in Edmonton, Alberta (June 2–5, 2010: <http://www.cla.ca/conference/2010/>), a National Research Symposium will be held at the University of Alberta on the evening of June 1<sup>st</sup> and all day June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Moderated by Dr. David Loertscher, Professor at the School of Library and Information Science, San Jose State University, this first-time historic Canadian event is a call to action from Treasure Mountain Canada (TMC) to rethink, revision, and transform what we believe about student learning, school library programs, and supporting teachers. TMC is modelled after Treasure Mountain, a research retreat project created and promoted by Dr. David Loertscher and his colleagues in 1989, as a "meeting of the minds" in school library research.

Facilitators Carol Koechlin, Liz Kerr, Cindy Matthews, Ruth Hall, and Linda Shantz-Keresztes invite you to join in the discussion of the planning stages by visiting Treasure Mountain Canada's wiki: <http://tmcandana.pbworks.com>.

See you there! **!**

# School Library Document: The Long and Winding Road

Peggy Thomas, Diana Maliszewski and Bobbie Henley

The school library document has gone through many changes and challenges from the beginning of the writing process to now. The very first draft was only seen by a few people outside of the original writing group. It formed the basis of the research that was the first public draft introduced at the Super Conference in January 2008. From there, OSLA sought input from the stakeholder groups, the Ministry of Education, and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS). Many opinions were gathered.

For a while, it looked as if the document would simply fade away or become a publication of the OSLA/OLA. Through a consultation process with the current director of the LNS, a partnership was formed between OSLA/OLA and LNS. OLA agreed to share the cost of a rewrite with the concerns and comments of the Ministry officials, LNS, and other stakeholders reflected in the new document. In the agreement, this revised document would be published as an OSLA/OLA work with the support of the Ministry of Education and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat.

One of the chief criticisms of the draft version of *Together for Learning* was the question of audience. To address this, it was decided to produce a document with a clearly-articulated vision piece for the education community-at-large and a handbook/implementation

piece specifically for the school library community. The intention is to complement this document with a website that will reflect the most current, up-to-date examples of learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The vision establishes the key concept of the entire school as a learning commons, with everyone having a role to play and everyone being a learner. The handbook is directed primarily towards qualified school library staff and the instructional role that they play in the school learning commons.

A team of four, representing both panels, has completed the rewrite. The documents have been shared with Ministry partners and will be presented at Super Conference—both at an event on February 24<sup>th</sup> and in a session on February 26, 2010.

Many of the changes and new ideas stem from the feedback and responses given by the Ontario school library community to the first draft. We thank you for being part of the process and for your patience as the changes have been made. Parts of the document may represent new thinking to some. While this can be unsettling, it is also an exciting opportunity to magnify the impact of the school library, and more strongly reflect the new learners of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. ■



Photos : Julie Millan



# The Sagittarius ORION-Shaw Pilot Project

Dr. Kay Li

The Sagittarius ORION-Shaw Pilot Project at <http://shaw.yorku.ca> provides teaching librarians with a new online resource free of charge, if their universities or school boards are connected to Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION). In the first phase of the pilot study, two Shaw Festival 2009 season plays—*The Devil's Disciple* and *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*—were digitized. Researchers, students, and teachers are able to access annotated texts and resources for the plays directly from their offices and classrooms. Included are the production details, classroom resources, contextual documents, research materials, quizzes and activities, a concordance, search engine, and study guides tailored to the Ontario school curriculum. Reference materials—many of them out of print and others newly written for the website—make available the work of world-renowned Shaw scholars.

The Sagittarius ORION-Shaw Pilot Project is the result of a research partnership with York University, ORION, the International Shaw Society, the Shaw Festival, and the Shaw Estate in the UK. York University Library is responsible for digitizing the works.

The project provides a window to the next generation of library collections. Teaching librarians are provided with new freedom in unprecedented ways. First, the ultra high-speed ORION network, often running at gigabit speed and significantly faster than the speed of home Internet, enables a large number of image, text, and sound files to be transmitted instantaneously. Therefore, the website can feature digitized books, concordances of full texts, interactive quizzes and games, and videos made at the Shaw Festival, which would have overloaded any normal internet connection.

Next, the online resource challenges the notion of “out of print.” Many of the articles the Shaw scholars and publishers provide free of charge are out of print, but they are now available online and therefore no longer “out of print.”

Thirdly, the project makes use of the freedom brought by Canadian copyright law. Bernard Shaw is a British writer who was born on July 26, 1856 and died on November 2, 1950. According to UK copyright law (the 1988 Copyright, Designs and Patents Act), the duration of copyright for literary, dramatic, musical, or artistic works is 70 years from the end of the calendar year in which the last remaining author of the work dies. Hence, Shaw's works are in copyright until 2020. Canadian copyright law is governed by the Copyright Act, which reads: “The term for which copyright shall subsist shall, except as otherwise expressly provided by this Act, be the life of the author, the remainder of the calendar year in which the author dies, and a period of fifty years following the end of that calendar year.” Shaw's plays, therefore, went out of copyright in Canada in 2000. The restrictive nature of the ORION network ensures that the content will stay within Canada.

