

May 2018

Volume 25, Issue 3

# THE Teaching Librarian

The Magazine of the Ontario School Library Association  
ISSN 1188679X



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# THE Teaching Librarian

Volume 25, Issue 3 May 2018 ISSN 1188679X

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## TingL Mission

### *The Teaching Librarian*

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

## TingL References

*The Teaching Librarian* is a general magazine for OSLA members and not a scholarly journal. If your article does require citation of sources, please provide them within the text of your article or column with as much or as little bibliographic information as necessary for identification (e.g. book title, year). If you feel that the works you are citing require full identification, please provide a bibliography at the end of your piece, formatted according to the latest Chicago Manual of Style (16<sup>th</sup> edition) or APA Style.

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## TingL Guidelines

V. 26, Issue 1	"Anxiety @ your library" Deadline: May 27, 2018
V. 26, Issue 2	"Myths and Reality @ your library" Deadline: September 30, 2018
V. 26, Issue 3	"Travel @ your library" Deadline: January 30, 2019

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

When writers consent to having articles published in *The Teaching Librarian* magazine, permission is also granted to online distribution of the periodical through accessola.com and educational databases, without expectation of financial compensation. Ownership and copyright of the article is still retained by the original authors. Any questions about submissions should be directed to the Editor of *The Teaching Librarian*: teachinglibrarian@outlook.com.

## TingL Subscriptions

*The Teaching Librarian* is a benefit of OSLA membership. Non-members may subscribe for \$36 per year, plus HST. To become a member or subscriber, contact:

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Ontario Library Association  
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Toronto, Ont., M5C 2B6  
Tel: 416-363-3388 or 1-866-873-9867  
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# The Editor's Notebook



Diana Maliszewski

“

**Goodbyes are not forever  
Goodbyes are not the end  
They simply mean I'll miss you  
Until we meet again.**

— Author Unknown

”

**B**link and it's over.

The very first time I wrote an article and had it published in *The Teaching Librarian* was for Volume 11, Issue 2 in 2004. A year later, I wrote another article about how being a parent changed me as a teacher-librarian (Volume 12, Issue 2, “Literacy and Reading @ Your Library”). At that time, my daughter Mary had just turned five years old and my son Peter was two years old.

Fast forward. Mary is 18 years old and just got her acceptance emails for university. Peter is 15 years old and is taller than me. As for me, I'm sitting in front of my computer, writing my very last “Editor's Notebook” column as the editor-in-chief of *The Teaching Librarian* magazine. I'm “retiring” after 12 years of service – I took the helm as leader for Volume 14, Issue 1 in 2006.

Publishing a magazine regularly has its moments with a hectic, frenetic, dare I say “manic”, pace. Do we have enough content? Will writers make the deadline? Working on my very last issue has been quite fast-paced, especially because we have several big changes. Long time *TingL* (Teaching Librarian) editorial board member and former editor-in-chief of SLiC (*School Libraries in Canada*) Derrick Grose has stepped down from his editing duties. He will be sorely missed. We also say goodbye to Jennifer Goodhand and Leslie Whidden, and thank them for their work on the editorial board. It's not all farewells. I'm pleased to welcome Joanne Sallay as our new Book Buzz columnist. Joanne brings a wealth of experience as a book reviewer and we are pleased that she will be writing for *TingL*. Another new face is Leah Kearney, who is launching our newest regular column, Never Stop Learning.

I want to thank the Ontario Library Association for giving me such a wonderful leadership opportunity. I've met so many fabulous people and learned so much. The OLA staff, especially my layout liaisons (Lori, Jennifer, Larry, Andrew, Natalie, Amanda, Carla, Brian, Annesha, and Lauren) helped create an award-winning publication that is still in demand despite the shrivelling print magazine market. Thank you to all the OSLA Councils I've worked with over the years, patiently hearing me abstain from votes as a non-voting member of council (except for that brief period in 2017 when I was the acting past-president – long story), regularly declaring conflict of interest and collecting a delicious croissant to eat during our sessions (delivered by my husband who'd use my OSLA meetings downtown as a perfect chance to shop at the St. Lawrence Market).

My departure from *The Teaching Librarian* magazine does not mean that I will disappear. I will continue to keep busy as the teacher-librarian at Agnes Macphail Public School, and I'll even teach the Library Additional Qualification course this summer for York University. My volunteer hours will be divided between activities at my church, the Association for Media Literacy (executive board member), Maker Festival Toronto (volunteer coordinator), Maker Ed TO (core team), the Digital Human Library (team member), and as the OSLA Super Conference co-chair planner. We can still stay in touch via Twitter (@MzMollyTL) or via my blog ([mondymollymusings.blogspot.ca](http://mondymollymusings.blogspot.ca)), where you can read weekly accounts of my adventures in teaching and learning. ■





# President's Report



Kelly Maggiras

**T**eacher-Librarians have been working hard during the past year to raise awareness of school libraries in Ontario. At the Annual General Meeting of the Ontario School Library Association on February 1, 2018, it was my privilege to accept the continuing role of OSLA President for 2018. We would like to welcome our new council members: Cynthia Gozzard will be representing the Central West Region, and Jennifer Brown will be our new Vice-President. Welcome to Caroline Freibauer as our new editor-in-chief of *The Teaching Librarian*. We also would like to thank Diana Maliszewski for her outstanding 12-year commitment to *The Teaching Librarian* and OSLA council. Your dedication and passion to the role and value of teacher-librarians is a true reflection of your mania, zest and continued commitment! We would like to thank our outgoing councillors, Alanna King, Joe Facca and Lisa Elchuk, for their contributions to OSLA during their time on council.

The OSLA Annual Award winners were recognized at the Annual General Meeting, graciously sponsored once again by Saunders Book Company. We honoured Teacher-Librarian of the Year, Sue MacLachlan. Sue has held many positions as teacher, teacher-librarian and Special Assignment Teacher-Librarian with more than 25 years of experience in the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board. Our second award of the evening was the OSLA Award of Special Achievement, given to the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario for their continued support and commitment to teacher-librarians. In the past year, ETFO has been particularly supportive of the current inconsistent working conditions for elementary teacher-librarians around the province. Studies demonstrate the immense value a properly staffed and resourced school library learning commons contributes to the school community, and we are thrilled that ETFO has been willing to recognize this and advocate for equity in Ontario schools. ETFO has recognized the importance of providing equitable funding and resources, as well as defending and supporting teacher-librarians where certain areas of the province are at risk of losing librarians.

The role of OSLA council is to represent and advocate for school libraries. This is a voluntary group of dedicated individuals who meet four times a year to plan advocacy and create resources to support our school library programs across Ontario. Although we only meet face-to-face a few times a year,

we are in constant communication with each other to meet our initiatives. As a subject association for school libraries, we are invited to attend many educational conferences, professional learning opportunities, and Ministry of Education sponsored events to provide our voice and perspective. We are proud to announce our contribution to the new resources on Sikh history and heritage that were developed by the Ontario Elementary Social Studies Teachers Association, the Ontario Art Education Association, the Ontario Association of Geographic and Environmental Educators, and the Ontario Library Association in partnership with the Sikh Heritage Museum of Canada. These new voluntary curriculum-linked resources describe Sikh celebrations in Canada and diverse viewpoints on maintaining cultural practices, Sikh perspectives on global warming and climate change and the history of Sikh pioneers in Canada and human rights. OSLA values and appreciates the ongoing support of ETFO and OTF in providing the opportunity to demonstrate the immense value of school libraries in learning and teaching.

