The Canadian Library Association is pleased to announce

Jo-Anne Gibson

as the recipient of the 2013

Angela Thacker Memorial Award

The Angela Thacker Memorial Award has been established in memory of Angela Thacker, teacher-librarian, library coordinator, and school library colleague, mentor, leader and advocate who served the Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada (ATLC) and the Canada School Library Association (CSLA) in many capacities. This award honours teacher-librarians who have made contributions to the profession through publications, productions or professional development activities that deal with topics relevant to teacher-librarianship and/or information literacy.

Jo-Anne Gibson is currently a teacher-librarian with the Pembina School Division at Acadia Junior High in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Prior to joining the Acadia staff in September 2006, Jo-Anne primarily taught band at General Byng School. After shadowing a teacher-librarian in the district, she decided to become a teacher-librarian as she was intrigued that this position could have a lasting impact on student learning and achievement. Jo-Anne acquired her Diploma of Teacher Librarianship in 2009 from the University of Alberta, and also holds a Masters of Education, from the University of Manitoba.

At the school level Jo-Anne has been very involved with the school and division IT (Information Technology) committee and is readily available to help out any staff member who needs guidance and skills using technology in the classroom. She is also an active member of both the school and division based professional development committees and the school’s literacy committee. Class instruction in the library consists of library and information literacy skills, promotion of new books, picture books, challenged books, author discussions, copyright and ICT skills.

Jo-Anne has been extensively involved in research, professional development and advocacy in the field of teacher-librarianship. She is well known for effective teaching and networking in the field of information literacy. Jo-Anne has promoted the ideals of librarianship at various levels. She is passionate about the necessity to
be a well-informed student and educator where everyone is using current and reliable research sources and presenting their newly constructed knowledge using the most effective 21st century tools. Jo-Anne is also passionate about teaching, literacy and promoting excellent literature to her students. A book trailer for one of the Manitoba Young Reader’s Choice Award nominees was created by Jo-Anne’s students at Acadia school and presented at the MYRCA award ceremonies in the fall of 2012.

At the divisional level Jo-Anne has shown leadership skills by making several presentations at the Pembina Trails divisional Teacher Librarian meetings including giving talks on graphic novels, a MYRCA blog, wiki’s and delicious sites and how they can be integrated into the classroom. She often shares ideas and insights on how to infuse ICT into lessons at division-based meetings.

Jo-Anne, along with other school library colleagues, travelled to rural communities to bring library information at little cost to them. She and the Manitoba School Library Association (MSLA) have been lobbying our provincial government to make the internet and research databases such as EBSCO available to our rural school divisions, at a reduced rate, to make education more equal throughout the province. Jo-Anne has been interviewed by local newspapers on several occasions, most recently on October 22, 2012 with the Minister of Education to promote Canada School Library Day.

Jo-Anne has also been involved as a panellist with an MSLA Literature Forum that was held at Acadia February 23, 2009. This same presentation was incorporated into SAG for the fall of 2009. The topic of the forum was how to use Web 2.0 tools in the classroom. She has presented at every SAGE (Special Area Group Educators) conference since 2009 and the Manitoba Library Association Conferences held in Winnipeg every other year. In October 2012, she presented at the MSLA Conference on Web 2.0 Tools and at the 2013 Ontario OLA Super Conference on Banned Books. Jo-Anne is a co-presenter at the 2013 CLA National Conference in Winnipeg, speaking about the state of Manitoba’s school libraries.

Jo-Anne was awarded the MSLA (Manitoba School Library Association) Outstanding Teacher-Librarian of the Year Award (2009). She has been an exemplary teacher-librarian in the school division of Pembina Trails, where her students, staff and library colleagues have all benefitted from her knowledge, expertise and passion for reading, literacy, information literacy, intellectual freedom, research and advocacy for all of these areas. Through her personal learning blog she is part of an extensive Teacher Librarian and Educational Technology network. She is a member of other professional social networks, including the CLA Voices for School Libraries Network. Jo-Anne has been the MSLA president (2009-2011), and is currently the MSLA Advocacy and Public Relations chairperson.

Jo-Anne Gibson clearly exemplifies the ideals of Angela Thacker through her passion, knowledge and dedication. She is a consummate learner who constantly follows recent developments and leaders in the fields of information literacy, educational technology and librarianship. She then incorporates her new learning and adjusts her own practice as needed. Ms. Gibson is very deserving of this important and commemorative award.
Carrying Our Past into the Future
Derrick Grose

There’s a map for that
Ellen Curtis, Sara Black and Michela Rosano

Une carte pour chaque occasion
Ellen Curtis, Sara Black and Michela Rosano

We can do nothing about our heritage but celebrate it!
Jacqueline Guest, author of *Outcasts of River Falls*, answers questions from *SLiC*

School Library Profile - Crowther Memorial Junior High, Strathmore, Alberta
Jennifer Young

Teacher-Librarians as Content Curators: Strong Contexts, New Possibilities
Anita Brooks Kirkland

I like to write about a time that is in flux and where important changes are taking place.
Maureen Jennings, author and creative consultant for *Murdoch Mysteries* talks about discovering the past.

National School Library Standards Project: An Update
Judith Sykes

School Library Profile - Marlborough Elementary School, Calgary, Alberta
Steve Clark

Informed by compassion for the hearts of teenage girls
Sue MacLeod, author of *Namesake* talks about sources of inspiration

Giving Multi-Level Marketing a Good Name - A Model Collection Development Proposal
Leslie Holwerda, Jennifer Lunny, Joanna Noakes, Kelly Boyd and Kirsten Morozov

Just a Little Thing: At the Heart of 21st Century Learning Must Be Reading
Moira Ekdahl

New jewels and neglected gems
Publishers highlight new works by Canadian authors and illustrators
Contributors to *School Libraries in Canada* - Volume 31 Number 2

Thank you to retired teacher-librarian Helen Lee for her assistance with this issue.
When I searched the Project Gutenberg edition of Ralph Connor’s novel, *Glengarry School Days*, for the word “library,” there was only one result. That is in the end section, "Information about Project Gutenberg," where it says, “Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.”

What is the relevance of *Glengarry School Days* to Canada’s school libraries? What is the connection between the one-room school house in pioneer Ontario and contemporary Canadian schools? On one level, this novel is symbolic of Canada’s social history which is accessible to students and teachers through their school libraries. This traditional task continues even as the walls around our libraries dissolve when we move into the world of digital media.

On a more profound level, today’s school libraries are partners in the quest to achieve the ultimate goal of educators. In paying tribute to Archibald Munro, the model teacher in his novel, Ralph Connor writes, “he had the rare faculty of awakening in his pupils an enthusiasm for work inside the school and for sports outside.” Here is the kernel from which the spirit of the contemporary learning commons has emerged: engagement of student enthusiasm in the classroom and beyond.
In this issue of School Libraries in Canada, Ellen Curtis of Canadian Geographic Education writes about giant maps (and I mean giant!) that can be brought to your school to connect students with the War of 1812, Canada’s Parks, the Boreal Forest and Energy Production and Distribution. Three author interviews will introduce novels that will transport students into Métis communities in Western Canada in the decades after the Northwest Rebellion, to Victorian Toronto and to Britain during World War II and, finally, to England during the transition from the Tudor period into the Elizabethan era.

To inspire our professional practices, I am pleased to welcome back our columnist Anita Brooks Kirkland with her article on digital curation. Leslie Holwerda, Jennifer Lunny, Joanna Noakes, Kelly Boyd and Kirsten Morozov share a model proposal for collection development. Judith Sykes provides an update on the School Libraries Standards project and, finally, Moira Ekdahl presents a paper on the role of the learning commons in promoting the increased student engagement with reading that comes when students take charge of their own learning.

In concluding, I would like to congratulate Jo-Anne Gibson, the recipient of this year’s Angela Thacker Memorial Award. Look inside the front cover of this issue to see the citation documenting her considerable contributions to school libraries. Thank you to Jo-Anne, to all of the contributors to this issue, to Professor Michael S. Hart, and to all of our colleagues who help us discover how we can awaken in our pupils enthusiasm for learning in the library and beyond!
There's a map for that

Ellen Curtis, Educational Programs Manager
Sara Black (educational programs coordinator)
Michela Rosano (Custom Publishing Editor)
Royal Canadian Geographical Society

What weighs 45 kilograms, covers half of a school gymnasium floor and holds all five great lakes? It’s not a riddle, it’s a giant floor map.

Canadian Geographic Education’s (CG Education) newest teaching resource, the giant floor map program introduces students to a different type of learning, one that takes them out of the comforts of their classroom and into the great big world of geography.

Every map tells a story. They help students to better understand the world around them; the places they live, the places they plan to visit and how they will get there. In that regard, a giant map (11m x 8m) is no different than a poster map on a classroom wall. However, what makes a giant floor map unique are the many ways students can interact with it. As soon as students’ shoes come off and they step onto the map, they become a part of it, absorbing everything around and beneath them.
Giant floor maps are printed on heavy-stock vinyl, the same material used for outdoor signs and banners. They arrive at each school for a three-week stay, rolled up in a two-metre long tube along with a steamer trunk filled with props, activities and reinforcers. Since CG Education, the educational branch of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, launched the program in the fall of 2012, it has seen huge success nationwide.

From start to finish, a giant floor map generally takes about three months to complete. The first step is to determine the map’s content. CG Education staff, many of whom are teachers, and cartographers strategically discuss what will be shown on the map itself and what will be layered on top of the base map through a themed activity. While the cartographer gets to work, CG Education staff start to create ten curriculum-linked activities suitable for both the elementary and secondary levels that teachers can use in conjunction with the map. These activities include the use of tactile learning resources such as pylons, plastic chains, photo cards and various props helping students make geographical connections to a wide variety of topics. Regardless of subject matter, students of all ages learn something new in a fun, hands-on way. Once all these materials are ready in both English and French, CG Education opens up free teacher registration through education.canadiangeographic.ca.
By the fall of 2013, teachers will be able to choose from four CG Education giant floor maps:

1. *The War of 1812* giant floor map, developed in partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage, shows the main theatres of war set on a historical backdrop stretching from Fort Detroit to the western tip of Newfoundland and as far south as Baltimore. By progressively building students’ knowledge of the war, each of the ten learning activities allows students to explore Canada’s past from different perspectives, determine why the War of 1812 was important geographically and dive into life in the 1800s.

2. Parks Canada partnered with CG Education to produce a topographic map of Canada, *Parks Canada: Places and Spaces for Everyone*, highlighting Canada’s national parks, marine conservation areas and historic sites. With authentic replicas and a plethora of treasures included with each map, students discover Canada’s natural and cultural landscape and the country’s collective heritage under the stewardship of Parks Canada.

3. In partnership with the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement (CBFA) Secretariat, CG Education produced *The Boreal Forest*, a giant floor map depicting the vast and valuable boreal forest within Canada’s borders. This map shows all of the aspects related to the groundbreaking Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement, including woodland caribou range, aboriginal treaties and protected areas, as well as forest-product company tenures.

4. To help students understand where Canada’s energy comes from and how it arrives at homes across the country, CG Education partnered with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers to create *Canada’s Energy: Production and Transmission*. This giant floor map shows Canada’s main energy transmission lines, areas of production and energy infrastructure. Students have the opportunity to investigate the critical role that energy plays in Canadians’ lives and how the energy landscape will change in coming years.

In a country where pure geography courses are disappearing from curricula, creating geographically literate students who can question and critique their surrounding environment is increasingly important. A giant floor map, filling up half of a school’s gymnasium, is a powerful way to illustrate some of the many topical issues facing Canadians and help reinforce one’s sense of place. Whether playing "Simon Says" with a kindergarten class, or hosting a discussion on the effects of human development on endangered animals' migration routes, the giant floor map allows students and teachers to be challenged and engaged with geography in a new and relevant way.