“This project introduces a whole new dimension for students, teachers and researchers, especially in access to and dissemination of research materials,” says Professor Kelly Thomson, former Associate Dean Research of Atkinson Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies, York University, and Chair of the Advisory Board of the Sagittarius Project.

“We are very excited about this new and innovative project,” said Professor Leonard Conolly of Trent University, Literary Advisor to the Estate of Bernard Shaw and Vice-President of the International Shaw Society. “This clearly has the potential of not only expanding appreciation and understanding of Shaw's work, but also of making it more accessible to new audiences through new technologies.”

For more information, visit <http://shaw.yorku.ca> or contact Tamara Stoll, Communications Officer, ORION, at (416) 507-9860 ext. 224 or by email at [tamara.stoll@orion.on.ca](mailto:tamara.stoll@orion.on.ca). ■

<http://shaw.yorku.ca>



With our tight budgets, school library staff members are always searching for a good deal. I arranged a free author visit for my friend's school by asking my writer-husband to present there as a favor to me. Here are resources (other than my spouse) that you can try, sent in by our readers:

This is almost the opposite of what you are asking, but it is all about FREE. During exams, we now offer FREE coffee to our students. I had co-op students to put in charge of the Coffee Cart. They set up, sat outside the library, served the coffee, and also sold Tim Horton's™ donuts for cost—50 cents each. Teachers came by as well. It was a great success and it was a way of giving back to the students. As I told them, "It is your fine money at work." It didn't cost much: a tin of coffee, a bag of milk, a quart of cream, some sugar, and some cups, which equalled less than \$20 for a lot of goodwill.

Pam Evans  
Western Technical Commercial School  
Toronto, Ontario

My name is Kasia Kalat and I'm an elementary teacher in the London area. I also work in partnership with *The National Post* to provide free resources to schools and school libraries and wanted to pass on a great opportunity that is totally free—there is no catch.

*The National Post* is offering 10 FREE newspapers per day to every school in Ontario. All you have to do is send an email to [learning@thedigitalpost.ca](mailto:learning@thedigitalpost.ca) and include your name, school, and that you are the librarian and would like the 10 copies for the library.

In addition to the complimentary copies, we are also offering teachers and teacher-librarians free digital subscriptions to the full edition of *The National Post* and 12 other CanWest newspapers (from across Canada), delivered directly into a teacher-specific email account each day for use with their students. The digital subscription does not expire and can be instantly translated into 12 languages; be read out loud via computer speakers by clicking onto an article; and can be downloaded, saved, archived, and even sent to mobile devices to give students instant access to research material. All teachers and teacher-librarians are eligible for free subscriptions as long as they teach grade 4/5 split to grade 12.

Kasia Kalat  
London, Ontario

Free Comic Book Day occurs in early May. I contacted my local comic book stores well before the date and asked if they could put aside some issues that would be appropriate for my school-age students. They were happy to accommodate, and with my teacher ID handy, I picked up the comic books and was able to get multiple copies of the same issue.

Cindy Mohareb  
Teacher-Librarian  
Our Lady of Fatima School  
Brampton, Ontario

One of my primary students recently informed me that I could get free Lego™ magazines for my school library. I signed up all the teachers in our school to get multiple issues. As part of our students' media literacy lessons, we made sure they were aware that these issues were "free" as advertising for the toy company. The magazines are a hit, especially with our male students.

Helen Collins  
St. Jude Catholic School  
Ajax, Ontario

During my summer holidays, I emailed various publishers asking for free bookmarks for my students and told them I'd be distributing them as prizes for my library skills sessions. I received many packets and boxes, have been happily handing them out ever since.

Brenda Turl  
Library Technician  
Near North District School Board  
Mattawa and North Bay, Ontario

A free resource that is available in both English and French for a secondary school audience is the Azrieli Series of Holocaust Survivor Memoirs.

To download or order books, go to: <http://www.azrielifoundation.org/memoirs/program.asp>.

The suppliers do offer the following advisory:

"Due to the traumatic and often horrific experiences that the authors of the Azrieli Series of Holocaust Survivor Memoirs are writing about, and the extremely difficult circumstances in which they found themselves during the years of Nazi domination in Europe, some of the books in the series contain sensitive material. The complex and sometimes delicate issues raised in the survivors' accounts are not only restricted to their encounters with brutality and violence—there are as many facets to their experiences as there are survivors. It is the policy of the Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program not to excise these passages—our policy is to maintain the integrity of the survivors' accounts and to publish them as written, editing only for clarity and editorial consistency. While many of the Azrieli memoirs are suitable for readers age 14+, the series as a whole is intended for senior high school and adult readers. We strongly urge teachers who wish to use the books in the classroom to exercise their own best judgment and discretion in deciding which titles are appropriate for their students."