The collaboration between OSLA and TeachOntario continues to develop through opportunities to innovate and grow. The projects led by OSLA members included online book clubs, online courses and outreach opportunities for educators to connect with stakeholders. We are thrilled by the continued relationship and support for student achievement and library programming provided by TVO and TeachOntario.

In partnership with TALCO, the Association of Library Consultants and Coordinators of Ontario, we continue to collaborate and demonstrate the role of school libraries as partners and leaders in building capacity and knowledge through education curriculum connections in the learning commons.

Are you passionate about school libraries? Why not nominate yourself or someone you know for a council position? The advocacy initiatives support library learning commons across the province and the professional growth opportunities are limitless! There are two positions open on our council – the Toronto Region (term until January 2019) and the Northern Region (3 year term). Please contact OSLA if you are interested in joining!

Finally, a special thank you to OSLA council and OSLA Super Conference planners Jessica Longthorne and Alanna King for their dedication, hard work and enthusiasm. ■



# Honouring Our Own

OSLA Council

If you did not attend the 2018 Ontario Library Association Super Conference, you may have missed the OSLA Awards Ceremony. These were our winners for 2018. *The Teaching Librarian* will feature all OSLA award winners in the next issue that appears after the conference – the third issue of each volume, otherwise known as the “Spring Issue.”

For more information on how to nominate someone for one of these awards, go to [accessola.com/awards](https://accessola.com/awards) and select OSLA Awards from the left column. Nominations for this year’s awards are due November 1.



## 2018 Award for Special Achievement

**Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO)**

The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) is the professional and protective organization representing 80,000 teachers, occasional teachers and education professionals employed in Ontario’s public elementary schools. Through the significant work of ETFO’s Building Better Schools education agenda, where teacher-librarians are specifically recognized for their specialized skills, ETFO leverages community outreach initiatives and government advocacy to address the challenges that members, students and school communities face. In the past year, ETFO has been particularly supportive of the current inconsistent working conditions for elementary teacher-librarians around the province. Studies demonstrate the immense value a properly staffed and resourced school library learning commons contributes to the school community, and we are thrilled that ETFO is willing to recognize this and advocate for equity in Ontario schools. ETFO has recognized the importance of providing equitable funding and resources, and defending and supporting teacher-librarians where certain areas of the province are at risk of losing librarians.

*Nominated by OSLA Council*



## 2018 Teacher-Librarian of the Year

**Sue MacLachlan**

*Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board*

Sue has held many positions as Teacher, Teacher-Librarian and Special Assignment Teacher-Librarian having over 25 years of experience with the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB). She has excelled in all of these positions, but, most significantly as a teacher-librarian and special assignment teacher-librarian in the last several years. While I have known Sue for only just over four years, her star has shone bright since the day I have started with HWDSB. Her knowledge of what being a teacher-librarian means and ability to share this, her patience with anyone she is teaching including myself, her love of literacy and libraries overall and her enthusiasm for being a teacher-librarian and her ability to advocate for this profession all point towards why she is being nominated for this award.

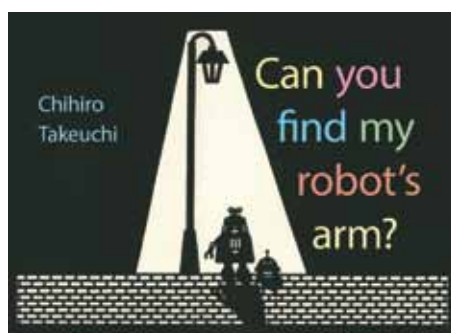
*Nominated by Donna Millard, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board*

# Book Buzz

**H**ello readers of *The Teaching Librarian!* My name is Joanne Sallay, and I am delighted to be your new voice contributing to Book Buzz. I fell in love with reading from a young age after an introduction to Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, and it has been a deep friendship with books ever since.

In my professional life, I work in the education field managing a tutoring service in Ontario, and I write articles and book reviews for educator and parent audiences. My intention and hope is to introduce you to new books and perhaps entice you to revisit classics in your collection to help with recommendations for students and colleagues.

This issue is dedicated to Mania @ Your Library, a very exciting theme indeed! With warmer weather and summer months approaching, it's important to keep students engaged with stimulating reading material. Teacher-librarians can tap into topics like STEAM, Canada, and movie tie-in mania – just to name a few. Here are eight suggestions to explore this spring for your library.



## **Can You Find My Robot's Arm?**

**Written and Illustrated by**

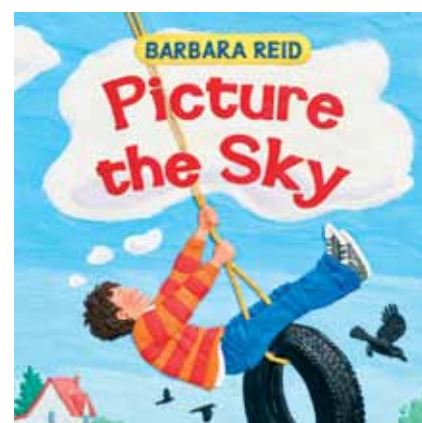
**Chihiro Takeuchi**

**Tundra, 2017**

**ISBN 9781101919033**

**For ages: 2 – 5**

Give early readers an introduction to STEAM with this mechanical tale. Young learners will follow the charming robot and his robot buddy on a quest to find his arm. It's an interactive picture book that asks questions to encourage little learners to think outside the box. The illustrations are quite interesting, as Chihiro Takeuchi is a renowned paper cut artist from Japan. Children may not even realize they are learning since they will find the story so amusing.



## **Picture the Sky**

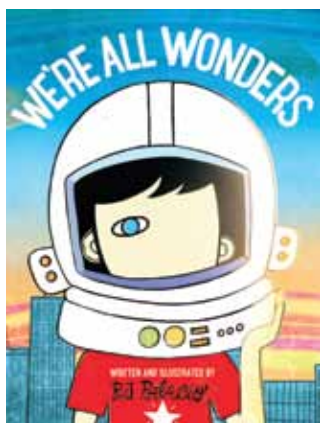
**Written and Illustrated by Barbara Reid**

**Scholastic Canada Ltd, 2017**

**ISBN 9781443163026**

**For ages: 3 – 8**

There has certainly been a lot of hype around Barbara Reid's latest title and companion to *Picture a Tree*. She is famous across Canada and around the world for her artwork in plasticine (a kind of modelling clay). Students are encouraged to use their imagination and creativity to make out stories within the illustrations. The sky is truly a work of art in every respect in this picture book. Fun fact: Barbara Reid was at both this year's OLA Super Conference and Reading for the Love of It Conference in Toronto signing copies and meeting with educators.