For more information about the giant floor map program and other free programs offered by CG Education, visit [education.canadiangeographic.ca](http://education.canadiangeographic.ca).

CG Education, the educational branch of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, is one of Canada’s largest not-for-profit educational organizations. With a mandate to foster geographic engagement in all Canadian students, CG Education believes that geographic education plays a vital role in creating an engaged and informed citizenry. Since 1992, CG Education has proudly represented and advocated for geographic education in Canada, ensuring that all educators are able to access resources free of charge and in the national language of their choice.
Une carte pour chaque occasion

Ellen Curtis
Sara Black
Michela Rosano
La Société géographique royale du Canada

Qu’est-ce qui pèse 45 kilogrammes, couvre la moitié du plancher d’un gymnase scolaire et affiche tous les Grands Lacs? Ce n’est pas une devinette, c’est une carte-tapis géante!

Le nouvel outil éducatif de CG Éducation, la carte-tapis géante, offre aux élèves une forme d’apprentissage différente qui les sort de la zone de confort de leur classe pour leur présenter le grand domaine de la géographique.

Chaque carte présente une histoire. Mais toutes aident les élèves à mieux comprendre le monde qui les entoure, le milieu où ils vivent, les endroits qu’ils prévoient visiter et comment ils s’y rendront. À cet égard, la carte-tapis géante (11 m sur 8 m) n’est pas différente d’une affiche en classe. Ce qui la distingue cependant, c’est qu’elle permet aux élèves une interaction nouvelle. Dès qu’ils enlèvent leurs chaussures pour marcher sur la carte, ils en font partie, absorbant ce qui se trouve autour et sous eux.
Les cartes-tapis géantes sont imprimées sur du vinyle résistant, le même qui sert aux panneaux extérieurs et aux bannières. Elles sont livrées aux écoles glissées dans un tube de deux mètres de longueur accompagnées d’un coffre rempli d’accessoires, de descriptions d’activités et de stimulants. La carte demeure à l’école pendant trois semaines et depuis que CG Éducation, la section éducative de la Société géographique royale du Canada, a lancé le projet à l’automne 2012, l’ensemble du pays y a réagi très positivement.

La création complète d’une carte-tapis géante nécessite environ trois mois. Il faut d’abord déterminer le contenu de la carte. Le personnel de CG Éducation, composé fortement d’enseignants, et des cartographes discutent de ce qui figurera sur la carte comme telle et ce qui figurera en dégradés pour les activités à thèmes. Puis, les cartographes se mettent à l’œuvre tandis que le personnel de CG Éducation se lance dans l’élaboration de dix activités liées aux programmes d’enseignement de l’éléémentaire et du secondaire que les enseignants utiliseront de concert avec la carte. Les activités prévoient l’utilisation de ressources d’apprentissage tactiles comme des pions, des chaînes de plastique, des cartes-photos et divers accessoires qui aideront les élèves à faire des liens géographiques avec toute une gamme de thèmes. Quel que soit le sujet, les élèves de tous les âges apprennent dans un mode amusant et pratique. Une fois tous les éléments prêts, en français et en anglais, CG Éducation lance aux enseignants l’invitation aux inscriptions gratuites par education.canadiangeographic.ca.
Dès l’automne 2013, les enseignants pourront choisir entre quatre cartes-tapis géantes de CG Éducation :

La carte-tapis géante sur la Guerre de 1812, conçue en collaboration avec Patrimoine canadien, indique les principaux théâtres de cette guerre sur fonds historique du fort Detroit jusqu’à la pointe ouest de Terre-Neuve et au sud jusqu’à Baltimore. En étoffant progressivement les connaissances des élèves sur la guerre, les dix activités d’apprentissage leur permettent d’explorer le passé du Canada à partir de différents points de vue, de comprendre l’importance géographique de la Guerre de 1812 et de baigner dans la vie des années 1800.

Parcs Canada s’est joint CG Éducation pour produire une carte topographique du Canada, Parcs Canada : de grands espaces pour tous, faisant ressortir les parcs nationaux, les aires de conservation marine et les lieux historiques du Canada. Grâce aux abondantes répliques de trésors accompagnant la carte, les élèves découvrent le paysage naturel et culturel du Canada et l’héritage collectif du pays conservé par Parcs Canada.

En collaboration avec le Secrétariat de l’Entente sur la forêt boréale canadienne, CG Éducation a produit La forêt boréale, une carte-tapis géante décrivant la riche et vaste forêt boréale du pays. La carte décrit tous les aspects du lancement des travaux menant à l’Entente, y compris le territoire du caribou des bois, les traités autochtones et les aires protégées, de même que les mandats des sociétés forestières.

Pour aider les élèves à comprendre d’où provient l’énergie du Canada et comment elle est acheminée jusqu’à tous les foyers du pays, CG Éducation a collaboré avec l’association canadienne des producteurs pétroliers pour créer Production et transport de l’énergie au Canada. La carte-tapis géante indique les principales lignes de transmission, les secteurs de production et l’infrastructure de l’énergie. Les élèves peuvent examiner le rôle essentiel de l’énergie dans la vie des Canadiens et voir comment le paysage énergétique va changer au cours des prochaines années.

Dans un pays où les cours de géographie sont éliminés du programme d’études, former des élèves qui connaissent la géographie et qui peuvent s’interroger sur leur milieu est extrêmement important. Une carte-tapis géante, couvrant la moitié d’un gymnase scolaire, constitue un moyen puissant d’illustrer des enjeux importants pour les Canadiens et contribue à renforcer le sentiment d’appartenance. Que les élèves de la maternelle jouent à « Jean dit » ou que ceux du secondaire échangent sur les effets du développement humain sur les routes migratoires des animaux en voie de disparition, la carte-tapis géante permet aux élèves et aux enseignants de relever des défis et d’aborder la géographie sous un angle nouveau et pertinent.

Pour de plus amples renseignements sur le programme des cartes-tapis géantes et les autres programmes gratuits offerts par CG Éducation, consultez education.canadiangeographic.ca.

CG Éducation est la section éducative de la Société géographique royale du Canada, et l’un des organismes éducatifs sans but lucratif le plus important du Canada. Par son mandat de répandre la formation géographique de tous les élèves canadiens, CG Éducation estime que l’enseignement géographique joue un rôle essentiel dans la formation d’un citoyen engagé et renseigné. Depuis 1992, CG Éducation a fièrement représenté et défendu l’enseignement de la géographie au Canada, veillant à ce que tous les enseignants aient accès à des ressources gratuites dans la langue nationale de leur choix.
Jacqueline Guest is the author of seventeen novels for children and young adults. Many of her works explore either the history or contemporary experiences of Canada’s First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. Often her works engage young people by telling stories built around sports, racing, gaming or other topics that draw them into reading. Because of the way her novels cover the range from historical fiction to contemporary life, School Libraries in Canada is particularly pleased to include this interview with her in its “Carrying Our Past into the Future” issue.

SLiC - First of all, congratulations on having been named the 2013 Arts Laureate for Indspire in recognition of your “work towards the betterment of their communities and for Indigenous success across Canada.” This is only one in a succession of nominations and awards for you and your writing including the 2012 American Indian Library Association Young Adult Literature Award for your novels Free Throw and Triple Threat; you also have seven titles listed on the First Nation Communities Read 2012-2013 list of resource books, not to mention numerous other writing awards and gold medals in Canada and the United States. What is the significance of these awards for you as a writer?

JG - What I really appreciate about the awards is the acknowledgement that my work is reaching and being enjoyed by my target audience, and my novels are having a positive impact. The Indspire award was an incredible honour and very much appreciated. It is one I will never forget.

SLiC - In your novel Outcasts of River Falls, Kathryn only finds out about her Métis heritage after she is orphaned. When and why did you become
conscious of your Métis heritage and how did it influence your life as you were growing up?

**JG** - I only found out about my Métis background as an adult. As a child I was told that my background was French Canadian. There was never any mention of Aboriginal roots. I guess it was easier to get by that way in those days, but when I found out about what I had missed I was sad because of all the lost stories that I would never hear from grandparents, aunts and uncles. One of my presentations is on the History and Culture of the Métis in The Era of the Fur Trade and when I finish I tell my audience we owe a debt of gratitude to our ancestors, wherever they are from, because if they hadn’t been so smart, so tough and so brave, we wouldn’t be here today. They would have perished and we would never have been born. So if they are still lucky enough to have grandparents or aunts and uncles, go and ask them for their stories about the ‘old days’ and perhaps they will grow to write a book like *Belle of Batoche*, which is about my great-great-grandmother who fought in the Battle of Batoche. We can do nothing about our heritage but celebrate it, which is a wonderful thing to do.

**SLiC** - When did you first identify yourself as a writer and what drew you to writing?

**JG** - When you are learning your craft, you don’t want to tell anyone you are a writer until you have something published, and so it was years before I could call myself a professional writer. Learning to write well is like any other skill; it requires many hours of practice to get it right. However, my life as a writer is all tied up with my life as a reader, as reading has always been a big part of my life. I lived in those stories and it was books that inspired me, books that educated me, and books that saved me. When I got older I wanted to give that gift to new readers, to show them the magic that is waiting in the pages of a book. I am still trying to repay the debt I owe all those writers of the books that gave me so much.

**SLiC** - Other than your discovery of the experiences of your Métis ancestors, was there anything else that attracted you to historical fiction as a genre for several of your novels?

**JG** - When I was growing up, history in school wasn’t my favourite subject, which was unfortunate because as an adult I discovered fascinating
elements in our history—there is something to engage almost any student. For instance, my novel *Secret Signs* is a winner with reluctant boy readers. This book is very Tom Sawyerish in feel—a young lad living by his own rules, his own wits and striking out on his own. Set in 1932, it tells of how he survived by using the secret signs made by hobos, a lexicon of pictures created to communicate messages that only other travelers would understand. It has a natural appeal for boys around grade four and grade five because of the adventure and humour, but it also teaches about the Great Depression and how tenuous survival was in those dire times.

My novel *Ghost Messages* is built around the story of the laying of the 1865 transatlantic cable between Ireland and Newfoundland. This engages middle school students while it helps them to understand the roots of communication. It has many curriculum links, such as the Fenian plot and the plight of the Irish, but it also has real historical figures woven into a fictional story. The high action mystery is a guaranteed page turner and interest is heightened by the inclusion of a supernatural element that is real and taken directly from history. There is also a terrible mystery revealed at the end of the novel that keeps kids reading to the last page. I try to give my books an ‘added extra’ to help librarians and teachers ‘sell the book’ and in *Ghost Messages*, I have included a Morse code question at the start of each chapter for students to decode. With careful reading, the answer can be found in the chapter, which leads to increased critical reading skills and adds to the enjoyment.

**SLiC** - What were your favorite books as a child and as a teenager? What attracted you to those books?

**JG** - Growing up, there was no library in my school or in my town and not a lot of money to buy extras, like books. I grew up with only two books: *A Child’s Book of Bible Verse* which taught me ethics and morals and *Alice in Wonderland*, which introduced me to the fantastic worlds that exist in good books. It aroused my sense of adventure and imagination and that got me involved in reading to the point where I lived in the books.

**SLiC** - Who are your most important literary influences as a writer? Why are their works important to you?
JG - Samuel Clemens, Mark Twain to your readers, is for me, a writer for all seasons and for all ages. This remarkable man is a true master of the craft. His sense of humour and the ability to translate that wit and wisdom to the page is unsurpassed. He draws readers into his stories making them laugh and cry while imparting down home wisdom that never ceases to be relevant.

SLiC - What kind of recreational reading do you enjoy?

JG - I read anything and everything, fiction and non-fiction. Right now I am reading *Children of the Fur Trade* for research, *A Short History of Myth* to satisfy my adult mind and *The Graveyard Book* to keep the kid in me happy.

SLiC - How do you feel about e-books?