Derrick Grose  
Teacher-Librarian  
Lisgar Collegiate Institute  
Ottawa, Ontario

IDEA FILE

## Free Reading and the Graphic Novel is FUNdamental

Throughout the school day, I hear several comments about reading from both students and teachers alike: “Reading is boring,” “I never like what we read in school,” “I like reading, but I don’t have enough time to sit down with a book,” and “My kids never do their reading assignments for class.” These comments target the same issue: How can we make reading, which is fundamental to learning, fun for our students? The answer to this question is simple: institute Free Reading time in our Language Arts or English programs. This idea may help solve many of the reading issues that plague both students and teachers.

There seem to be two large groups of students who have reading obstacles: the reader who wants to read something that is not required for school and the reluctant reader. Students complain that they are not allowed to choose what they are interested in reading, and thus attribute reading for leisure with schoolwork. Similarly, students who are labelled as reluctant readers often do not hate the act of reading, but rather hate what they are reading and therefore have not established a personal connection with reading. With Free Reading time, however, students are given the freedom to explore their reading interests. Therefore, reading can be associated with the freedom to choose and a hobby which students enjoy, indirectly helping students to perform their best at standardized exams where reading comprehension is a part of the exam.

So if students are actively reading and performing well on their exams, what is the problem? The answer is that the instructors’ view on what their students should be reading during Free Reading time—with limitations such as format, page numbers, and quality. This is a particularly sensitive issue when students are reading graphic novels.

Graphic novels are generally targeted as less serious reads because they contain illustrations along with text, contain stories with superheroes, and are sometimes “graphic” in terms of violence and sex. Due to these characteristics, some parents and teachers see them as less valuable than a traditional book. I admit that I thought the same thing when I first heard about graphic novels. It was not until I actually read one and further studied the medium did I realize that there are several genres and types of graphic novels that

are beyond superheroes and are written for various audiences. As I started to read a graphic novel, I was surprised to find that, for me, they are a lot harder than reading your traditional book. Not only did I have to pay attention to both illustrations and text in one panel, but I needed to figure out which panel to read next in order to follow the story line. Unlike the traditional book, where I had to read linearly and then spend time after finishing the book to process how I feel about the novel, the graphic novel allowed me to immediately respond to what I was seeing and reading. For example, the first graphic novels that I read were Art Spiegelman’s Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novels, *Maus I* and *Maus II*. Both volumes depict the Holocaust through different perspectives: the survivor, and those who did not experience it directly, but are deeply connected to it nonetheless. Not only are graphic novels complex in structure, but they are also more reader friendly to different types of learners. For example, Andy Runton’s Eisner Award-winning series entitled *Owly* is a wordless graphic novel. Unlike reading the traditional novel, where the plot and characters take lots of pages to develop, graphic novels dive right into the action and are generally under 200 pages. I have overheard several of my students say they like graphic novels because they read and feel like movies. These are all reasons why students should be allowed to read graphic novels for their Free Reading choice; and it is our responsibility to allow them the freedom to choose.

As a teacher-librarian who is relatively new to the field of graphic novels, I often feel overwhelmed to find and select them for my library collection. I have learned a few simple tips to help my anxiety when it comes to ordering graphic novels. For starters, choose graphic novels the same way you would for your print and electronic sources: know your audience and collection development policy. Use lists provided by reviewers or organizations as guides rather than as directives, because your specific community may respond differently to the content and style. I would highly suggest contacting a nearby comic book store and chatting with fellow teacher-librarians who are avid graphic novel readers to see what they recommend.

Why not ask the students for suggestions? Here are four titles recently examined by my friend’s Graphic Novel Reading Club and Review Team (a group of students in grades 6–8:

## Rummanah Aasi

### The Big Adventures of Majoko

Nana opens an odd diary and out pops Majoko, a cute little witch. The two of them become partners in adventures. They get into trouble but somehow find their way out of it. We recommend it for readers in grade 3 and up.

Rosal & Biravi

### Prince of Tennis

This is a suspenseful series about a rookie, Ryoma, who is very talented at tennis. The year he joins his tennis club, the organization makes it to the international tennis championships. The plots revolve around the major tennis tournament. I'd recommend it for readers in grade 4 and up.

Diana

### Full Moon

It centres on a 12-year-old girl who has a disease that prevents her from singing. In her travels, she comes across a suicidal shape-shifting spirit and he helps her

turn into a 16-year-old singing sensation. The different books deal with how she works to achieve her dream of being a great singer and getting a record deal and the developing romance between Mitsuki and Takuto. We recommend it for readers in grade 7 and up.