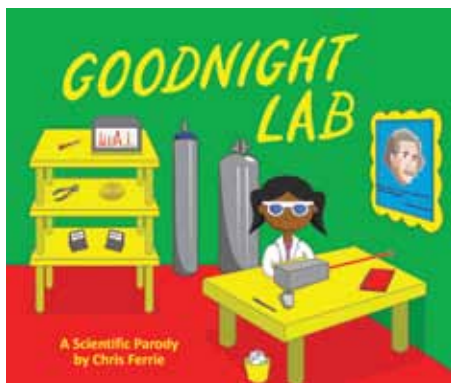


### **We're All Wonders**

Written and Illustrated by R.J. Palacio  
Random House Children's Books, 2017  
ISBN 9781524766498

For age: 4 – 8

The newest addition to the *Wonder* franchise is a picture book which embraces core messages from the original bestseller. This story is written and illustrated by the creator, R.J. Palacio, and is an adventure featuring Auggie and his dog Daisy. Stories like this can have a tremendous impact on youth and provide a non-threatening way to begin honest dialogue and communication between students and the adults who love them. While officially recommended for elementary readers, fans of all ages will enjoy this title, especially following the movie debut in the fall. It's a particularly nice pick for older students to share with younger reading buddies.



### **Goodnight Lab: A Scientific Parody**

Written and Illustrated by Chris Ferrie  
Sourcebooks, 2017  
ISBN 9781492656173

For ages: 4 – 8

Fans of the classic bedtime story *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown will love this scientific parody that takes place in the great green lab. Readers of all ages will enjoy making comparisons to the title that inspired it for some extra enrichment. This picture book is the brainchild of Chris Ferrie, a physicist and mathematician who has a passion for introducing young children to science in a manner that catches their attention. His Baby University series for aspiring scientists will certainly make you smile with titles like *Rocket Science for Babies!*



### **This Book Stinks!: Gross Garbage, Rotten Rubbish, and the Science of Trash**

Written by Sarah Wassner Flynn,  
Illustrated by National Geographic Kids  
National Geographic Children's Books, 2017  
ISBN 9781426327308

For ages: 8 – 12

While protecting our planet is a year-round goal, capture the spirit of World Environment Day on June 5<sup>th</sup> with this clever resource from National Geographic Kids. Read about the world of waste with tons of stinky statistics and stories that will be sure to educate and entertain students at the same time. It may also inspire some real change (with respect to rubbish) in your library, school and every day routines. Warning: the students may ask to take out the trash.

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### **Every Day (Movie Tie-In Edition)**

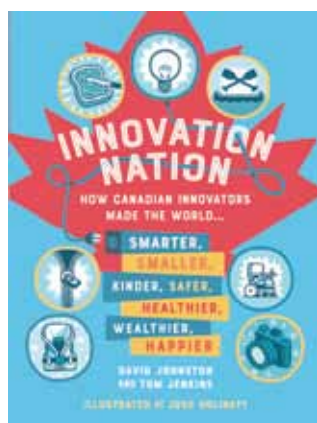
Written by David Levithan

Random House Children's Books, 2018

ISBN 9780525581611

For ages: 12 and up

The plot of this chapter book is the very definition of mania with a protagonist who wakes up in a different body every day. A romantic twist is presented when the soul of the main character assumes the body of Justin, and then develops a crush on Justin's girlfriend. This fantasy provides interesting moral issues for readers to explore. After all, being a teenager in high school is challenging enough under regular circumstances. While originally published in 2012, the recent release of the movie adaptation provides a good reason to revisit this title. The movie tie-in edition includes eight pages of photos from the film, which students will enjoy. Fun fact: there are many Toronto locations captured in the movie including Ripley's Aquarium and Sugar Beach. Fans will be happy to learn this title is part of a series, with the release of the third novel, *Someday*, expected in fall 2018. \*Book contains mature content.



### **Innovation Nation: How Canadian Innovators Made the World Smarter, Smaller, Kinder, Safer, Healthier, Wealthier, Happier**

Written by David Johnston and Tom Jenkins, Illustrated by Josh Holinaty

Tundra, 2017

ISBN 9780735263017

For ages: 8 – 12

This unique resource celebrating science and technology in Canada is co-authored by former Governor General David Johnston. The release of this resource was timed around Canada 150 as a tribute to Canada's incredible history of innovation and collaboration. Young readers will learn about 50 Canadian inventions that changed the world, from the lightbulb to the whoopee cushion. The language and illustrations are easy to follow for elementary age readers. This title is the companion to the adult edition, *Ingenious*, for more advanced readers who want to read further into this topic. The authors hope to inspire further discoveries by directing all proceeds from both books to programs that support innovation in Canada!



### **Ingenious: How Canadian Innovators Made the World Smarter, Smaller, Kinder, Safer, Healthier, Wealthier and Happier**

Written by David Johnston and Tom Jenkins

McClelland & Stewart, 2017

ISBN 9780771050916

For ages: 14 and up

This title is the adult version and companion to *Innovation Nation*. While the descriptions and content are more sophisticated in nature, it can certainly be appreciated by a high school audience. The innovations are broken down into seven categories and include short vignettes accompanied by pictures. I recommend checking out the website [innovationculture.ca](http://innovationculture.ca) for three *Education for Innovation* classroom resources for early learning – Kindergarten, Grades 1-8 and Grades 7-12 that are adapted from both *Innovation Nation* and *Ingenious*. This book came out as a celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada, and is meant to spark ideas to inspire further innovation in our country. Now that is exciting! ■

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proposal, visit:

[olasuperconference.com](http://olasuperconference.com)

# Meet the Author

## Gail Sidonie Sobat

**Gail Sidonie Sobat is a celebrated author, singer, performer, and teacher. Her life experiences spark her writing which she does from her home in Edmonton, Alberta.**

**TingL:** Have you always had a passion for writing?

I've always had a passion for words, ever since first learning them. Because I am musical, I was drawn to Dr. Seuss and rhythm and rhyme at about three years of age. As I learned to read more confidently, I used to look words up endlessly in the dictionary while I sat on the toilet. (Too much information?) But it is true that words have shaped who I was as a child and who I am as an adult.

**Do you have a particular writing routine that keeps you motivated?**

More time for a routine would be nice. I'm an over-extended person who has difficulty saying "no." So, turning off the noise and putting fingers to the keyboard is my only solution – after the marking and the planning and the administering. I've never had enough time to write and establish a routine and yet I've written twelve books.