JG - Children today are digital natives who are completely comfortable in their electronic world while I am definitely still a "stranger in a strange land." But as far as I am concerned, it doesn’t matter what medium kids use as long as they read; use whatever works for you. I do my writing on a computer but I don’t free read on the infernal machine. I may be an anachronism, but I still like the printed page. There’s nothing like the feeling you get when you curl up beside a crackling fire with a nice cup of tea and crack open the first page on a new book! O frabjous day! However, I know the times they are a-changin’ and perhaps if I had an e-reader, I would emigrate to the Land of Electrons.

SLiC - As an author, have you had any particularly memorable experiences in school libraries?

JG - Library visits are paramount to me as a writer because they give me a chance to connect with my readers on a personal and individual basis. One particularly memorable experience was at a library not far from here where a Grade 5 student told me, “I read *Rink Rivals*.” Thinking that further explanation was needed, he continued, “I read the whole book. Every page.” Then this young boy floored me by adding, “This is the first time I have ever read a whole book and now, I’m going to take out another one.” That kind of individual reaction to my work is most meaningful and memorable.

SLiC - In addition to writing, you have done other work to promote literacy including helping to promote Native literacy at Mamawenig (the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Gathering), performing workshops at the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre, participating in Back to Batoche Days, and at Fort Calgary ‘s Métis Cultural Festival. You have also presented at educational and writers’ conferences and been Writer-In-Residence for the Marigold Library System and worked with the Calgary Arts Partners in Education Society. What do you find most gratifying about these aspects of your work?
JG - These activities give me a chance to share books in unusual settings where there is usually a positive atmosphere. They give me a chance to have gratifying experiences like sharing *Goal in Sight*, a novel about bullying that features a real blind hockey team, with children who may not have thought about being physically challenged and playing a sport. It is worth all the time and expense of travel, all the hotels and gasoline, bad meals and long roads, to make audiences aware of how much there is to discover in the world and to plant seeds of interest with fiction. There is always the ‘hook in the book’, those insider secrets that only an author can share, and which can spark interest in a new reader. For me, I have incredible traveling tales--like that special day I stood on an iceberg and the time I flew a kite in a hurricane or how I wore pink bedroom slippers in Parliament!

SLIC - What is the greatest source of concern that has come to your attention as a result of your work promoting literacy, cultural awareness, education and the arts?

JG - I hope you don’t mind my beating a drum about an issue that needs more publicity, but I am really concerned about budget cuts to cultural institutions and I would put libraries at the top of my list of institutions that need to be protected. To me libraries represent the “full meal deal” in terms of cultural preservation and when we lose libraries and librarians we are losing our culture. Librarians are our strongest resource and best hope for creating life-long readers. Reading fires the imagination and with imagination comes innovation and with innovation, we are assured of a bright future. I want that for our children, but if we keep cutting library budgets, both in schools and in our communities, then we are limiting their chances for success.

SLIC - What is your greatest source of hope for the future as a consequence of your work promoting literacy, cultural awareness, education and the arts?

JG - Many children are kept so busy with so many different activities these days that we are creating an ADHD Twitch Generation that is constantly downloading new information, jumping from one activity to another and generally living with an attention span of a nanosecond. My hope would be that kids will be able to indulge themselves with quiet time for sitting, reading and reflecting. They need to understand the inestimable worth in giving yourself permission to do nothing but sit and read.
SLiC - Are you working on any new books or other new projects right now? If so, do you mind telling us what they are, or what attracted you to them?

JG - Thanks for asking. As a writer I am always working on a new book whether I am just working it out in my head or actually getting something down on paper. Right now I am working on The Comic Book War, which will be the third book (after Belle of Batoche and Outcasts of River Falls) in the series about the Tourond family. Set in 1943, it will tell the story of three brothers who go off to war and the younger brother who is left at home.

SLiC - I think you said it all when you spoke about the importance of libraries as a cultural institution but I will still ask, is there anything else you would like to say to Canada's school librarians and the supporters of school libraries?

JG - I would like to thank all of the library gods and goddesses who go the extra mile to help students. I know of school librarians who, when the budgets are short, go out and spend their own money to put the right book into the hands of a student. I want to acknowledge all of the time outside of regular hours librarians put into organizing book fairs and activities and supervising libraries so that students can read and study. Thank you for doing battle with your principals to get funding for author visits. Your work is appreciated. You are important. You make a difference.

SLiC - Thank you for taking the time to share some insights into your writing and your literacy work with the readers of School Libraries in Canada. Your words of support and encouragement are greatly appreciated as are all of the books you have written to inspire the same love of reading and of learning that has given rise to your own success.

Thank you to Jennifer Young, the library technician at Crowther Memorial Junior High in Strathmore, Alberta for this school library profile. You are invited to submit your own school library for consideration to be featured in a future edition of School Libraries in Canada. The form is available at:

English - http://clatoolbox.ca/casl/slicv27n1/profile.doc  
Français - http://clatoolbox.ca/casl/slicv27n1/profil.doc

Crowther Memorial Junior High School

Strathmore, Alberta is a community of just over 12,000, about a half hour from Calgary. The community has a youth center, a skateboard park, various other parks, a curling rink, two hockey arenas, a swimming pool and Catholic and public school divisions.

The library at Crowther Memorial Junior High serves over 600 students and 32 teachers. The spacious library is open to students during breaks and at lunch time. There is plenty of table space for projects and research and large windows are available for students to write on using Crayola window crayons. Special programming includes free breakfasts and book fairs. One library technician supports this programming as well as a collection of 14,164 items. The most popular items include Manga, Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Lego books and record books such as Guinness, Top Ten, and Ripley’s. There are 60 desktop and 30 laptop computers.

Photo Credit: Jennifer Young  
students looking for books and doing research at tables / windows decorated by students / typical lunch
The library faces many challenges. Supervision and computer damage are obvious ones (All the mice for the outside computers have been pulled off and students have to sign them out! Since September we have replaced over 30 mice due to damage.). Another one is accommodating reading levels from grade 1 to grade 12 but keeping material junior high appropriate. There is a new "one-to-one project" for which every grade 7 and 8 student is assigned a laptop (like a textbook); these are signed out from the library. Day sign-outs of laptops are also available for students not taking part in the program or who have forgotten or damaged their own laptops (As many as thirty go in and out some days.).

Despite a shrinking population and budget, circulation stats have consistently gone up over the last four years. The library is full during breakfast, break and lunch and most class periods. On World Read Aloud day, all teachers read a picture book at the start of every class !! An Animoto video showcasing how well this worked can be viewed at [http://animoto.com/play/INcUBSu0yZkKbjiwu1cNG1Q](http://animoto.com/play/INcUBSu0yZkKbjiwu1cNG1Q). We have teamed up with the public library for the school year beginning in September 2013. All of our students will have public library cards giving them access to e-books; we are very excited about this new initiative. We got rid of overdue fines, so students can keep books until they have finished reading them. We keep markers, tape, glue, pencil crayons, special scissors (ones that cut funky edges) for students to use for various projects. The library has become a safe place to hang out. Although junior high is a very challenging age group, it is most rewarding to work with these students.
Teacher-Librarians as Content Curators: — Strong Contexts, New Possibilities

by Anita Brooks Kirkland,
Consultant, K-12 Libraries
Waterloo Region District School Board

Keeping on top of our dynamic online environment these days can be quite overwhelming. Aside from the explosion of information, a parallel explosion of online tools and all of the buzzwords for how we interact in these new environments can leave one rather breathless, and perhaps skeptical in the midst of all of the hype as to what is really useful.

Curation has emerged as one of the latest fashionable buzzwords. Everyone is a curator these days. But if you cut past the hype, the foundational ideas of curation combined with the power of new online tools means new opportunities for teacher-librarians to do what we have always done, but better.

In many ways, the notion of curation is about connecting the dots – making sense of information and putting it into a meaningful context. The idea of digital content curation is a new take on an old idea – an idea in which teacher-librarians have always been engaged. This article is about owning that idea and leveraging the possibilities of these new tools to make what we have always done more powerful – connecting the dots between the tried and true and innovative practice.

What is Curation?

According to Herther (2012), the term “content curation” is a recent label, coined by marketing professor Rohit Bhargava in predicting an increased need for sense-making in the explosion of online information. Herther describes a content curator as “someone who continually finds, groups, organizes, and shares the best and most relevant content on a specific issue online.” The founder of the online curation tool Curata, Pawan Deshpande, describes the shortcomings of search engines and the consequent need for content curation. Search engines, he says, “reveal the most popular content rather than the best and most relevant content” and are also “designed for one-time queries rather than a persistent search over a long period of time.” (Herther, 2012).

Clay Shirky, noted Internet guru and professor at New York University, flips the notion of information overload into the reality of “filter failure”. “Curation comes up when people realize that it isn’t just about information seeking, it’s also about synchronizing a community.” (Rosenbaum, 2010). Business consultant Harold Jarche provides a useful model for understanding the progression from information-seeking to sense-making and sharing to accelerate knowledge-building. “The process of seeking out information sources, making sense of them through some actions, and then sharing with others to confirm or accelerate our knowledge are interlinked activities from which knowledge (often slowly) emerges.” (Jarche, 2012).
Libraries as a Context for Curation

So why is this seemingly new concept so familiar? Surely these ideas should be fully understood by librarians. After all, librarians are in the business of selecting and organizing information. We have always helped our communities make sense of that information through the very organization of our collections, the way we provide resource lists, create displays, and organize online topic pathfinders. While these have been powerful methods of curation, they tend to be somewhat passive when it comes to serving the information needs of our communities. Sharing our knowledge has frustratingly relied more on marketing than on connecting communities.

New social tools for content curation open up a whole new world of possibilities. Sites such as ScoopIt, Storify, Pinterest and a host of other options facilitate gathering information from multiple inputs including social media, give opportunities for contextualizing and commenting on that information, allow us to organize and feature content, provide multiple sharing options, and create new opportunities for shared communities of interest. Online curation platforms leverage their own interactive environments for discovery and sharing within that specific environment and beyond. With search engines now incorporating social media into search algorithms, the potential for extending reach is boundless.

The Human Touch

The core element of content curation is the human touch. For librarians who found themselves defending that role in the early days of the Internet, one can’t help reflect on the irony of the rest of the world now realizing that they really do need help in filtering and sharing information effectively! But for now we’ll just release that idea to retrospection and focus on opportunities to re-engage.

Perhaps the most useful “non-tech” models for effective curation are the very institutions where the notion of curation originates, museums. Long gone are the glass cases full of masses of objects gathered thematically in collections. Museum displays now focus on context, learning and connecting to the community in meaningful and interactive environments. Online content curation provides new possibilities not only for the selection and arrangement of information, but for interacting with information in communities of interest.

Why Teacher-Librarians Make Good Curators

"Librarians are uniquely qualified to curate. School librarians are perhaps most ripe for this function, because they understand the curriculum and the specific needs and interests of their own communities of teachers, administrators, learners, and parents." (Valenza, 2012). We can connect the competencies for curation intrinsic to the teacher-librarian’s role with specific ways that curation is useful for connecting the learning communities we serve.

Selecting: Librarians have a healthy sense of skepticism, are very experienced at separating the credible from the not credible, representing varying points of view, getting past the hype and noise to the substance, and differentiating information needs for specific audiences.

Synthesizing: The teacher-librarian’s role is one of sense making. We scaffold information for our students, matching resources to curriculum objectives,
information needs and developmental levels. We value inquiry, and help develop the information skills that empower deeper exploration.

Sharing and Connecting: In the end, that’s what it’s all about. We gather information so that we can share it with our communities in meaningful and helpful ways. New tools and strategies can only make what we already do that much better.