Nancy & Karen

### Amelia Rules: The Whole World's Crazy

It's about a girl named Amelia whose parents are divorced and is now living with her mom and Aunt Tanner. She goes on wild adventures with a couple of her new friends, Reg, Pajama Man and and her frenemy Rhonda. They try to find out if Santa is real, for instance, and get in trouble in the process. I recommend it for readers in grade 4 and up.

Tharany

A well-developed graphic novel collection combined with the Free Read Program is guaranteed to revitalize the language arts or English program in your school. ■



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# One School's Story on How **BE THE CHANGE**

*I have a story to share. It is a good story, and though it changes in breadth, and time, and place, the key elements still remain the same. It has bad guys and good guys; heroes, small but mighty; and even a sprinkling of character education—about conscience, and integrity, and how good can prevail.*

*But our story is actually seeded in some other stories; stories that are still waiting for their happy ending.*

In Huacipa, Peru, Miriam, aged 13, spends her days making bricks. She works with her family, forming bricks in a simple mould which are then baked in a kiln.

In Phnom Penh, Vietnam, three siblings—the elder brothers Kayrith, 14, and Ratha, 12, and their younger sister, Minea, 10—and their cousin, Thavara, 11, work as scavengers at the city dump. They live near the dump with their family and spend their days hunting through the mountains of garbage, looking for items for reuse or resale.

On the other side of the world, Josiméne, 10, works as a “restavec”, or live-in maid, in a two-room house outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s capital. Josiméne’s parents are small farmers in Haiti’s remote and mountainous heartland, where they eke out a subsistent living, aided minimally by Josiméne’s meagre income.

In a train station in India, Sankar sells bottled water to train passengers to buy food and daily necessities for living. On average, he makes 50 to 100 rupees (about \$2-\$3) a day selling bottles of drinking water. The money is enough for food and other bare essentials. Sankar and

other children sleep wherever they can in the station—on the floor, on benches, on piles of luggage.

Jose, aged 11, picks beans on a cocoa plantation to feed the northern nations’ hunger for chocolate.

Song Le, aged 12, sells sex.

For these children, school is only a dream. They work from dawn to dusk, sometimes with their families, often not. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that there are some 300 million such children in the world.

**Mahatma Gandhi said, “We must be the change we wish to see in the world?”** Craig Kielberger spoke at the OLA Super Conference a few years ago about how we, in Canada, enjoy so many rights and privileges, and how it is our obligation to share what we have with others, our time, our money, our advocacy for equal rights for everyone. A Free the Children representative visited our school, and shared some of her stories. The student body was deeply moved by her tales of hope and courage. She kept returning to one key point: we cannot, individually, change the whole world, but that every one of us can do one thing to create positive social change. It is a good lesson for our students, the leaders of tomorrow, to hear.

In the wake of these statements, and challenges—the Be the Change initiative—sponsored generously by the OLA, was born. Several teacher-librarians, under the leadership of Peggy Thomas, began to write documents framed on the Ontario curriculum, but they took it one step further. Each lesson, or series of lessons, ends with practical ideas for “being the change”. They range from creating public service announcements, to writing postcards to government leaders, to planting a garden, to fund-raising for social justice projects. The



# ow to NGE

Sybille Parry

Be the Change resources are freely available for you to download from the OSLA website. Go to [accessola.com](http://accessola.com) and follow the links to Be the Change.

But now, back to our story.

This year, it takes place in a small school, nestled in the western outskirts of Toronto. West Glen Junior School is small in population, just under 200 students, but mighty in spirit, and rich in culture. Our student body reflects a remarkable cultural diversity, with families coming from over 30 different countries. We are a mini United Nations, with a high proportion of newly arrived immigrants. What better place to sow the seeds of social justice?

I first approached my, then new to me, staff by framing the idea of the Be the Change initiative. I began by asking some questions. How many children do you think are involved in child labour? Around 300 million. What percentage of the world's population does not have access to clean water? About 20%, almost 120 million people. What percentage of the world's population always has enough to eat. Just 30%, one third. Now consider this: the amount of money it would take to provide clean water to the entire world population is \$10 billion. Sounds daunting? Next statistic: the amount of money spent annually on ocean cruises is \$15 billion. Child labour. Water. Food. The sex slave trade. Profound poverty. The list is long, and a wide variety of factors come into play, but clearly, our villains have emerged: a global economy where the dollar is the only value, and child slave traders persist because of political and personal indifference.

Gandhi said WE must be the change we wish to see in the world. Nine out of 20 staff joined the Be the Change committee, almost half. We met, planned,

strategized, and then invited the students to join us. We began with a team of 14 student leaders. In our selection criteria, we looked for potential leadership, a variety of styles, talents and abilities, and a representative cross-section of the student population. We didn't want only the movers and the shakers, although we did need some for their energy, and their natural leadership abilities. We also dug deeper to students whose potential we suspected, but which may not have blossomed fully yet.