**You are the founder and coordinator of a summer writing camp for young people, YouthWrite®. Is this more than a summer program? Also, how would one get involved — as an instructor or as a young, aspiring writer?**

YouthWrite®, a camp for kids who love to write...just about anything, as our name suggests, hosts summer camps for youth between the ages of 8–19. While our multidisciplinary writing camps are the cornerstone of our programming, we also work with other organizations to deliver high-quality instruction and mentoring across a wide spectrum of writing. We partner with Happy Harbor Comics for youth interested in comics and graphic novels, with Edmonton Public Schools to offer spring camps for ages 10–14, with MacEwan University to deliver adult writing programs, with the Kiwanis Music Festival to facilitate YouthWrite®'s Spoken Word Youth Choir, and we offer



our alumni/adult JustWrite® program each fall in the Rocky Mountains. As well, we facilitate writers in schools through our booking program. Some of the things we're most proud of is the fact that: a) we pay our artists a fair fee (though we always hope to pay them more); b) we have a very diverse team of instructors and supervisors to represent and mentor the youth at our camps; c) we have never in our 22-year history turned away a child in financial need. (Every child is subsidized to attend YouthWrite®; some receive full scholarships.)

Our YouthWrite® instructors are established and professional writers/artists in their disciplines. Many are award-winning and highly sought after, and everyone we hire is by invitation only, just as instructors are invited to The Banff Centre or Humber College. Because I travel widely and am involved in so many educational and artistic communities, I meet incredible



## Angela Thompson



people who I know have much to offer our young writers.

I also should mention our YouthWrite® supervisors who are themselves established and emerging artists and/or practicing professionals in writing, theatre, improvisation, dance, filmmaking, songwriting, music, playwriting, and/or teaching. They are the heartbeat of the camp; a number have been with YouthWrite® for ten years or longer. Our amazing team sets the tone for the camp and mentor, by their example, how to live the dream of a working artist.

We accept YouthWrite® applicants from all over the country and the world, but predominantly our writers come from Alberta. Each must submit a sample of writing, a letter of reference and a statement about interest in our program. Based on these application requirements, a young writer is accepted to YouthWrite®.

### **Do you have any projects in the works right now that you would be willing to discuss briefly?**

Currently, I'm working on a very fun new work: a tale set in New Orleans, featuring a slightly mad scientist who dreams of reanimating dead chickens, and his helpmates, Priscilla the spider and Claudie, a young girl of Acadian descent. Oh yes, there's voodoo.

I've also just finished a novel for adults, *Songs from This and That Country*, an intergenerational narrative that examines the age-old ethnic conflicts between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, and explores how these divisive and acrimonious relationships

are revisited by second-generation Canadians. In large part, the story is based on realities of new immigrants to Alberta as well as the Bosnian conflicts in the 1990s. *Songs* is a historical novel interlaced with memoir and elements of magic realism. I weave historical Second World War events with 1990s Bosnian War with family records as well as elements of the fantastic.

### **What advice do you have for young writers?**

Read. Read. Read. And write. Write. Write. And in this age of instant everything with endless, mindless, online and self-absorbed occupation, bear in mind this lovely quotation from Henry Miller:

"Develop an interest in life as you see it; the people, things, literature, music – the world is so rich, simply throbbing with rich treasures, beautiful souls and interesting people. Forget yourself."

Read more at: [brainyquote.com/quotes/henry\\_miller\\_140615](http://brainyquote.com/quotes/henry_miller_140615).

### **You have published works in many different genres – fiction, poetry, graphic novel – which is the most challenging for you?**

Finding time is the real challenge, as noted above. Once I do, I love to leap into new forms to be playful. I suppose the two adult books, which took seven years each to write, have presented the greatest challenge. This is not because YA doesn't deserve and require an investment of significant time and energy. It's just that the nature of my subjects for adult

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audiences required so much travel and research. The themes were broader and heavier – I needed more time and thought over many years to bring the narratives to fruition.

***A Winter's Tale* was the novel that brought your first Forest of Reading White Pine Award nomination. What did that mean to you as a Canadian author?**

The Forest of Reading nominations have changed my life as a Canadian author – they put me on the literary map, so to speak. I am forever grateful for being read and recognized. *A Winter's Tale* will always hold a special place in my heart (as indeed the entire *Ingamald* series does). I often stop and think of the amazing librarians who've shaped my career. I doff my cap to them!

**You have worked collaboratively on multiple projects, in particular, *Jamie's Got A Gun* and *In the Graveyard*. What is rewarding about these projects?**

Ooh! Pictures are such delight! Working collaboratively with Spyder Yardley-Jones was so rewarding. How often does a writer get to see her words become images? It's very rare! Every time Spyder brought over a new collection of drawings was like opening a gift! And he is a gift. What an illustrator! I wish more people knew his work.

**How do you decide what stories need to be told and/or what your next project will be?**

Many of my stories for young adults come from what I've witnessed as a teacher over the years. Young people have so many struggles. That they make it to adulthood is sometimes heroic. Growing up takes courage. I like to write about that courage and about misfits. I guess, in essence, all of my novels are about outliers. My next YA project will focus on a famous group of Canadian women's basketball players, but it will also look at discrimination against yet another alienated youth.

**Any final words? Advice? Shout out?**

Here's a shout out to all the fine and fabulous English language arts teachers and teacher-librarians everywhere in this country! The world needs more of you! ■

## Connect with Gail Sidonie Sobat

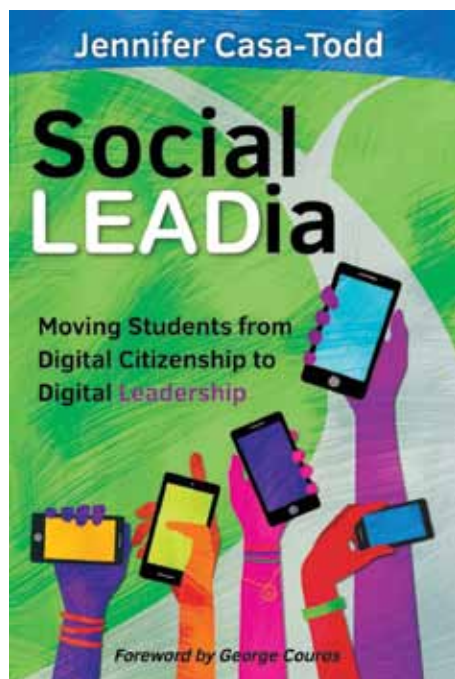
[gailsidoniesobat.com](http://gailsidoniesobat.com)  
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Visit her at [gailsidoniesobat.com/blog](http://gailsidoniesobat.com/blog)

Gail visits schools and libraries: [authorsbooking.com/wp/gail-sobat/](http://authorsbooking.com/wp/gail-sobat/)

Her latest work is the award-winning graphic novel, *Jamie's Got a Gun*, illustrated by Spyder Yardley Jones.

# Professional Resources

Stefanie Cole



## **Social LEADia: Moving Students from Digital Citizenship to Digital Leadership**

by Jennifer Casa-Todd

Dave Burgess Consulting, Inc. 2017

ISBN 978-1-946444-11-0

*Is a resource designed to provide all educators, from Kindergarten to administration, with examples of why there should be resounding support for the necessity of embedding social media into classroom programming.*

Social media is seen by many as the home of cyber-bullying and the gateway for predators into our students' lives, but Jennifer Casa-Todd knows that our students are already immersed in this world. She encourages us to move beyond one-stop digital citizenship lessons or the banning of social media tools to using them to exemplify how social media can empower students, connect them to experts, and move student learning beyond our classroom walls.