Practical Purposes for Curation in the School Library Program

So how do we already curate information and how can we re-imagine traditional methods to leverage digital curation tools? Sometimes our curations are very specific. We provide pathfinder pages and reading lists to support specific inquiry and research units. We collect websites to introduce big ideas to help students connect to prior learning at the beginning stages of their research. Our online Knowledge-Building Centres integrate information sources into an online learning community. Our library websites are used as starting points for learning about information literacy, digital citizenship and information ethics. We connect readers to their interests with “great reads” lists, collections of author and award websites, online book trailers and fan fiction websites.

We teach search, and in today’s context search skills include the ability to select the best curator for our area of exploration. Learning how to assess whose curation to trust based on elements such as credibility, followership and community is a new and important information skill. So is the ability to recognize the difference between a gate-opening curator who introduces multiple facets of complex ideas and gate-keeping curators whose selections narrow the lens and opine bias.

It’s About the Context More Than the Tool

So which tool is best? This is the question that it usually comes down to when talking about any subset of social media tools. The answer isn’t quite as easy as the question. Each tool has its own strengths and weaknesses. A tool that is great at presenting a contextualized overview of an inquiry topic may not serve well to connect readers to just the right book. The trick is to start with the purpose in mind, and select the best tool for that specific purpose. Take the plunge and create accounts on a few services, explore the possibilities, and think about the connections to your school library program.

Make the library website the information hub - the place to gather and contextualize multiple curations. Consider bringing those curations into your website through embedded widgets rather than sending your students away from your website with hyperlinks. Most curation websites make this easy by providing the embed code.

In an effort to demonstrate the possibilities and offer a starting point for further exploration, I have created a ScoopIt curation on content curation, with articles selected with the school library professional’s context in mind.

Why Students Need to Learn Curation

Aside from understanding how curation connects to our own role, we also need to be thinking about how curation can become a valuable learning tool for our students. Helping students learn how to create online curations offers an
opportunity to develop sophisticated sense-making skills. It extends the notion of a personal online learning environment to the broader world of connected information communities. From a very practical point of view, a curation site provides students with a digital notebook for online research. How about the idea of assessing a student’s digital curation as a fresh approach to the annotated bibliography? Most importantly, curation is fast becoming a real world job skill, particularly in areas such as marketing, journalism, and the emerging field of knowledge management. Curation is surely one of the ultimate transferable information skills for learners today.

Leading Through Informed Innovation

With a built-in affinity for curation and a compelling need, teacher-librarians need to own this new concept and lead through innovative practice. We may have come full circle. In the early days of the Internet we sometimes had to justify our existence. After all, who needed libraries and librarians when we had the Internet? Fast-forward to 2013 and the very techies who espoused that idea are discovering a compelling need for human intervention in contextualizing information. Taking the lead in this environment offers a huge opportunity for teacher-librarianship. So take a plunge by exploring the possibilities and connecting the dots for yourself and for your students.

References


I like to write about a time that is in flux and where important changes are taking place.

Maureen Jennings

"I’ve always tried to write visually with lots of action, and that seems to suit television."

Maureen Jennings is the author of the novels behind the popular television series Murdoch Mysteries and Bomb Girls. Born in England 1939, she moved to Windsor, Ontario in 1956. In addition to her career as a writer, she has worked as a high school teacher, as an English instructor at Ryerson Polytechnic Institute and as a psychotherapist. Shipwreck, the novel explaining how the Murdoch family got its start in the business of investigation, was published in the Good Reads series for adult literacy in 2010. Maureen Jennings kindly agreed to discuss this book and her work as a writer of historical fiction with School Libraries in Canada.

SLiC - From your point of view, what characteristic of your novels has contributed most to their success when translated to television?

MJ - I’ve always tried to write visually with lots of action, and that seems to suit television.

SLiC - Where did you get the idea for writing your Detective Murdoch mysteries? Did you start with the character, the setting or the crime?

MJ - a bit of all three. I wanted to set the book in Victorian Toronto because I live here and could tune in to that previous world. I wanted to write a police procedural because it’s easier to make the solving of crimes plausible. That meant a male protagonist. I wanted him to be Catholic because I was interested in the religious conflicts of the time and that made him a bit of an outsider. He’s never going to be an Inspector because of his religion. The first crime was stimulated by a true story of two young women whose bodies were found frozen in the lake. People die here from hypothermia every year. I was intrigued by
S LiC - How does writing historical crime fiction such as the Murdoch series compare with writing contemporary crime fiction such as your Christine Morris mysteries?

MJ - In some ways it is easier to write crime fiction set in 1895 because I don’t have to do a mad study on the incredible technology that has now developed. However, with the Christine series, it was nice to write from the POV of a woman for a change.

S LiC - Which is your favourite?

MJ - Both have different aspects that I like. Why? I learn things I never knew before and get to share them with other people.

S LiC - What are the most personally interesting or exciting discoveries you have made in the course of your research?

MJ - There are so many it is honestly impossible to list them all. Perhaps discovering there were internment camps for enemy aliens in England early in the war and one of them was near Ludlow which I now consider my home town.

S LiC - Would you consider exploring a different historical period in your writing? If so, what period would you choose and why would you choose it?

MJ - Not at this stage. It takes too much time. However...I have dabbled in the late Middle Ages for background to a play I have written about Sir Thomas More. I would go there again. I like to write about a time that is in flux and where important changes are taking place.

S LiC - What do you like best and what do you like least about seeing characters from your novels translated to the television screen?

MJ - It’s wonderful to see them walking around and talking. Nothing I haven’t liked, thank goodness, although the Murdoch of the books is a bit less straight-laced than the Murdoch of the show. He likes a beer now and again and he smokes a pipe. But it’s not a big issue for me.

S LiC - Growing up in England during World War II and the decade following the war, what influence did libraries have on your life?

MJ - I knew almost nobody who had books in their homes. We only had three until I was a teenager and started to win them. We all went to the libraries. I could not have survived without libraries giving me access to books. Many people felt that way.

S LiC - What were your favourite books as a child and as a teenager? What attracted you to those books at those times in your life?

MJ - I love all the Sherlock Holmes stories which I discovered when I was about thirteen. It’s hard to describe the impression they had on me. I entered into that world utterly. They stand the test of time. They are still brilliant.
MJ - *Black Beauty* had a huge impact on me with its heartbreaking stories about cruelty to horses. I still can cry at the death of Ginger.

SLiC - What is your favourite non-fiction work now that you are an adult?

MJ - Too many to answer this properly but perhaps *The Face of Battle* by John Keegan knocked my socks off. It gets into what really happened below the myths. We’re more used to that kind of book now but when it first came out, it was groundbreaking.

SLiC - What authors, if any, have most influenced you as a writer?

MJ - Arthur Conan Doyle. All of the ‘golden age’ mystery writers. P.D. James is a favourite. Arnold Bennett. Perhaps because their books are so compelling. I wanted to write like that.

SLiC - How has your work as a psychotherapist has influenced your work as a writer?

MJ - It has given me an appreciation of the deeper currents that rule our lives and certainly has given me an understanding of motivation of all sorts.

SLiC - What are you working on right now?

MJ - Book three of my new Tom Tyler series.

SLiC - What attracted you to your current project?

MJ - I wanted to write about the war in England.

SLiC - Is there anything else you would like to say to *School Libraries in Canada’s* readers?

MJ - I myself am so grateful to all the books that have helped me over the years, that have been in many ways, my friends. I hope you enjoy them as much as I do.

SLiC - Thank you taking the time to let us get to know more about you and your work.

The young man who is later to become Inspector Murdoch solves his first mystery in *Shipwreck*

ISBN 9781926583266

National School Library Standards Project: An Update

by Judith Sykes
Project Coordinator

A strong contingent of school library committees from across Canada has undertaken the first tasks of the National School Library Standards Project for the Canadian Library Association (CLA).

Committees have met physically or virtually, aiming to submit responses to the tasks for the end of May 2013. Committee chairs will then share their content and process with the National School Library Standards Steering Committee and the CLA School Library Advisory Committee. Amalgamating this data will follow, with the goal being to format the draft content of the future e-book, thus enabling the original committees to respond to the compilation. The national focus group that created the template and guiding principles will assist with the amalgamation.

The willingness to participate and the important work done by the committee chairs and members across Canada are greatly appreciated. Many have shared new resources or links to the project site. To view these resources, the principles, template and tasks, visit the National Standards for School Libraries in Canada Project. 

(https://sites.google.com/site/nationalslproject/home)
School Library Profile

Thank you to Steve Clark, the Learning Commons Lead Teacher at Marlborough Elementary School in Calgary, Alberta for this school library profile. You are invited to submit your own school library for consideration to be featured in a future edition of School Libraries in Canada. The form is available at:

English - http://clatoolbox.ca/casl/slicv27n1/profile.doc
Français - http://clatoolbox.ca/casl/slicv27n1/profil.doc

Marlborough Elementary School

Marlborough School has a rich, diverse multi-cultural student body and family community. 52% percent of students speak a language other than English at home. The 270 students and 11 teachers in this kindergarten to grade six school benefit from quality library and school resources. The school has kept up with technology. All classrooms have computers, projection devices and smart boards. Please take a look at the classroom pages on the web site(https://sites.google.com/site/marlboroughvlc/). Students go on a variety of educational related field trips. Our instructional program has a strong focus on literacy, technology and citizenship. Students experience special presentations and performances. Our new playground structure is considered one of the best in the city.

Photo Credit: Steve Clark
Space to work on iPads in comfort /
Smart Board and Green Screen resources /
The library has one teacher-librarian and one library technician. There are 6700 items in the collection, 70 computers and 18 iPads.

Our learning commons is situated directly in the centre of our building. It is, therefore, the physical hub of our school. It is well lit with natural light sources coming from an atrium in the centre of the building. It is also a big open area, which helps keep the space flexible to suit the different learning needs of students.

Over the past few years, our school library has gone through a transformation from a library to a learning commons. After researching and consulting with library experts within our system, we made physical changes at first and then focused on understanding and implementing the learning commons concepts with both students and staff. Through ongoing discussions at staff meetings and on professional development days, we had collaboratively come to a mutual understanding of what and how our learning commons works on a day-to-day basis. Our learning commons is now a great place to visit and work on both independent and collaborative group projects. We have a full time teacher that works in the learning commons to help implement and use the learning space. The learning commons lead teacher specializes in the use of technology as a learning tool and focuses on coaching teachers and students on planning and using technology in a range of learning tasks.

The most popular resources are the green Screen, iPads and Macbook Pros. In Division One the most popular books are the Elephant & Piggie Series (Mo Williams), the Usborne Very First Reading Series and the Dragonblood Series (Michael Dahl). In Division II the most popular books are the Bone Series (Jeff Smith), the Orca Currents and Orca Sports Series, the Eragon Series (Christopher Paolini), Touching Spirit Bear (Ben Mikaelson) and “The 10 Series” (Non Fiction).

Our biggest challenge has been in the way we deploy our teaching staff in and around the learning commons. In an elementary school setting, we believe that the best thing you can do to make this transformation is to have a specialist teacher in the learning space to help support learners and teachers. During our three year
journey we have tried 4 different teacher staffing models:

A. 1 teacher working in a computer lab; 2 teachers working in the learning commons
B. 2 teachers working 0.5 in the learning commons and 0.5 as a classroom teacher
C. 2 teachers working full time in the learning commons (and in classrooms) with teachers and students
D. 1 teacher focused on working with classes and teachers in the learning commons (and in classrooms)

Here is a video we made in celebration of our transformation journey: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kRkck9N2aQ

Students can spread out and focus on their own work./comfortable place to read and work

Submit your school library profile for consideration for publication in a future issue of School Libraries in Canada.