We sent out hand-lettered invitations. They accepted, and our small but mighty heroes were ready for action. We framed our initiative for the school over a six-week period, culminating in a "Be the Change" Spring Concert and Art Show and sale. We met with our students weekly, beginning each meeting with fair trade chocolate. We educated them, both in our meetings, and through a curriculum focus in the Library Partners Program for all classes using the lessons on children's rights to highlight some of the inequities faced by children in other parts of the world, always adjusting content to be age appropriate.

This past year, we had the good fortune to have the text, *One Hen*, a 2009 Silver Birch nominee, as a key resource. It describes the power of micro-finance on Kojo a boy in Kenya. This powerful, true story tells of his initial small loan to buy some eggs, and how he is able, as he grows into an adult, to use that small beginning to build a thriving business that employs many people in his larger community. The story beautifully illustrates the concept that one small action, in this case a very small loan, can have huge implications for social justice. Their understanding is deepened as they explore the *One Hen* website, and earn beads by playing the games, which directly support other micro-finance projects which they can see develop as they play. These are potent tools for our small heroes, and they delight in their power to help

*continued on p. 32...*

just by playing games on a website. The sponsor behind the website is Opportunity International, an organization dedicated to fundraising for and supporting small-scale entrepreneurs in developing countries. On a more direct level, student leaders plan six weeks of FUNdraising activities such as Toonie Tuesdays (bring a toonie for “Be the Change”, and dress backwards, or have crazy hair, or wear your pyjamas).

Naturally, there is no exclusion, and all students are welcome to participate in Spirit Days. The loonies and toonies are encouraged, but they are not mandatory. We held a bake sale on the night of the spring concert, and at the suggestion of one lively staff member, we dared the Special Education teacher to dress as a baker, raising \$160 in staff donations just for the photo opportunity. Popsicle sales were very popular on some hot June days, and a lucrative endeavour. You can imagine the joy of watching the school community work together towards a common goal: the building of understanding of world issues among staff, students and parents, and above all, the satisfaction of observing students as they grow in leadership, commitment to social justice, and

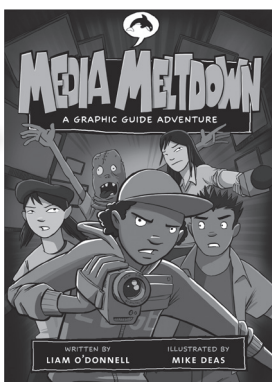
conscience—the awareness that each one of them has the power to bring about positive change in the world.

In the end, our little school, among the neediest in the Toronto District School Board, raised \$1,000. We proudly presented an enormous cheque to Opportunity International, in the presence of the assembled student body. We also presented a petition that we had written to Prime Minister Harper, asking him to lead our country to ensure that all children everywhere enjoyed the same rights, by honouring our Millennial Goals. Our petition stretched around the perimeter of the gym. Katie Smith-Milway, author of *One Hen* attended our event, and even TVO came to lend an air of gravity to the entire experience. So we have our happy ending.

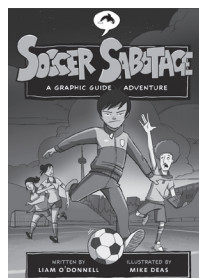
For me, personally, it is not an ending, but a continuation. The “Be the Change” initiative has become an integral part of who I am as a teacher. And the happiness for me lies in looking into the eyes of those kids who really get it. In those kids, the next generation of “Be the Change” leaders is born, and if that is all I ever accomplish in this career, it is more than enough. ■

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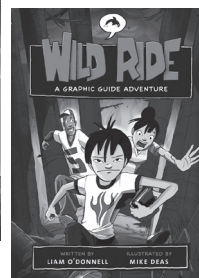
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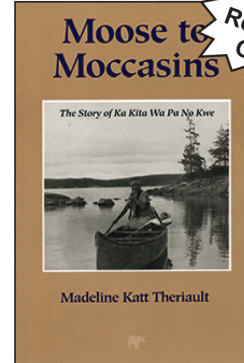
**Faster Than Wind**  
by Steve Pitt  
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Historical Fiction, Ages 10+

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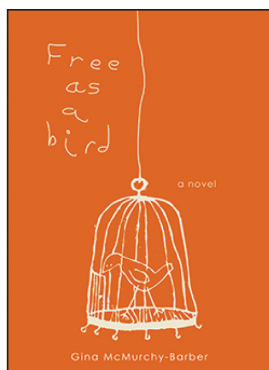
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Sam McLean is the new boy in town and anxious to make friends. During a daring stunt, ghost riding their whip, his friend is left for dead and Sam flees. Yet, someone else knows and the stakes are rising.



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Tabby Freeman and Lora Froggett go to the same school, but they live in totally opposite worlds. Although they've never been friends, a series of strange events causes their lives to crash together in ways neither could have ever imagined.