Curated stories from Jennifer Casa-Todd's family, teachers she's worked with as a teacher-librarian in her school and at the district level, to teachers and students she has connected with through her own well-developed PLC, fill the book. These stories are potent examples of student digital leaders and teachers who use the connecting aspects of social media to engage in learning. As she so succinctly states, "It isn't the tool, but the tool's user that makes the difference" (2).

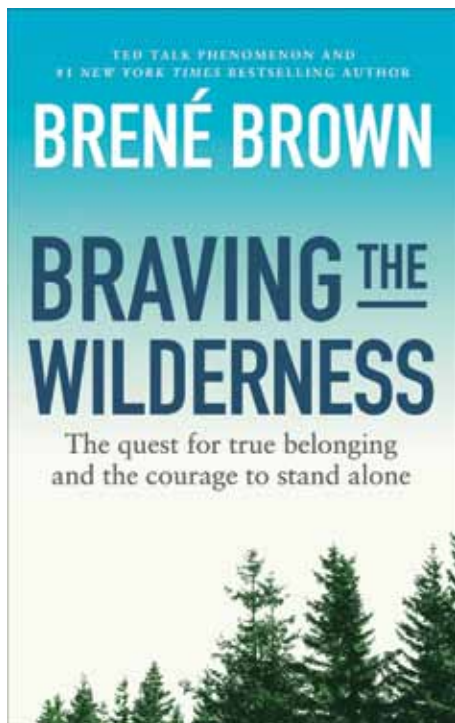
Beyond using real-life examples as mentor texts to demonstrate why social media should be an essential aspect in the classroom, she explores various pedagogies that social media can support. Are you looking to incorporate self-regulation, digital citizenship, or 20 per cent time into your classroom? Every chapter provides you with common sense explanations of how and why we should approach the topic, sites to explore, stories of teachers who have accomplished a similar task and an exemplary student with a website and Twitter handle for you and your class to study.

Jennifer Casa-Todd's teacher-librarian persona is fully visible at her companion site, [socialleadia.org](http://socialleadia.org). Not only will you find provocations for each chapter to support a book club or the websites of the students showcased in the book, but you'll find direct access to the articles, resources, videos and guides mentioned in each chapter. *Social LEADia* provides you with all the support you need to help your students and yourself engage in social media to make your classroom and the world a better place.

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**Braving the Wilderness:  
The Quest for True Belonging  
and the Courage to Stand Alone**

by Brené Brown

Random House, 2017

ISBN 978-0-8129-9584

*Is a guidebook for developing leaders and disrupters who need the reminders and resources necessary to find ways to be while developing the skills to work civilly and cooperatively with others in a critical world.*

Why would a psychology book be a professional read for teacher-librarians? Teacher-librarians are at the forefront of change in education. We explore new ideas in technology, social media, critical thinking, and more. We provide tastes and toe-dips into these areas for the members of our school communities, often smoothing the way for larger implementation. We may not even recognize the leadership skills we, as a collective, possess.

Brené Brown's intensive research, in this case, is on the topic of belonging and stems from a quotation from Maya Angelou that she couldn't understand and actively disagreed with:

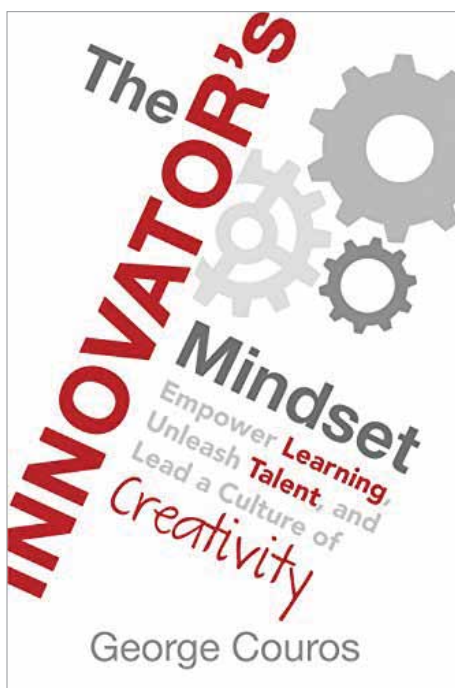
"You are only free when you realize you belong no place—you belong every place—no place at all. The price is high. The reward is great."

As she explores this quotation, Brené engages you with stories about interactions with Maya Angelou, Oprah, Zen Buddhists, and people who've dealt

with the large-scale grief of incidents such as 9/11 and the Sandy Hook shooting. She then juxtaposes these catastrophic events with the mundane dilemma of wearing jeans and clogs when business attire is requested.

Brown supports our growth as leaders. She presents the fears that arise as we push our boundaries. She then relates these fears to the core feelings of isolation and impostor syndrome that many of us possess. Reading her books can be unnerving because she confirms and identifies the secret and self-critical stories we whisper to ourselves. We need the confirmation that this self-criticism is wide-spread to help us accept that these fears exist in the process of growing. She gives us, educators, teacher-librarians and others, the much-needed permission to continue to push these boundaries, yet stay true to ourselves, as we share our ideas in the changing and fluctuating world.

It is especially timely when we look at the many stories of racism and hatred that fill the news. How can we create a space for shared humanity? How do we move beyond the echo-chambers we build to confirm what we already believe? The book is so rich and full that an individual book review can't do it justice. It will stand up to repeated re-reads and seem like a whole new book each time. Based on ever-changing life experience, the reader will bring in his/her approach.



**The Innovator's Mindset:  
Empower Learning, Unleash Talent,  
and Lead a Culture of Creativity**

by George Couros

Dave Burgess Consulting, Inc. 2015

ISBN 978-0-09861554-9-9

*Is an inspiring read to help teachers and leaders understand what innovation is and the framework and moves necessary to create a culture of empowered learners.*

In one reading of this book, a copy was destroyed. All throughout, page corners were turned and stars, underlines, and exclamations were penned. It's an indication of the many ideas, references and stories, George Couros uses to guide us to an Innovator's Mindset. It is clear, however, that he doesn't want innovation to be the buzzword he feels it's becoming, but a "mindset that intentionally and consistently shapes our daily practice" (206) which is reflected, ultimately, by the empowerment of our students.

The importance of reflection and the understanding that although our main goal may be to educate students, no true learning occurs unless all parties in the education system are on a constant learning journey is evident, even in the structure of the book. The sections help us understand what innovation in education is, what frameworks we need

to allow innovation to occur, and how to step back and open doors allowing people to develop and explore their strengths and interests. The clickbait chapter titles like, What Innovation Is and Isn't, Powerful Learning First, Technology Second and Engage Versus Empower, can be used to create debate around our practices. As well, each chapter ends with questions to help the reader explore where he/she lies on an innovation continuum and dig deeper into beliefs around pedagogical practices.

One of the main shifts he asks coaches, teachers, and administrators to take is from telling to listening. He asks us to listen to understand what learners need to grow. Do you have the flexibility to go beyond the teacher you want to be, to become the teacher your students need? As an administrator or coach, do you have enough knowledge of the people you are working with to go beyond providing them with the book-of-the-day, and provide them with the professional learning they want?