School Library Profile (.pdf) Profil d’une bibliothèque scolaire (.pdf)
Informed by compassion for the hearts of teenage girls

Sue MacLeod

"I once told my daughter that my high school didn't have a library (or a school band). And when she found that hard to believe, I dug out my high school yearbook and, of course, it had both. I was in a fog those years …"

Born in Kingston, Ontario, to parents from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Sue MacLeod moved a lot when she was growing up, but she visited her grandmother in Ingonish, Cape Breton, every summer. Currently a resident of Toronto, she has loved writing almost as long as she has been alive. She has published two books of poetry, close to 100 magazine articles and, most recently, her first young adult novel. A long time resident of Halifax, she was that city’s first poet laureate. That city serves (along with sixteenth century London) as the setting for her new young adult novel Namesake. That seemed like an ideal topic for discussion in an issue of School Libraries in Canada dedicated to bringing our past into the future. Here is what she had to say when we asked her about the novel and her work:

SLiC - What is it about sixteenth century England that made you decide to use it as one of the settings for your novel?

SM - It was actually Lady Jane Grey herself who compelled me. I read a book about her when I was ten or so, and she stayed with me. It occurred to me a long time ago—twenty years or more—that I wanted to write about her in a way that would link her story with that of a contemporary girl. So, a young adult time-slip novel emerged as a natural way to approach that.

It took me years to get around to doing it, and once I got into the writing, I became enamoured with one aspect of sixteenth century England: the way people spoke, with lots of drama, talking in full, often flowery, sentences. I enjoyed working with Lady Jane's speech—both the phrasing

Photo credit John Oughton

Sue MacLeod - Writer and Editor
she actually would have used, such as "the Year of our Lord," and things I made up for her, such as her description of a 21st-century refrigerator as "yon cold coffin of light."

**SLiC** - Why did you choose Lady Jane Grey as the namesake for the central character in the novel?

Pajama Press (my publisher) asked me the same question in an interview, and I'm going to repeat what I told them because it's the best way I've found to explain it: I knew, looking back, that I'd had a romantic vision of Jane Grey in my own teens, partly because I was drawn to victimhood—I identified with it somehow. That draw isn't unique to me, I'm sure, and may be common among girls, for a whole mix of cultural and personal reasons. I wanted to write through that, to come out on the other side.

I hope no one will interpret this as meaning that I wanted to teach teen readers something about emotional survival. I didn't want to do that any more than I wanted to teach them about history. Which is: not at all.

I think most fiction (aside from the strictly commercial), comes from the author's desire or need to work something out, or at least explore it, for her or himself. And the fiction I like reading also has compassion for its characters and readers. My book is informed by that (or at least that's how it feels to me, and I hope that manifests)—informed by compassion for the hearts of teenage girls, including the teenage girl I once was.

**SLiC** - The modern Jane Grey seems to be a good student who is interested in her school work but who is not necessarily an academic star and whose efforts are not recognized by her mother. Why did you choose this sort of character as your protagonist?

**SM** - The fact that Jane isn't an academic star adds another layer to the conflicts she has with her mother. It's also a factor in the shifts that are occurring in her friendship with Megan; because Megan is an academic star, she's fallen in with a new crowd of kids—AP kids—leaving Jane on the fringes.

**SLiC** - You describe yourself as “a woman of letters” and you have used words and definitions as chapter headings in your novel. Can you trace the roots of your interest in words?

**SM** - "Woman of Letters," the name of my freelance editorial business, is sort of tongue in cheek. It just seems more fun than, say, Sue MacLeod Editorial Services.

I really enjoyed finding those chapter titles, most of them in a book called *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*, compiled by David Crystal and Ben Crystal.

The roots of my interest in words? I don't know. But it might go back to Cape Breton. I was an army kid; we moved around a lot but spent a good
part of each summer in Ingonish, Cape Breton, where my mother grew up. People spoke differently there than in, say, Toronto or Oromocto, New Brunswick, or wherever we were living. That could be how I developed an interest in accent, cadence, and, more generally, language.

**SLiC** - What were the books you most enjoyed reading as a teenager and how does your novel compare with those books?

**SM** - Some young adult books I remember loving were *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*; *The Outsiders*; *Go Ask Alice*; Paul Zindel's *The Pigman* and *My Darling, My Hamburger*; and a book called *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones*. The latter book may seem dated now in some ways (as is apparent in the title), but I remember thinking, even at the time, that the book was strong because the narrator's voice was believable and engaging. If my book has anything in common with these, it's the fact that I worked to create an authentic voice, as these writers clearly did, since, to my mind at least, they succeeded brilliantly.

Other books I loved as a teenager, although they weren't y.a., included Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* and *Joy in the Morning*, and *The Cheerleader*, by Ruth Doan MacDougall.

**SLiC** - Do you have any memories of school libraries when you were in elementary school or high school? If so, what are your most vivid memories?

**SM** - In elementary school, I looked forward to seeing what book the "library teacher" would choose to read to us. And I remember discovering Dr. Seuss in the elementary school library.

I once told my daughter that my high school didn't have a library (or a school band). And when she found that hard to believe, I dug out my high school yearbook and, of course, it had both. I was in a fog those years ...

To extend the question, if that's okay, public libraries had a major effect on me—still do. I was seven when my father took me to the public library in Oromocto, New Brunswick, and that was the most amazing day for me. I borrowed *The Black Stallion*, and I remember having to ask my father for help with a word: a hot sun was beating down *mercilessly* on one of the first few pages.

Then, at 12 or 13, I was especially moved by two non-fiction books I found at the Runnymede branch of Toronto public library: one was a biographical book about the Beatles and the other was about Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement. It was like I could actually feel my way of looking at the world being shaped by the civil rights book.

**SLiC** - In your work as a writer and editor you describe a wide range of projects including everything from guides to affordable housing and a cover story on single mothers and poverty for *Atlantic Insight* to *The
Parent Kit: A Family Guide to Sexuality Education and content for on-line games for anti-smoking campaigns. What was the best project you worked on that was not one of your own creative endeavors? What did you like about it?

SM - It's hard to pinpoint a favourite, but two very different projects jump to mind: a guide to affordable housing, for the Halifax YWCA; and a report on federal budget cuts for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA).

They were both challenging, which I like. For the housing guide, a long-term project, I had to start with a crash course on writing at a Grade Six level; while my job with the CCPA report was to edit it, draw out the main points, and write an executive summary, all within five days. The bottom line: they both felt like meaningful work.

SLiC - Do freelance assignments sometimes enrich, enhance or inspire your art? If so, is there a specific example that comes to mind?

SM - They do. And they inform me and keep me up to date on things. And many of them allow me to contribute to something of value and to make connections—however temporary—with people I interview or work with. At the same time, though, my freelancing pulls my time and energy away from what I think of—not too preciously, I hope—as "my work."

So there's a tension there. That's why I'm focusing on freelance editing these days, more so than freelance writing. It doesn't use quite as much of the same energy. And I'm also doing some teaching, which is great because it gets me away from the computer and out the door. Balance is good.

One freelance assignment directly inspired a book that I plan to write someday (soon, I hope). I was hired to write a booklet on the history of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, which is across the harbour from Halifax. I found lots of material about the contrast between the two places in the early 1800s (Halifax a mix of military base and grand city; and Dartmouth very working-class, complete with a "shanty town" of new Scottish and Irish immigrants). The man who operated the ferry across the harbour was a major character in the community. In the book I hope to write, he has a daughter who falls in love with one of the shanty town immigrants.

SLiC - It has been four years since you moved from Halifax to Toronto. How has that move influenced your work? Do you think about moving back?

SM - Nova Scotia is beautiful. I lived there for most of my teens and for my entire adult life until 2009. Many of my friends are there, and my daughter. But no, I won't be moving back. It was time for a change, and I'm a big-city person.

Sitting alone on an overcrowded bus the other night, surrounded by umpteen conversations, most of them in languages I don't understand, it...
struck me how deeply at home I feel here. Maybe it's because I lived here for five years of my childhood and came to love the diversity, bustle and variety of activities a big city offers.

*Namesake* is set partly in Halifax, and it was more fun writing about Halifax from a distance; it gave me a fresher perspective. Toronto, on the other hand, provides lots of new inspiration.

**SLiC** - What projects are you most excited about at the moment? What is it about them that engages you?

**SM** - I've started a new young adult novel—a love story, with class differences involved, and with a clash in values that threatens a close family relationship. (Come to think of it, those themes are also in the Dartmouth idea that I mentioned above, although not in *Namesake.*) The new novel will be set in present-day Toronto. In fact, the two main characters initially meet on the subway.

There are two points of view in the story, shifting back and forth. One of the protagonists has a father who's a police officer. The lives of cops have always interested me, so I'm looking forward to doing that research and trying to understand that world and its contradictions. Also, the other protagonist is a boy, a departure for me since both *Namesake* and my previous books (poetry) feature women and girls in the primary roles. That's another challenge that I'm happy to be engaged in.

**SLiC** - I look forward to reading that next novel and thank you for providing school librarians and their supporters with some insights into your work and its inspiration!

Find out more about Sue MacLeod at [http://suemacleod.com/](http://suemacleod.com/).
Giving Multi-Level Marketing a Good Name - A Model Collection Development Proposal

Leslie Holwerda, Jennifer Lunny, Joanna Noakes, Kelly Boyd and Kirsten Morozov

As an assignment for a course entitled "Introduction to Resources for Children and Young Adults" (Fall 2012) at the University of Alberta, one group collaborated to create this proposal for the funding of a school library with specific attention to building a collection for reluctant readers. Although the school and district are fictitious, the needs of reluctant readers and the selection criteria are real and the extensive list of titles will provide any school with an excellent starting point for creating a collection that engages all readers.

(Editor's Note: The title of this article is not the title assigned to it by its authors. I have chosen an alternate title because this proposal reflects an important aspect of the teacher-librarian or school librarian's work as an advocate for school libraries. While the focus of the project is on literature, the presentation models a use of media that shows that teacher-librarians are in the business of providing teachers and students with communication resources as well as information resources. Students need to learn design skills and how to use critical thinking to create mash-ups that will deliver their message to their audience. In a rapidly changing world, the challenge of researching, composing and organizing a worthwhile message is compounded by the need to find an effective tool for delivering it. The authors of this project show us how they are prepared for their traditional role of promoting literacy as well as for their expanded role in providing support for students and teachers in the creative use of a variety of media tools.)

INTRODUCTION

“Our target audience, the reluctant reader, can read, but chooses not to because the books they are exposed to are not interesting to them” (Gruenthal, 2011, p. 37).
Across the country each Ministry of Education writes expectations in all subject areas which include reading: reading for pleasure, understanding, research and learning. Unstated, but expected, is the creation of a culture of reading where every student is engaged in reading. After participating in the TD National Reading Summit: A Reading Canada- Building a Plan, Chris Kennedy (2012) wrote that “a reading culture, fostered from a young age, is crucial for our society” (para. 2). Every province reflects this belief as reading and choice in reading material are identified as being critical to student success.

Curriculum documents across the country confirm the importance of building a culture of reading. The Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Language Arts Curriculum (2010) guides teachers to develop a program that fosters a love of reading through daily reading of a variety of texts and in different ways (p.197). In Ontario the language “curriculum focuses on developing the knowledge and skills that will enable students to become effective (life-long learners and) readers” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 10). Teachers in British Columbia plan so they can “develop capable readers who are knowledgeable about the reading process, who are able to successfully make meaning from text, who enjoy reading, and who regularly choose to read” (Ministry of Education, Province of British Columbia., 2006, p. 20). The Ministry of Education, Province of British Columbia (2007) lists learning processes and learning environments which include specifically “engaging the reluctant learner” (p.32).

Each district or board of Education within the province responds with recommendations and initiatives reflecting Ministry guidelines in order to graduate students who successfully read more and longer for pleasure, information, recreation, and learning. Krashen (2011) quotes numerous studies, both his and others’, that have found that reading more increases ability and skill in numerous content areas, such as reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, speed, and knowledge (pp. 4-5).