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# Meet the Author | Jenna Kalinsky

## Rob Baxter



Jenna Kalinsky is a graduate of Columbia University's MFA program and studied with many great writers. She's written a number of articles, stories, and poems for smaller print, online magazines, and websites, in addition to television productions and creative programming for children. Jenna has been able to merge this into a career of teaching university English courses in fiction, creative non-fiction and academic writing at Humber College, The University of Western Ontario, The University of Toronto and Toronto Writers' Centre.

**RB:** Jenna, how would you describe yourself as a writer?

**JK:** A procrastinator, often crabby, usually hungry, sometimes sleepy, and after several hours at the computer, needing a decompression chamber before I can return to the real world. I'm like all the seven dwarves at once.

Above all that, however, I'm in love. And like lovers, writing and I rise to beautiful heights when things are going well, when I've caught a great wave and am saying what I want to say, finding the best way to say it, digging my heels in deep. We also argue fairly often, and then I throw up my hands and say, "This is ridiculous. Let me be a gardener! Biochemist!" Or since I still love literature, I rue that I didn't become a librarian: all the glory of literature around me, none of the stress of being responsible for it.

But those scuffles usually end quickly, and then I'm back in the trenches, hand-to-hand-combatting-it: telling stories, speaking the truth, trying to keep me in the chair, sane, and creating cool stuff.

**RB:** When was the first time you picked up a pen or pencil and decided to write?

**JK:** Professionally, it was when I was at the Breadloaf writers' conference in Vermont, surrounded by phenomenal writers who wrote and taught writing for their life's work. I was on scholarship and too busy running around taking care of the faculty, which was my job. But one afternoon, high from all the brilliant readings and intense discussions about literary craft, I

was walking by a large field, the tall grasses weaving in the breeze, the sun high and hot, and I felt at one with myself and the people around me, as if literature and our two weeks of basking in it, was possible as a world to live in. My decision wasn't earth moving; it was just a gentle invasion into my unconscious that I, too, could make this my life's work. That I could belong to this.

**RB:** Was this simply a strong feeling to write, from deep down inside, or was it something fostered in your background, or encouraged by another person?

**JK:** In university I worked with a teacher who made me write better, because I admired her and wanted to write for her. She gave me books I hadn't known would open me from the inside, and because of her pushing me into new directions, and my desire to make her happy, I was watering my own little seeds, getting stronger and acquiring the confidence I needed to take on this world.

**RB:** How do your stories develop—from real life, or are they totally fictitious?

**JK:** Both at once. I can't isolate one from the other. The first story I published was about a Mexican girl in a dysfunctional family, who lived in a border town of California. She wasn't me—not a lot of Mexicans named "Kalinsky"—and I had never been to where she lived or experienced what she did, but from my life experience and emotional understanding, I could deeply relate to her emptiness and the holes her family tried to fill in themselves. I've also written from the point of view of a man, an elderly European woman, and a gang member. I like to be free enough to make up the exterior, but the interior always feels very authentic to me, or else I wouldn't be able to create characters who come across as real and human.

**RB:** What is your favourite kind of book to read, who is your favourite author, and why?

**JK:** I think people and relationships are infinitely fascinating, and I'd rather read a book where there's no definable action—no car chases or shootouts—but the characters' inner lives are in revolution. Michael

Cunningham, who wrote *The Hours* and was my mentor in graduate school, liked to talk about his book while he was writing it and say it was a silly little book in which nothing happens. But whole lives are lived on those pages. It's a stunning work, and it won the Pulitzer Prize. His writing always inspires me for its beauty and honesty. If he wrote shopping lists, I'd read them.

**RB:** What kind of advice can you give to someone who's interested in pursuing a career or profession in writing?

**JK:** Learn enough about writing so you can create a burning-hot resume, then sprint to business school. Writing is lonely and hard. Why suffer?

But, ok, if you're one of those who likes to suffer, and some people do, then be a cockroach (write that on a Post-it™ note and keep it on your computer monitor. Or better, your nose). Every day someone will tell you something to the equivalent of, "perhaps it'd be best if you hung up your skates," or something less polite. Or you'll write and write and write and feel like no matter how hard you try, you're not going anywhere. I know a lot of writers who publish their work, and not all of them are the best in the business.

Of course having talent never hurt anybody, but the ones left standing at the end of the day aren't necessarily the most talented, but those who can keep getting rejected and remain steadfast. Look at J. K. Rowling—she was rejected by something like 30 publishing houses for *Harry Potter*. It happens that these books are wonderful, but if instead of being tenacious—a true English cockroach—she had run home, eaten bonbons and gotten a desk job at an insurance company, we wouldn't have had those books and the literary world wouldn't be nearly as rich today.

**RB:** Many readers of this article actively encourage students to pursue activities that involve creative writing. In your capacity as a teacher of creative writing, what kinds of activities would you suggest to these students?