Read *The Innovator's Mindset* and mentally check-in to see where you are and where you want to be. Use the breadcrumbs George Couros has laid out to create your learning journey. ■

# Connected Library

## STEAM Mania

**M**ania in the library! Mania, according to at least one definition means “an excessive enthusiasm or desire; an obsession”. As I think about that definition, I believe I can apply it to my Library Learning Commons, also known as the STEAM LAB. Full disclosure, I was one of the lucky ones who went through a renovation – a right down to the studs renovation – which turned a 1970s space into a 21<sup>st</sup> century library learning commons. With the renovation, I acquired moveable furniture, new technology, new paint, wobbly stools and a whole new vibe. The space is fresh and exciting and creates an excessive enthusiasm throughout the building! With this new space, we toyed with the idea of a tinker lab, maker space, genius hour, passion projects and a whole host of other new ideas surrounding making and design thinking. I do not believe there is one right answer. The answer depends on the school, the administration and those who are vested in bringing the MANIA to the building. In my case, we settled on STEM, and then added the A for arts. We have STEAM LAB (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) within our LLC. The mania is real, and I’m along for the ride.

Within STEAM, there is no one answer. We have taken it to be the integration of: science, technology, engineering, arts and math, with no subject being taught in a silo. One book that has

been my go to is *STEAM Makers* by Jacie Maslyk. In her preface she explains that her book is “...based on the idea that the Maker Movement combined with STEAM education empowers students and helps to build skills to create a more productive and sustainable global culture. STEAM makers connect disciplines, bridging learning styles by naturally engaging young people as they apply learning in creative ways.”

In my role, I am both a teacher-librarian (0.5) and a STEAM teacher (0.5 planning time teacher). I see classes of students from Grades 1-5, two times per week for **40-minute** periods. My assignment, which I happily chose to accept, is to collaborate with teachers and plan projects related to the teacher’s long range plans and the curriculum, through a STEAM lens. The projects may include using technology or recycled materials, and all involve collaborating to design or making something that connects directly back to the curriculum.

Here are a few of my favourites, and a way to step into STEAM.

### Green Screen Mania

I scream, you scream, we all scream for a green screen! A green screen allows for students to film in front of a coloured green screen, and then, during editing, the students can add in another background or video of their choosing. It’s just like in the movies.

My first favourite thing to do is use the green screen with an app called DOINK. DOINK is a paid for app – but it’s worth it. I like DOINK because it’s easy.

Before you get the app, you need a green screen. We bought one from a camera store, but after receiving the “green screen kit,” we realized it was really just a large piece of green fabric. Think Fabricland, and it might save you some money. Either way, the screen has to be on a wall, a moveable panel, blackboard, or something high. Our screen rolls down over a stack of library books when in use. When we are not using it, we roll it back up, and store it on top of the five-shelf high





bookcase. I bought PVC pipe and we roll the screen up and down. It's then bolted into the top of a bookcase for safety. The plus side to this is that it is safe, the right height and always available in the STEAM LAB. The negative to this is that it is not portable. It's just something to think about before you create your space. Wherever you use the screen, the students will enjoy it!

First, the students need to get their creative juices flowing and write a script on whatever they are presenting. Be it a commercial, a movie trailer, a talk show, a news report or a debate and so on. They need to have their information scripted and memorized. Once that is done, you need to remind them that on filming day, they can't wear green! On filming day, I let the students practice walking on and off the screen so they have a sense of space. When they are ready to film, all you need is an iPad (mounted to a tripod, or handheld). You go into the regular video button like you are making a homemade video. Hit record and film. Once finished, the students then upload their video to DOINK. Then, they upload the background they want to cover the green screen. You can upload a video, or picture from the camera roll. That is it.

Sounds cool – but how did we use this app? I helped students in Grade 3 with social studies. They created travel commercials encouraging people to visit places like “The Hudson Bay Lowlands.” The Grade 2s also did a commercial trying to sell their newly- made toys that included two simple machines linked to science. Their commercials were advertising their awesome toy. I have a few classes of Grade 4. One group produced a commercial selling a product they made using Little Bits and connecting it to light and sound. Another section of Grade 4s created Lego stop-motion animation movies showing how sound is important to tell the story. They then made a movie trailer using the green screen for their movies.

It's fun. It's easy and most of all, the students are engaged! Think of all the curriculum connections too: science, the



arts, language (oral, and writing of the script) as well as technology. Not to mention 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like learning to learn, communicating, collaborating, global citizenship and innovation.

### Manic for Video Games

Another two favourite apps we have been using are Sketch Nation and Bloxels. Both are for video game creation and both are free. I have connected these games to language curriculums, as well as technology, science, and again, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. (Seeing a theme?) Both are easy to learn from a teacher's perspective – I think SketchNation is easier – but in all cases, there is usually a student who can help, or a YouTube tutorial to show the class. I have used both of these video game creators and connected the students learning back to the curriculum. After a read-aloud, the students had to make a game connecting it to the book we read. They had to create a character from the book, a background, and the video game had to make sense in order to connect to the story in the book. Students in Grade 2 were able to complete this task. Once finished, they traded iPads and tried each other's games. Simple. Fun. And a neat way to showcase their understanding of a book.

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## Toys and Digital Posters

Little Bits circuitry is also a very helpful piece of equipment to purchase but be warned – it's expensive. If you have the funds, the students love to build with its simplicity. All pieces are colour-coded and made of magnets, so pieces can only fit certain ways when they attach to each other. We have done numerous building projects with using either recycled materials or Lego and adding in the Little Bits. The Little Bits can add sound, lights, fans, spin, act as a temperature gage, or pressure gage to any project. There also are many helpful resources for Little Bits on the Internet. My Grade 4 class made something using light and sound, recycled materials and Little Bits that made the world a better place. If you take the monetary plunge and purchase Little Bits, remember to supervise the students really well so parts don't get stepped on or broken.

If your budget is tight, a free, interesting and easy thing to do is create posters using Pic Collage or Pic Kids. It's so simple that I have had Grade 1s use it. Using the iPads, you select your topic (e.g., how to conserve water, celebrations, reflections on your learning) and find some pictures on the Internet that match with your project. The students also can



take pictures of something they created. Based on the number of pictures they want to use (I would suggest 3-4 maximum), they pick a grid on the app. Then, they add the pictures to the grid, and

the text and voila – they have created a digital poster. This is a great language and/or technology piece. We went one step further and uploaded the posters to a Padlet to share. I was concerned about getting the kids to upload the pictures, but using Qrafter or Scan to scan the QR code, made it simple. All students were successfully able to create a poster and add some writing.