Providing engaging reading material is key to supporting successful readers. According to the Ontario School Library Association document, Together for Learning (2010), “when students are encouraged to pursue their own interests and passions and are free to choose from a rich collection within an inviting environment, they are motivated to read and their reading and depth of understanding improve” (p.16). School libraries should provide equitable access to an assortment of engaging reading resources for all students, including those identified as reluctant readers. Currently, collections in many schools are of limited appeal to students, especially reluctant readers: they have had an infusion of academic literature, but the materials that might draw reluctant readers are extremely limited in variety and genre, and are often dated and in poor shape.

The challenge is that reluctant readers "can read, but choose[es] not to" (Gruenthal, 2011, p. 37). These readers need to have a choice of reading material and be allowed “to feel power and control over reading.” They need to be encouraged to read their own “interests no matter how different from our own” and be offered the “best of whatever (they) are willing to read” (Jobe & Dayton-Sakari, 1999, p. 138).

In order to attract and engage reluctant readers the following areas of reading need to be addressed through improvements to school library collections. Purchasing titles which reflect the reading interests of reluctant readers will lead
to more students reading more books for longer periods of time, eventually improving literacy, test scores and graduation rates.

The integration of video and text in this proposal reflects a world where decisions may be based as much on what has been seen and heard as on what is read on the printed page.

**Fiction Reading**

Because fiction is such a broad category, it offers many choices for the reluctant reader. The most important thing is that their interest is captured and held. All readers enjoy reading what appeals to them, and this is especially true for reluctant readers. Jones & Hartman (2006) point out that "many non-readers will pick up books if they find something relevant to their interests. For a lot of reluctant teen readers, that thing is sports" (p. 120). Or as Lori & Kropp (2005) discovered, "for other struggling readers, successful fiction choices will be those that are "cool," that involve action-adventure or teenage problems" (p. 36).

Another way to keep reluctant readers engaged in fiction is to offer them the chance to read books that are part of a popular series. As Worthy (1996) mentions, "series books have been a solid reading staple for both adults and children for centuries." With the "characters, language and content that grow more familiar with every book read," they allow readers to become comfortable with the reading process and instill in the reader "a sense of mastery over the conventions of reading" (p. 204).

**Non-fiction Reading**

Non-fiction is a popular genre with reluctant readers. These students are often "information-oriented rather than fiction-oriented. These I'd rather-do-something kids are totally focused on getting information about the real world. They are
thing-oriented... and often focus on specific topics..." (Dayton-Sakari & Jobe, 2003, p. 22). Thus, our selection list reflects a breadth of informational titles to suit many interests.

We've made special efforts to include non-fiction titles on popular topics for reluctant readers. We paid particular interest to survival stories, both in terms of physical and social, as well as animals such as dinosaurs, cats and dogs (Jobe & Dayton-Sakari, 1999, p. 119).

**Graphica Reading**

Graphic novels are an effective way to foster children’s love of reading and grab the attention of even the most tentative reader. Graphic novels and other text that combine words and illustration have been found to be “an invaluable tool for motivating reluctant readers” (Crawford, 2004, p. 26). The visual aspect of the graphic novel provides important contextual clues and the minimal text attracts reluctant readers creating a unique blend that engages those that might otherwise choose not to read.

The use of graphic novels may also lead to reluctant readers moving towards the selection of more serious text (Krashen, 2004, p. 103) and promote a transition into lifelong learners.

**Electronic Reading**

Twelve years ago *Reluctant Readers* (Jobe & Dayton-Sakari, 1999) included lists of suggested CD-ROMS, taped books and videos under non-print titles because “Kids are tuned in!” (p. 79) This has not changed but there has been an increase in the availability of audio books for use with iPods, tablets, MP3 players or computers and an equivalent increase in the availability of e-books as well as interactive books.

Recently it was reported that in digital sales another of the “strongly performing categories include children’s digital books and digital non-fiction books, which increased by 171% and 128% respectively” (Publishers association, 2012, para. 1). Sales are increasing, technology is available for accessing digital books and students are using technology in every form. It was found in a scientific study that “after use of the e-readers, boys’ attitudes about the value of reading improved” (Williams-Rossi, 2012, para. 3).

Carman’s (2011) informal surveys of middle school students show 99% of students use at least three devices daily. He is "convinced we should be creating books for every kind of reader—traditional, ultra-wired, and everything in between” (para. 18) and, as a result, includes text, video and audio in many of his stories. In school library collections we must remain current in order to attract readers. We must use up to date technology and offer state of the art electronic formats to attract reluctant readers. *Achieving Information Literacy*(Asselin, Branch, & Oberg, 2003) recommends that non-print resources including sound recordings exceed 1% of the collection (p. 30) and electronic and digital media in a variety of formats exceed 60 titles (p. 31) and this purchase will be the foundation of an electronic collection.
"How to" and Guide Book Reading

How to books and guidebooks are usually informational books, although some of them are actually parodies of this form.

Jobe and Dayton-Sakari (1999) have observed that books that teach how to do something provide an additional level of textual interaction. Most such books teach practical, necessary or entertaining skills, such as cooking (p. 55), and we have included books to build all sorts of skills, such as drawing, sports, cooking, etc.. There is a built-in incentive to stay focused on the material.

Students are influenced by the viewing habits of the current popular culture of their peer groups (Jobe & Dayton-Sakari, 1999, pp. 61, 91). Because those who read more are more culturally literate (West, Stanovich, & Mitchell 1983 as cited in Krashen, 2011, p. 5), our selection list includes, for instance, guides to the world of fashion and zombie survival manuals (as recommended by Gruenthal, 2011, p. 38) in order to satisfy this interest. These books may also provide immigrant children and the more socially awkward students with more cultural currency.

Horror, Taboo and Humour Reading

Jobe and Dayton-Sakari (1999) also note that horror is fascinating to students (pp. 100, 125): as such we have added zombie books. Reluctant readers are also often drawn in by humour and taboo topics (p. 119), hence the inclusion on our list of gross foods and guidebooks on bodily functions that have the added interactivity of sound effect buttons (Gruenthal, 2011, p. 38). Finally, Gruenthal (2011) notes that teens love controversial topics, and we have therefore included age-appropriate books on sexuality and teen issues (p. 38).

Conclusion

In order to have an impact on the reading behavior of our reluctant readers, the school library collection must be improved, not just added to. We need to provide books which will attract and engage students and bring them back again and again. In order to meet the needs of our reluctant readers, selection criteria have been developed which recognize the variety of readers and complement their in and out-of-school interests. Our list of three hundred titles has been carefully selected by a team of experienced teachers and teacher-librarians. Many of these books may not be considered quality reads, but they can be the key to getting reluctant readers excited about books (Ujiie and Krashen 2002 as cited in Krashen, 2011, p. 8; Gruenthal, 2011, p. 38). The books will be made available in a number of different formats ranging from e-books and audiobooks to graphic and traditional hardcover and paperback books. These books, when made available to our students, will encourage reluctant readers to want to read more and, with increased reading, we anticipate an improvement in all areas of academic achievement.
A Haiku Deck slide show is one of the multi-media applications that was used to explain this proposal. The strategies suggested for promoting reading, in addition to those shown above, included school-wide free voluntary reading, a library-based 40 book challenge, introducing e-books, a contest promoting the use of play-away devices and a grand celebration for the re-opening of the collection.

References


Just a Little Thing:  
Reading Must Be at the Heart of 21st Century Learning  
by Moira Ekdahl  
Teacher-Librarian, John Oliver Secondary School  
Teacher-Librarian Mentor, Vancouver School Board  
Liaison Chair, BC Teacher-Librarians’ Association

Context: Re-designing The Place for New Teaching and Learning

John Oliver (JO) Secondary School is a medium-sized, extremely diverse, inner-city secondary school in Vancouver’s East Side. It does not do well in measures of literacy or numeracy. Its location is unique, overlooking as it does the graveyard, the adjoining crematorium, and a busy but nondescript intersection; if you stand on tippy-toes you can just see the mountains. JO has been a school ready for change for a long time. The school’s recent focus on technology has begun to shift the currents of local opinion. Putting new life into a dreary library space and transforming it into a dynamic learning commons at the heart of the school took the school-based re-design team eight months. The JO learning commons intends to provide access to a “knowledge-creation centre” and invite every child and teacher into a new learning culture.

The re-design team incorporated simple principles in order to put new “light” into a structure that likely found its architectural influences in the Cold War and that in reality has not one window; new sightlines created a sense of openness; bright new furnishings were easily moved to build new learning contexts; the collection footprint was reduced as stacks and spinners were removed; old bulky furnishings and fittings that encumbered movement and flexible use of the space were removed. Paint, wiring, and custom-built fittings consumed the biggest portion of the budget.

Two features of the school library worked well to support a new “hub of learning” role: its location across from the school office near the front of the building and the remarkable amount of space. Today there are four kinds of spaces: quieter, more comfortable reading and study areas; an informal café-style reading and learning space; smaller multi-media production, storage, and work spaces; and large teaching areas. One of these is the Innovative Teaching Centre; furnished with ottomans, it offers a full-wall screen with surround sound and/or an interactive white board. Another, the Collaborative Centre, has light, mobile “wheely” chairs and colourful “wavy” tables that can be pulled together quickly into different learning configurations.

Within the Vancouver School District, there was also a real need for a district hub for technology-based professional learning and for a physical example of the possibilities for change and transformation of Vancouver school libraries into learning commons. Many of our school libraries are sadly in need of renewal; transformation into a learning commons “approach” that supports new ways of teaching and learning may offset the tendency in the new discourse of technology and of learning in the 21st Century, or personalized learning, to omit a place for the school library and inquiry-based learning.
Each school’s learning commons will be as unique as the educational community from which it draws its energy. Experts agree, the grounding principle for transforming school libraries into learning commons is that you start with the teaching and learning and then build the space you need based on the instructional program. Our re-design group hadn’t done that. Instead, we had capitalized on a serendipitous convergence of a number of factors rarely found in public education: administrative support for renewal; visions, not necessarily shared, for re-energizing teaching and learning in a technology-enhanced learning environment; a generous community donation to address a real opportunity to make a significant difference in kids’ lives; the previously noted need for a district model and centre for professional learning about teaching with technology; and the willingness and expertise of a “team” of teachers to work collaboratively to address the aesthetics, the technological shortcomings, and the learning agenda. We had, it turns out, left the harder part to the last: it was now time to re-design the program.

I was new to the JO teaching staff in September. I had advised, in my district mentor role, on the physical transformation of the old school library into a “learning commons” space and now worked there to build the program. Long-established patterns of understaffing, barriers to communications, and insufficient access to technology continue to provide challenges to change, and I was acutely aware that instructional practice did not have the solid collaborative foundations for teaching and learning built over years of collegial conversations and connections with the school library. To make matters more complicated, the 2011-12 school year has seen a very politicized work environment in BC; teachers have had little inclination and few contexts for the conversations about educational change, few opportunities to discuss, share, or present understandings, about what a learning commons -- or anything else for that matter -- could be to a school.

The JO teacher-librarians have been acutely aware that the renewed facility, the books and resources, and the technology do not constitute the program. Learning in the twenty-first century has taken on new dimensions with the exponential expansion of information, ever-changing tools, increasing digitization of text, and heightened demands for critical and creative thinking, communication, and collaborative problem solving. All learners must be able to access high-quality information from diverse perspectives, make sense of it to draw their own conclusions or create new knowledge, and share their knowledge with others. (AASL)

The school library constantly seeks to improve services that enable access for the school community (Brooks-Kirkland 3). Teacher-librarians understand access must be both physical and intellectual. Refreshing a space will wear thin if common principles for access aren’t developed, especially as demand for access increases. “[While] every member of a school’s population will ultimately participate in the creation of a Learning Commons, ... the concept’s early co-ordination and leadership will rest with school library expertise” (3). Change, even when grounded on broadly understood common principles around the operations of a school library, is challenging.