**JK:** Be a detective. Snoop through people's lives. Be curious. Eavesdrop at parties; take notes everywhere



Photo: drunkenboat.com

you go; write down observations on what you see and smell—how the sky looked that one day, what people do in elevators, faces we make at babies, etc. Write every day even if you don't want to—especially if you don't want to—in a journal that you never, ever show to anybody because showing it to someone, even someone who loves you, invites her judgment, which kills creativity. Write every day, and enjoy knowing you're always creating something, even if you're just taking notes. It gives a person purpose to remember this. And make sure once

*continued on p. 36...*





in a while to have fun. Do bad refrigerator poetry. Steal first lines out of books and then write a new paragraph to follow that's a huge departure from the original. Write the impossible and make it possible.

**RB:** Is there a best age at which to start writing? In other words, is a person ever “too old” to write?

**JK:** In pop culture, younger is better. But in writing, the older you get, the better a writer you'll be. Most writers are older because they get better at saying what they want to say the longer they're around. Start now, cultivate yourself as a writer, and know every day you write is a day you're getting better at what you do.

**RB:** Some people say that the easiest part of the writing process is the novel, short story, or poem itself, and that the hardest part is getting published. What advice would you give to someone who has a finished product that s/he is just burning to see in print?

**JK:** If you know your work is as good as it's ever going to get—you've revised it numerous times; shown it to fellow writers and received feedback that you've implemented; you've combed through the prose looking at grammar, syntax and punctuation; the writing is fresh, unique and vivid; and the piece is shining its own particular light—you're ready. Make sure you're not rushing to the goal before the product is as phenomenal as it could be. Publishers and agents are inundated with manuscripts. Sending out the highest quality product possible will up your chances of publication.

Then prepare yourself for the business of writing. Artists today must also act as their own bookkeepers, publicists, researchers, and secretaries. First of all, investigate the types of publications out there and see who would be most interested in your kind of writing. I regularly plunk myself down at a big independent bookstore and read literary magazines. Going to conferences is also a way to get insider track information on who is publishing what, and a great way to meet the publishers themselves. Read *Poets and Writers* magazine, which is a wonderful resource for writers.

When you sit down to send out the work, remember writing is a job; in order for people to read your work, you must treat your work and the industry professionally. Spend as much time on the cover letter as you did on the piece (or at least a lot of time). To stay organized, I suggest making a database (Excel works well) of the literary magazines (for short works) or agents (for full-length manuscripts like novels) you want to send to. Note what piece you sent to whom, and what the outcome was.

You'll receive a lot of rejection letters—that's part of the process. But know this: there is someone out there for everyone, as they say in matters of the heart. It's the same in literature. Eventually someone will be interested and then you're on your way to being published, and having the knowledge that soon your work will influence others the way others' work has influenced you. ■



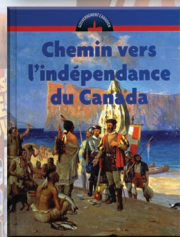
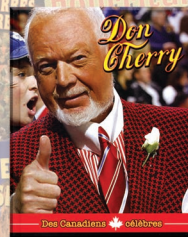
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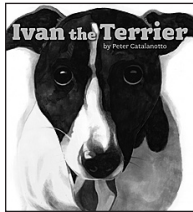
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**Ivan the Terrier**  
Written and Illustrated by Peter Catalanotto  
2007  
9781416912477

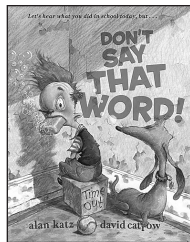
**Sample Curriculum Links:**  
Primary Language Arts:  
Reading

**Summary:**  
Ivan is a terrier with a fondness for interrupting... especially, if you're starting to tell a story. Ivan makes his disruptive way through various classic tales from *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* to *The Three Bears*, and beyond. The narrator's increasing impatience is clear from the font size of the text, and primary readers will love predicting just what Ivan will do next.

**Don't Say That Word!**  
Written by Alan Katz;  
Illustrated by David Catrow  
2007

9780689869716  
**Sample Curriculum Links:**  
Primary Language Arts:  
Reading  
Grade 4 Language Arts:  
Writing

**Summary:**  
Michael walks in the door from school, eager to answer his house-cleaning mother's question, "What happened in school today?" Unfortunately for Michael, what he considers the highlights of the day are horrifying to his mother. She cuts him off before the last word every time, though the rhyme scheme makes it easy for students to predict the last word in each of Michael's tales. Students will love the humour, as well as Michael's interesting appearance. (He looks like an escapee from Dr. Seuss' Whoville). The twist at the end makes the fun complete.