## Next Steps

All of these apps, programs, and bits are awesome, but what do you do with them? I have recently watched many teachers scrambling to finish report cards and thought to myself, we all have to work smarter. They all had the information, but perhaps didn't know they had it. This is where Google Keep could come in handy. Google Keep is one of the Google Suite apps that I use to record notes, conversations, and pictures. I have set up each class that I cover and given them their own file. As a classroom teacher, those files could be subject areas. Then, within the app, you can add notes, comments, and photos of things you observed, talked about with the student, or groups of students and so on. When it came time to writing my section of reports (I give teachers a science or social studies comment, as well as some learning skills comments), I did a search within Keep and found all of the notes related to each specific student. You can then open those comments in a Google Doc. All in all, it was simple, and just another way to capture information. Google Keep can be accessed on the web, or via an app.

Our LLC/STEAM LAB is a new room within our school that promotes MANIA! It's for building, making, technology enthusiasts, and a place full of opportunities for students to show their 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies, learn new skills, show their learning in different ways, create collaborative projects and have fun. It's a place to gather observations, conversations and lots of product. It's a place the students love to visit, and it's a place where I love to teach! ■

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# Crowd Sourcing

Imagine bringing into your school library *Harry Potter*, the main characters of *The Maze Runner* and top scientists – and all that students want to do is break out.

It's all part of the escape room mania sweeping schools and libraries, which involves collaboration and critical thinking to solve a series of puzzles and challenges while learning.

While there are many variations of escape, or breakout, rooms, they all involve a series of word and number problems usually connected by a story.

Although an escape room activity can take a long time to plan and set up, Sandra Bebbington, a consultant with the Quebec Ministry of Education's English Sector Services, has a long list of reasons why they are worth the effort.

"It encourages active learning, helps youth and adults work on soft skills," said Bebbington during a session at the February Ontario Library Association Super Conference where she presented with Julian Taylor, a librarian with the Quebec ministry. "It allows for grit, the opportunity to fail in a low-risk environment."

Bebbington said, in an email interview, that she has always been interested in how play and games can facilitate learning. She started attending escape rooms with friends and family and discovered a movement to bring them into schools.

"My colleagues and I went to an introductory PD session and I have been building and facilitating escape room scenarios at schools, in libraries, community events and conferences ever since," she said.

The narrative is important to making the breakout activity work. "Research has shown that skills and concepts are better learned when done in the context of a narrative, particularly one that they can relate to," Bebbington said.

She has put together break out activities based on *Harry Potter* and *Maze Runner* novels, as well as the movie, *Elf*. Some of the activities can be physical – students need to demonstrate a skill before moving to the next clue – or digital.

"This type of activity also allows for the learning of both content and skills at the same time," she said. "For example, breakouts can be used to introduce a topic or help you close up a unit with practice and reinforcement."

And the learning doesn't stop for Bebbington. "I have yet to explore digital breakout/escape rooms. That's my next goal!"

## Bebbington's Top Tips for a Planning a Successful Breakout Activity

1. Walk through the activity after you have put it together to ensure it makes sense, check for mistakes or catch any missing elements.
2. If you are going to evaluate the students, let them know what you are evaluating.
3. Have a discussion with the group afterwards so that students can have a chance to reflect on what worked and what didn't. This is important for the students to process what happened and great feedback for you.
4. Establish rules from the start and stick with them. For example, make it clear this is a collaborative activity and participants must work on things together.
5. Don't fill the locked boxes with prizes. The satisfaction of resolving the problem or puzzle should be the reward.
6. Drop hints if participants are struggling. Don't wait for them to ask for help.
7. When building an activity, remember it isn't meant to be linear. For example, include something in Activity A that participants won't need until Activity C. Creating an organizational chart with sticky notes helps.
8. Laminate clues and activities so that they can be used again.
9. To help create clues, look for tools such as ciphers, newspaper clipping templates, cryptexes and various word and number puzzles.





## Caroline Freibauer

### Necessary Tools

- Lockable box
- Word locks
- Number locks
- Directional locks
- Key locks
- Small lockable boxes/bags
- Black light
- Invisible ink pens
- Hasp
- Miscellaneous (envelopes, stickers, etc.)
- Tons of imagination

### For More Information:

Bebbington and Taylor's OLA Super Conference Presentation – the presentation includes links for even more information: <https://goo.gl/AkLH2K>.

### Mania for Reading with the Forest

When teacher-librarians and teachers at the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) grew a reading program using novels from the Forest of Reading to 87 teachers from five, they learned three things.

First, bringing Red Maple novels into the classroom dramatically transformed teacher practice.

“Our teachers learned to assess without killing the reading,” said Cheryl Paterson, a student success teacher at HWDSB. “They gave students voice and choice in their texts.”

Second, they learned that more students were reading more books and telling everyone about them, including teachers, peers and parents. Blog posts about the books increased from 27 to more than 250.

In surveys conducted by the board's E-Best research department, 88 per cent of students said they liked the books and wanted to read more. Seventy-five per cent of the students said they read more in the past year and the same number said they talked about the books with their peers.

But, third, they learned that their research methodology might be flawed. When students were asked how engaged they were in reading, the responses before and after the Red Maple books remained the same.

Based on everything they were seeing, these results were unexpected, said Sue MacLachlan, a former special assignment teacher-librarian at HWDSB who spearheaded the project with Paterson.

“In the pre- and post-survey the reading engagement stayed flat across all categories,” said MacLachlan during a presentation at the Ontario Library Association Super Conference. “We wondered if the survey question really captured what we were looking for.”

For many students, reading involved texts selected by teachers, followed by answering questions. Reading might be perceived as a solitary experience, which did not reflect what was happening with the Red Maple novels where students were talking about them on the playground and sharing them with parents at home.

They also wondered if a lack of access to teacher-librarian support and the library learning commons in the upper grades might be another reason why students reported a lack of engagement. In many schools, intermediate students are not brought to the library learning commons on a regular basis.

Moving forward, HWSB plans to revisit its survey questions and expand its program from Grades 7 and 8 into the high schools with White Pine books. A group of teachers also has applied for a Teacher Learning and Leadership Program grant to pursue the connection between reading and writing. ■

# Never Stop Learning

by Leah Kearney

**W**e at TVO are excited to be joining *The Teaching Librarian* family. This issue launches our inaugural column which will be a regular fixture in *The Teaching Librarian* magazine. Teacher-Librarians are always looking for the best resources and have long-established relationships with TVO, which makes this a natural collaboration. This column will increase awareness of the educational resources powered by TVO.

TVO was created by former Premier Bill Davis in 1970 as the technological extension of the public education system. What started out as a TV station four decades ago, has now grown into a multi-platform, digital media organization. Our resources for the pre-K to 12 educational community are relevant, dynamic, progressive, curriculum-based and free. As teacher-librarians, you work with students and educators from a range of grades and have always been the “go-to” when people are stuck. In future columns, I will go in depth on what TVO offers to support student achievement and educator professional learning. To start things off, here is a glimpse into what we have:



**TVOKids** is Canada’s most trusted and most educational media brand for kids providing programs, games and apps based on the Ontario school curriculum. As well as the incredible content that TVOKids is internationally recognized for, we are excited about the content on [tvokids.com](http://tvokids.com) that encourage digital engagement, such as the My Kindness Matters Campaign and the Draw Your Selfie Contest.