The teacher-librarians looked daily at the patterns of use and sought opportunities for conversations with staff and students about the ways tools, resources, and their own expertise could craft a new program that would be “a
flexible, responsive approach to . . . [expanding] the learning experience” (Brooks-Kirkland 3) for students at JO. In fact, the students “get” how it works and participate readily in the new learning culture. They come to work and read; they love working there. Everywhere there is evidence of student engagement. Usage is two to three times what it was last year. How then, we asked ourselves, do we begin the collegial conversations that will inspire collaborative re-design of the learning commons program? How can we best extend the professional invitation to explore new learning opportunities with us and re-focus our collective approach to ensure our teaching has an impact on our particular JO students with their unique skills, interests, and learning needs?

**Inspiration for Change: “Just a Little Thing”**

Working to develop a program in the JO learning commons program must begin with recognizing the very real commitment teacher-librarians have to reading, at the heart of learning, and acknowledging the shared sense amongst the JO teaching staff that there is work to be done with reading. To be an independent and inquiring learner, using digital or analogue tools, you must be able to code and decode, construct and deconstruct texts in many formats and across many platforms; an inquiry-based approach provides the perfect framework for such a focus.

Demonstrating what working collaboratively and seamlessly integrating technology with inquiry learning looks like in “TL terms” was the first challenge. Who could resist a small reading assignment with a little Web 2.0 enhancement, simple in its construction, yet profound in its capacity to enact and empower disciplinary reading and conversations to “personalize” the learning?

A 3-minute video, “just a little thing” like its creator Hazel, is a perfect example of how a kind of “magic” can take over when a content-area teacher and a teacher-librarian collaborate to empower learning, in this case, for a truly gifted student. [See Appendix I: Chemistry Assignment] “Chemistry 12 Newsflash - The Drive to Inquire: What’s New” is linked to February 2012 TLSpecial blog post entitled “Meet Hazel”:

Mr. Leung (Lester), the teacher featured in the video, is the tech-savvy Science department head who undertook the proposed “newsflash” assignment with his Chem 12 class as an alternative to the sometimes-daunting research or inquiry-based project. Big projects can worry teachers of senior academic courses -- too many learning outcomes, too little time, and until recently, a final provincial exam – the suggestion of these create a refrain teacher-librarians hear often: "I simply don’t have time to bring the class down to do a research project." Yet, Science teachers from Vancouver secondary schools had heard in June from UBC Science faculty that our graduates need to be more literate scientifically, that is, to read and talk more about science. This assignment was a response to these tensions and to the need to offer something manageable for senior academic students. Lester agreed: his students needed to learn to use the databases to find the latest scientific information, engage in inquiry, and practice reading deeply in order to be able to understand and then converse about "scientific" topics.

The assignment integrates the inquiry-based approach to reading deeply for knowledge and understanding in science with curriculum outcomes, literacy goals, print and digital resources, and technology as a tool, one that also builds in opportunities for greater student achievement and engagement. Students were to
become, in this case, young chemists, read up on one new advance or study or finding in Chemistry, and present it for the consideration of their classmates in a chatty video summary. This “newsflash” assignment is easily adapted for Physics or Biology, Psychology or Geography, as a way to begin to help students script and practice academic conversations. The teacher-librarian helps students with access to credible, reliable news, magazine, and journal articles. Students are advised to search the databases of digital resources for articles from "popular" science or other news magazines, as opposed to scholarly science research articles, to avoid their becoming discouraged.

The BC Teacher-Librarians’ Association’s document, Points of Inquiry: A Framework for Information Literacy and the 21st Century (Ekdahl), identifies as inquiry processes both reading for deep understanding and what is traditionally called research. Reading that is deeply linked to inquiry goes beyond learning to read – that is, fluency and decoding – to understanding, creating increasingly complex worldviews, and reading to learn. The Points of Inquiry graphic is a five-pointed star, each point codifying the messy and recursive dimensions of information-seeking behaviours that transform information into knowledge. The inquiry model and the graphic expressly intend to create opportunities for students to be “stars,” not only of their own learning but also of discovering something new in themselves.

The “newsflash” assignment, in using an inquiry-based approach to reading, seeks to connect the content students are learning, their interests or what they wonder about, their peer relationships, and their understanding of what is relevant and current in science. Students select an article they find interesting enough to share with their classmates and investigate by reading it carefully. They construct an account of this new and newsworthy development in the discipline, expressing it, in this case, using a Web 2.0 screencasting tool. They reflect throughout the process on the nature and quality of such aspects as the process, product, audience appeal, content or message, and so on.

What is apparent in the video is Hazel’s unerring sense of her audience. Our young chemist wondered about peanut butter: was there was any hope of sharing her love of "said" product with her "unfortunate" teacher who is allergic to it? Hazel, an adventurous and confident learner, did not heed my advice on scholarly articles but saw it as a challenge. She jumped into pure science, choosing to read and "distill" for her classmates the results of a study conducted by US government agricultural researchers specializing in peanuts, Si-Yin Chung and Elaine Champagne, as cited at the end of the video presentation included in my blog. To be clear, the video is based on the reading of an article written for food researchers, that is, an article significantly beyond the reading level of just about everyone in the school!

In this study, [write Chung and Champagne], we examined three different monomeric phenolic compounds for their ability to irreversibly complex with the major peanut allergens. These compounds were caffeic, ferulic and chlorogenic acids, respectively, commonly found in fruits and vegetables (Naczk & Shahidi, 2006). Our objectives were to determine if these monomeric phenolics form irreversibly insoluble complexes with the major peanut allergens in peanut extracts and liquid peanut butter, and if such a complex-formation process reduces the allergenic capacity of the extracts and liquid peanut butter. (Chung)

Contrary to the perception created in the video that she found the article in her high school’s digital library collection, the article Hazel settled on turned out to
be a bibliographic citation; that is, the full-text version is actually not accessible in that EBSCO database. As a measure of her persistence with this task, she asked her teacher to help her find the article; many would not have asked. It is not likely that many teachers in the school could have helped her, but having just completed his master’s degree, Lester still had access to the digital resources at the university! Screencasting presentation software cut out some of the most serious and annoying limitations of student presentations; in "performance mode," students could practice and perfect their performances for the camera.

Tools like Knovio (http://www.knovio.com) or Screencast-o-matic (http://www.screencastomatic.com) enable students to put their own "talking head" as a picture-in-picture alongside a powerpoint presentation. Hazel thinks the class should do more things like that to get them ready for university. Another of her classmates liked it because it was so "studious." In February, Hazel talked confidently about this project with 100 teachers who were focused on inquiry, technology, and student engagement at the District Technology Day. When you watch the video, it should come as no surprise that Hazel instantly became a "star." Teacher-librarians adored her confident entry into EBSCO’s Academic Search Premier database to seek an article of authentic current research on a topic of genuine interest. Teachers loved her smooth navigation of complex terminology and complicated concepts, her easy and practiced delivery, her strong connections with her teacher, her sense of the fun of learning, and her playing to the camera and her audience, the class of young chemists.

The video is used as a model now at other schools. The inquiry-based approach had unfettered the young female "Jeremy Lin" to whom Mr Leung alluded when he began his presentation of the project at Technology Day. How many more academic Lins and Lin-ettes have we sitting in our classes? Persistent and motivated readers take huge leaps to gain intellectual access to what interests them. For a brief moment, Hazel had joined the community of food researchers. As the project video has been shared with US agricultural researcher Si-Yin Chung who thought it was “awesome,” a Skype call with Hazel’s class is in the planning stages.

Hazel told the teachers that the assignment had scared and overwhelmed her at first, and then she had loved it. She quickly moved from mastering the content and creating the script to perfecting the look for this three-minute presentation. It took 48 tries. She had, she said, studied her own presentation and perfected it with a perseverance she wouldn’t have used if this had been a written or oral in-class assignment. Hazel’s assignment represented a kind of magic that can only “flow” from student engagement, à la Csikszentmihályi! The assignment was completed in a week. Two classes were spent in the learning commons. And having done it once, the “newsflash” assignment will be easy for them to do it again either by finding the article on a home computer or by coming to the learning commons for a single block.

Earlier this month, Hazel and five other students attended the two-day National Reading Summit III, held at the SFU Downtown campus here in Vancouver. Other Summit attendees included public and academic librarians, government officials, school district management and other educators, publishers, business representatives, even a Bare Naked Lady (Keynote Steven Page). The JO students, all avid readers, were the only students present; their “little voices” for youth spoke resoundingly and well about reading, both for pleasure and for information and learning. With few chances to be recognized for their love of reading, they rose to the occasion. Hazel tweeted her delight at being there to
speak for young people engaged in the joy of reading and learning. Her video received great response when it was shown to the attendees to enhance their understanding of the scope and possibilities for reading in our schools.

**Theoretical Framing: Reading Driven by Inquiry, Joy, and Conversations**

A look at reading theory generates more questions for consideration in building the learning commons program as the hub for a renewed focus on learning in a culture of reading.

Where, in theory, do we find the underpinnings for building of a culture of reading as the focus of a secondary school learning commons within a school community? How do we co-design the learning contexts that these underpinnings envision?

Educators, the research suggests, need to attend to “teaching students to read complex non-fiction texts . . . and to master informative writing,” begins Marge Scherer, editor, *Educational Leadership* (EL), in her introduction to the March 2012 issue, themed “Reading”; they need to read like a detective and write like a reporter (Coleman). This particular EL issue, while filled with strategies for building a culture of reading in schools, is short on ways that teachers can work collaboratively with their teacher-librarians to construct meaningful “reading conversations.”

How can teachers and teacher-librarians collaboratively construct such conversations?

Recent discourse in the field of reading deepens the connections for teacher-librarians amongst processes for learning, knowledge-creation, and community. R. David Lankes argues for community-building and connection, as opposed to collection development, when he suggests “that a functional view of librarianship has led us to focus too much on collections and artifacts (books, web pages, and the stuff we can point to) and not enough time on our most basic collection: our communities.” He draws on Conversation Theory and its implications for dynamic learning; that is, what is learned is a series of “tangles” or memory associations formed when participants engage in conversations that use common language and understandings to reach agreements or disagreements around new information that further shapes or re-shapes existing knowledge structures. As reading prompts internal conversations, readers make sense of the resources and artifacts collected in the context of inquiry-based learning.

Teacher-librarians who understand how this works, suggests Lankes, construct learning as “participatory conversations”; they have something to contribute to the conversation. How will the JO learning community construct learning as such conversations? Teacher-librarians understand the need to work collaboratively with colleagues to attend to the joyfulness of reading, or such would be the implications of the recent study conducted by the Ontario-based research group People for Education; elementary-aged children surveyed reported a decline in interest in reading that correlates positively with the emphasis on the more traditional literacy strategies in classrooms and with the decline in numbers of teacher-librarians. “We learn to do well what we learn to love” (Allyn 16).

Richard Allington advises educators to eliminate worksheets and workbooks, using the saved funds to buy books that prompt student-centred reading and writing, literary conversations, and read-alouds (14). Allyn suggests that we are all struggling readers in one context or another. Yet, “reading enjoyment is not
only associated with high student achievement. Research shows that ‘engaged’ readers are also more likely to be socially and civically engaged as well.” (People 2). In more concrete and corollary terms, poor adult readers have trouble finding and keeping work and completing day-to-day activities like reading and writing letters, email, and forms, as well as helping their own children learn (Allyn 18).

How, in light of these understandings, might we re-think the literacy agenda at JO?