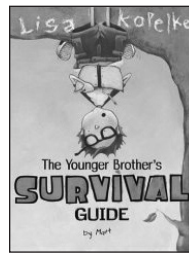


**The Younger Brother's Survival Guide**  
Written by Lisa Kopelke  
2006  
9780689862496

**Sample Curriculum Links:**  
Junior Language Arts:  
Reading  
Junior or Intermediate  
Language Arts: Writing

**Summary:**  
Matt, a much-maligned younger brother, has set out some important tips for

surviving an older sister. Matt's advice is given in first person, with tips "torn" right out of his supposed notebook. The book will amuse both readers and writers, especially if they look within the illustrations to see the hidden story behind the tips. The story also provides readers with a fun way to activate their "sibling schema" before tackling their own family tales.

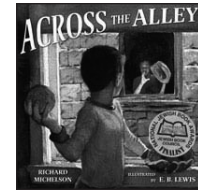


**Across the Alley**  
Written by Richard Michelson; Illustrated by E. B. Lewis  
2006  
9780399239700

**Sample Curriculum Links:**  
Junior and Intermediate  
Language Arts: Reading

**Summary:**  
Willie and Abe are best friends, although their friendship has to happen in secret. Abe is a white, Jewish boy, and Willie is a black, so they can only spend time together at night, across the alley, where the rest of the world can't see them. Both boys long to rise above their family's dreams for them: Abe wants to be a famous pitcher; while Willie longs to play the violin. Secretly, they trade "instruments" and train each other. When the boys are discovered, they end up teaching their families and their communities that

prejudice has many faces—but friendship makes them all beautiful.

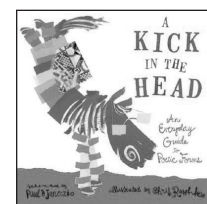


**A Kick in the Head: An Everyday Guide to Poetic Forms**

Selected by Paul E. Janeczko;  
Illustrated by Chris Raschka  
2006 (paperback)  
9780763641320

**Sample Curriculum Links:**  
Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts:  
Writing  
Junior and Intermediate Arts:  
Visual Arts  
Junior and Intermediate  
Language Arts: Media  
Literacy  
Grade 9 and 10 English:  
Writing

**Summary:**  
This fabulous anthology features samples of every type of poem imaginable, and includes both well-known and unknown works by many different poets. However, it's more than just an enjoyable read for poetry fans. It also features brief, user-friendly notes on the various poetry types, providing simple and immediate areas for writers (and their teachers). Chris Raschka's illustrations add to the appeal, offering intriguing media literacy and art lesson options as well. ■



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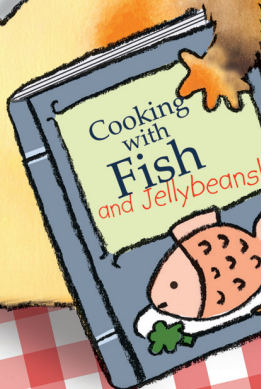
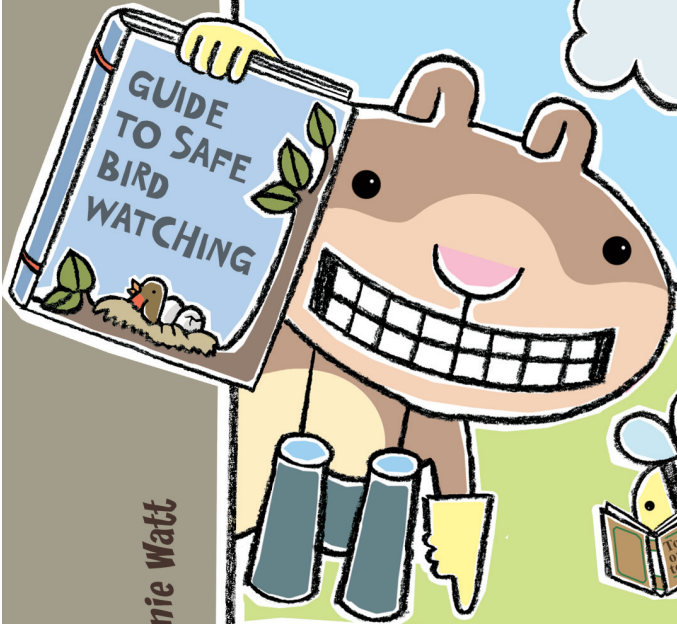


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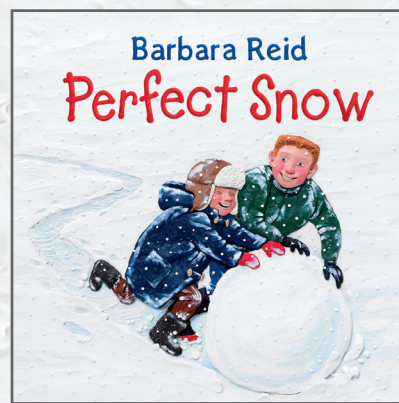


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