The field of reading theory is also beset by the new discourse of digital reading. “Debate still rages about the extent to which reading in digital contexts is really new or different” (Biancarosa 25). Research shows there is a loss of reading efficiency, possibly due to the added complexities in reading digital text, a non-linear reading experience that offers ready hyperlinking to definitions, background information, and other inquiry choices. It is going to continue to be important for students to have teaching for reading in each content area:

If our adolescents are to meet 21st century expectations for reading, all students must have opportunities to learn specialized reading habits and skills. In short, struggling readers who need basic skills instruction should receive it plus instruction in adolescent literacy .... Funding and accountability policies must anticipate the incorporation of disciplinary and digital literacy into reading instruction and practice. (Biancarosa 26)

Building skills and motivation to enable reading complex text will hinge on providing students with opportunities to practice fluency, understand vocabulary and sentence structures, including those that are domain-specific, recognize the connections amongst and organization of ideas, and develop background knowledge that is developmental, experiential, and cultural (Shanahan).

Another thread in the discourse of digital literacy worries about the impact of the digital environment on reading and learning; it is characterized by writers such as Nicholas Carr, author of *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, and Mark Bauerlein, author of *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or Don’t Trust Anyone UNDER 30).*

Will more technology in high school classrooms help? Not in the crucial area of reading. When teachers fill the syllabus with digital texts, having students read and write blogs, wikis, Facebook pages, multimedia assemblages, and the like, they do little to address the primary reason that so many students end up not ready for college-level reading. When they assign traditional texts -- novels, speeches, science articles, and so on -- in digital format with embedded links, hypertext, word-search capability, and other aids, they likewise avoid the primary cause of unreadiness. (Bauerlein)

How can these threads in the reading discourse help to initiate and inform a critical look at the importance of an inquiry-based approach to reading as we integrate technology with teaching and learning here at JO? Stephen Krashen offers simpler sociopolitical analyses. His is a strong and persistent voice advocating for narrowing the achievement gap by eliminating poverty and for diverting the costs of testing, monies paid to the publishing industry, to improving libraries in high-poverty areas. To Krashen, the public’s faith in the skill-building approach to literacy is wrong:
...mastery of the components of language is acquired as a result of understanding what we read and hear. [The Comprehension Hypothesis, as opposed to the Skill-Building Hypothesis] claims that grammatical competence and vocabulary knowledge are absorbed as a result of listening and reading, and that writing style and most of spelling competence is the result of wide, self-selected reading.

Noted for his pithy common-sense approach to the promotion of reading and free choice, Krashen advises educators that reading improves with reading; reading anything improves reading; children are more likely to read if they have access to books; kids need to be immersed in opportunities to read and, in Krashen’s view, school libraries are the hottest tool in the literacy kit. The better the school library, the higher the reading scores.

How can we attend to the needs of students at JO to optimize learning as we construct a learning commons program and learning contexts that turn on the “light” that engages our students with reading, reading to learn, and learning?

Conclusion

While the “newsflash” assignment and Hazel’s three-minute video are unquestionably just little things, they are huge in the insights they provide into the power of reading and inquiry, teacher collaboration, seamless technology integration with curriculum, and student engagement as well as achievement. Hazel’s learning experience affords us an opportunity to reconsider and re-affirm the centrality of reading to creating meaningful learning in any context.

Students need support for inquiry-based reading and learning if they are to become effective and ethical users of information, able to work with increasing independence and with critical competencies. Technology hasn’t changed this. Simply put, it’s not about the “toys” or teaching technology; it’s about using technology to teach:

The professional staff members of the learning commons take a leading role across the school in the transformation of social media skills into academic skills. Teacher-librarians teach learners to question and [think] critically about all information, both print and digital. They model implementation approaches and conduct professional development with teachers in the instructional use of technologies to achieve curriculum objectives . . . . [They] embed the best tools in a learning experience to achieve maximum impact on learning. (Loertscher 51)

How then do we prompt the “participatory conversations” that will inspire and enable the re-design of the learning commons program? How can we best work with our teaching colleagues to explore building and sustaining a culture of reading in order to have a real impact on our particular students with their unique skills, interests, and needs? Framing discussions in and about the learning commons are best framed in the broader contexts of inquiry-based learning and student success, especially as these correlate positively with both reading and strong school library programs; herein lies the solid ground for building the foundations together that will inspire and sustain good practice at the core of a school-wide culture of reading.

Pedagogy, when grounded in an inquiry approach, assures a sustained and energized focus on students reading for pleasure and/or learning. In our technology-enhanced teaching and learning contexts, it’s ultimately not about the tools or toys but about the teaching and learning that takes place. Unquestionably, the inspired conversations and programs developed in 21st
century school libraries and learning commons recognize that students will find their places amongst the new digital environments for work, learning, and play. Their success depends on teachers and teacher-librarians arming them well with skills for reading and responding critically, creatively, and comprehensively to what they have read across multiple platforms and through various formats.

References:


Publishers recommend . . .

Publishers are invited to submit the title of one work of fiction and/or one work of non-fiction by a Canadian author or illustrator, published in the last year, that they would consider a "best book" or a "neglected gem." Let School Libraries in Canada know about recent works to satisfy the needs and interests of school library patrons from kindergarten to senior high school. Send a .jpg image of the cover art, a 50-100 word factual blurb and the publication information to sliceditor@gmail.com by August 15th for the Fall 2013 issue.

Fiction

Real Mermaids Don't Need High Heels
by Helene Boudreau
Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 2013.
240 pp.; Ages 9-12; ISBN 9781402264580

The only thing that terrifies Jade more than the ocean is dancing at the Fall Formal. Because Jade has two left feet - er, flippers. Who knew being a high school freshman is even more awkward than being a plus-size aqua-phobic mer-girl?

The Mermish Council has just ordered that all land-dwelling mers return to the ocean. But there's no way Jade is going to let her mom, or Luke, her... boyfriend? mer-guy-friend?, disappear again. If Jade can stop mer-mageddon, finding a plus-size dress that doesn't look like a shower curtain should be a piece of cake.

Double Play
by Sara Cassidy
Lorimer, 2013.

Allie loves baseball. It's the one thing that has been consistent in her lately complicated life. Allie's father left recently, and now Allie has a new family -- her mother's new girlfriend, Phyllis, and son Miles have moved in. It's taking some adjustment, mostly because Miles seems determined to get under her skin. Things start looking up when Allie gets invited to join the boy's baseball team as their new pitcher; then Miles announces he's quitting the boy's team and tries out for Allie's old team -- a girl's team! Allie is sure he's doing it just to annoy her. . .

Odd Duck
by Cecil Castellucci, illustrated by Sara Varon
96 pp.; Ages 6-10; ISBN 9781596435575

Theodora is a perfectly normal duck. She may swim with a teacup balanced on her head and stay north when the rest of the ducks fly south for the winter, but there's nothing so odd about that. Chad, on the other hand, is one strange bird. Theodora quite likes him, but she can't overlook his odd habits. But who exactly is the odd duck here? Theodora may not like the answer. Sara Varon (Robot Dreams) teams up with Cecil Castellucci (Grandma's Gloves) for a gorgeous, funny, and heartwarming examination of the perils and pleasures of friendship.
Pirate Cinema
by Cory Doctorow
384 pp.; Ages 13+; ISBN 9780765329080

Trent McCauley is sixteen, brilliant, and obsessed with one thing: making movies on his computer by reassembling footage from popular films he downloads from the net. In the dystopian near-future Britain where Trent is growing up, this is more illegal than ever; the punishment for being caught three times is that your entire household’s access to the internet is cut off for a year, with no appeal.

Things look bad. Parliament is in power of a few wealthy media conglomerates. But the powers-that-be haven’t entirely reckoned with the power of a gripping movie to change people’s minds.

Community Soup
by Amy Fullerton
32 p.; ISBN 9781927485279

In Community Soup, author and artist Alma Fullerton has cooked up a lively read-aloud seasoned with a touch of creative problem solving and a generous dollop of group cooperation. Alma’s striking three-dimensional art combines primitive paper sculpture and mixed-media collage, resulting in illustrations full of colour and texture—one could almost pluck a bean off the page. This tale for young readers is accompanied by a pumpkin vegetable soup recipe that adults and children can make together.

How I Lost You
by Janet Gurtler
Sourcebooks Fire, 2013.
320 p.; Ages 12+; ISBN 9781402277948

There are a few things Grace Anderson knows for sure. One is that nothing will ever come between her and her best friend, Kya Kessler. They have a pact. Buds Before Studs. Sisters Before Misters. But in the summer before senior year, life throws out challenges they never expected. And suddenly the person who’s always been there starts to need the favor returned. Grace and Kya are forced to question how much a best friend can forgive. And the answer is not what they expected.
Saltwater Summer
by Roderick Haig-Brown

Don Morgan has made enough money trapping on northern Vancouver Island to realize his dream of buying a 32-foot salmon troller. With his pal Tubby, he sets off on his great adventure, which does not unfold quite as he had pictured. Don has a lot to learn—not just about commercial fishing, but about growing up. The fishing is so poor that Don could lose his beloved boat before the first season is over. But in the end, Don's own good sense prevails, his real friends come through, and he overcomes his troubles—running into real-life adventure in the process.

It's a Tiger!
by David LaRochelle, illustrated by Jeremy Tankard
36 p. ages 2-5 ISBN 9780811869256

Kids and parents alike will rejoice in this lively read-aloud picture book, as the main character runs into (and away from) a tiger over and over again as the plot gets sillier and sillier. Perfect for acting out while reading, It's a Tiger! offers just the right amount of excitement without being too scary, and a sweet ending with a bit of a twist.

Whose Trees Are These?
by Erna Michalow

Have you ever wondered about the role of trees in nature and their relationship to the rest of the environment? The author weaves the story's other main characters—the sun, rock, earth, water, air, fire, animals and people—into scenic treed landscapes and brings them all to life through the use of lyrical prose. Each character in turn claims ownership of the trees, but the trees have the final say. Scientific details in both the text and illustrations depict the natural beauty of our world.
**The Phantom’s Gold**  
by Eric Murphy  

Thirteen-year-old William McCoy’s life changed forever when his father died. Now, his mother is moving on ... but William still wants to hold on to the past. He sneaks on a bus to his father’s hometown, Lunenberg, where he encounters the spirit of his great-grandfather, a notorious rum-runner who has been dead for more than seventy-five years. With his mother in Toronto fretting about his safety, and his extended family in Nova Scotia struggling to save their home, William competes in a high-stakes schooner race with his family, his father’s memory, and a rumrunner’s legacy on the line.

**Non-Fiction**

**May Day: A Graphic History of Protest**  
The Graphic History Collective (Robin Folvik, Sean Carleton, Mark Leier, Sam Bradd and Trevor McKilligan)  

*May Day: A Graphic History of Protest* traces the development of International Workers’ Day, May 1st, against the ever-changing economic and political backdrop in Canada. Recognizing the importance of work and the historical struggles of workers to improve their lives, with a particular focus on the struggles of May 1st, the comic includes the reader as part of this history, and the story concludes that “we are all part of this historical struggle; it’s our history and our future.”

**Back to Learning**  
by Les Parsons  

This book presents practical guidance on confronting bullying, taming the digital universe, and changing the troublesome trend in students’ entitled attitudes. It introduces three principles to approach any teaching task and gives the background to:

- understand how the brain learns and use that knowledge,  
- individualize instruction and encourage risk-taking,  
- solve the bullying puzzle,  
- recognize the limits of standardized tests and prepare students for them,  
- expand classroom programs and introduce simple evaluation techniques,  
- appreciate where the digital revolution might lead and discover how to change days of dull routine to days of exciting, open-ended possibilities.
When a black teen was murdered in a Sydney, Cape Breton park late one night, his young companion, Donald Marshall Jr., became a prime suspect. Sydney police coached two teens to testify against Donald which helped convict him of a murder he did not commit. He spent 11 years in prison before being acquitted of the crime; a royal commission inquiry into his wrongful conviction found that a non-aboriginal youth would not have been convicted. Marshall became a First Nations activist. later winning a landmark native fishing rights case. He was often called the "reluctant hero" of the Mi'kmaq community.
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