**TVO mPower** is a collection of online games that teaches fundamental K-6 math skills while enabling students to have fun and learn more about the world around them. By connecting our math games to the big ideas in science and social studies, students learn that math is everywhere. By integrating skills such as metacognition, problem solving, creativity and citizenship, we are supporting the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century global competencies. TVO mPower is Ontario curriculum-based, assessment-driven and learner-centred.



**TVO Homework Help** provides free, personalized math tutoring for Ontario students in Grades 7 to 10. Students have access to both guided and independent learning in a safe, online environment which combines technology, certified math teachers and personalized learning. The website is available 24/7 with math tutors available from Sunday through Thursday from 5:30 pm to 9:30 pm.



**TVO TeachOntario** is an online learning community to support sharing, collaboration and knowledge exchange. Created for Ontario educators by Ontario educators, the platform consists of three spaces: Explore, Share, and Create – offering educators a place to discuss, collaborate and construct new learning. We host a range of courses on TeachOntario to support educator professional learning. Courses are self-directed and run throughout the year. Some of our past topics include mentoring, graphic novels, and makerspaces. We also have book clubs (facilitated by OSLA council members) that cover a range of topics relevant to Ontario educators.

We are excited at the prospect of a regular column that highlights TVO’s outstanding resources and are thrilled to collaborate with our friends at OSLA in this way! ■

# The AASL Experience

Diana Maliszewski

**F**or many Ontario school library professionals, the pinnacle of PD is the Ontario Library Association Super Conference. It is an annual opportunity to network, discuss, and experience some fantastic speakers and sessions. Have you ever wondered, however, if there were other, similar events that you could attend? What if I told you that there was an affair of approximately the same size as the OLA Super Conference, but exclusively focused on school libraries?

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) runs a conference once every two years, and in 2017, it was in Phoenix, Arizona. I learned about the conference via a tweet that referenced a list of state and national school library conferences. (I don't remember the original source for this information, but another comparable link is [librarianlisa.com/the-ultimate-school-library-conferences-calendar-2017-18](http://librarianlisa.com/the-ultimate-school-library-conferences-calendar-2017-18)). I convinced a couple of Ontario teacher-librarians to submit proposals and we (Melanie Mulcaster, Alanna King, and I) were all accepted.

Travelling out of the country for a conference entails its own set of unique challenges. Funding is one of them. Presenters were required to be members of the American Library Association and there were no discounts for conference registration if you were speaking. We also had to arrange our flights and accommodations. Thankfully, Melanie was a superb deal-finder and found our team a wonderful home-away-from-home with its own kitchen, close to the conference centre. We spread out paying our expenses so that we didn't take a financial hit all at once.

Attending AASL was a wonderful opportunity. Between Melanie, Alanna, Mary (my daughter) and I, we presented ten times! This meant that we didn't have as much free time as we might have liked, but we ensured that we fed our brains at different sessions. Needless to say, there were almost too many to choose from! I wrote about the presentations I saw on my blog (see [mondymollymusings.blogspot.ca/2017/11/aasl17-conference-reflections-its-worth.html](http://mondymollymusings.blogspot.ca/2017/11/aasl17-conference-reflections-its-worth.html) and [mondymollymusings.blogspot.ca/2017/11/aasl-conference-reflections-part-2.html](http://mondymollymusings.blogspot.ca/2017/11/aasl-conference-reflections-part-2.html)). The energy at the event was tangible, and everyone we met seemed to be friendly and approachable. The big buzz at the conference was the release of the new National Standards. (*School Library Journal's* summary of the event can be found at [slj.com/2017/11/industry-news/aasl-17-starring-standards](http://slj.com/2017/11/industry-news/aasl-17-starring-standards)). It was fascinating to compare the situation in Canada with our southern neighbours and it made us realize that Ontario school libraries (where they exist, properly staffed) are at the forefront of innovation. We should be proud!

Another benefit to attending a conference in a different place is sharing the experience with others. I know I tweeted a lot and thought a lot about what I heard and learned. It made me want to bring these ideas back to friends and colleagues back home. (I also wrote about this more in depth at [mondymollymusings.blogspot.ca/2017/11/important-people-disembodied.html](http://mondymollymusings.blogspot.ca/2017/11/important-people-disembodied.html).) The next AASL conference will be in 2019 in Kentucky and if you are financially fortunate enough to attend, I highly recommend it. If you'd like to try a conference within Canada, check out Canadian School Libraries ([canadianschoollibraries.ca/school-library-association](http://canadianschoollibraries.ca/school-library-association)). ■

# Maker Mania

## What Making Can Mean for Your Learning Commons

by Melanie Mulcaster with Julie Cruise and Meaghan Hopkins

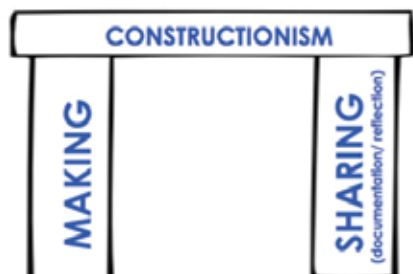
It is undeniable that the maker movement and makerspaces are spreading like wildfire in our school systems. Many educators, like myself, question the quick implementation of such spaces, wondering if we are all caught up in the same fad or are just looking for another way to place a band-aid on the problems and challenges we already face in our school systems (Halverson & Sheridan, 2014). What is making—really—and what might it mean for teaching and learning practices in our schools and learning commons?

### What defines making in our spaces?

Making, as I like to define it, is based on Seymour Papert's theory of constructionism. Constructionism lives and grows in context, stressing that individuals learn best through the manipulation of physical materials (Ackermann, 2010). Learning through a constructionist lens means that the creation of knowledge becomes less abstract and more concrete and personal. Projecting our own understandings through the active and physical creation of personally meaningful artifacts makes learning real, tangible, and shareable (Ackermann, 2001; Martinez & Stager, 2013; Papert, 1999).

However, "making does not equal constructionism – necessarily" (Skillen, 2014, np) and we cannot assume that students are constructing new knowledge merely through the act of making.

### KNOWLEDGE BUILDING



One must carefully consider the two pillars of constructionism – making and sharing – and how they relate to assessing learning and teaching practices. The richness of making lies in the ability of all learners to share their thinking processes in the attempt to make sense, re-assess, evaluate and confirm the world around them. We must make the time to document, share, and reflect on student learning to drive future instruction.

Making, quite simply, is just not enough.

### How do we engage and empower our students through making in our learning commons?

The best maker environments, in my opinion, are less about the tools than they are about the culture. Making is a mindset, not a space. If we model how to access and explore materials respectfully by displaying them in a way that invites innovation and creativity, students will take ownership over the space. Having a culture where materials can only be accessed during certain subjects/activities is when we fall into a makerspace instead of a maker culture.

Creating an environment that invites movement, collaboration, and experimentation is far more critical to students' success than investing a fortune in specialized materials (Stockman, 2016). Begin with loose parts – watch how your students tinker, experiment and explore with these cost-effective materials. Question, wonder, ponder and reflect upon learning experiences to guide your next big box purchases.

I often reference Laura Fleming's makerspace planning infographic to ground my practice.

Let the environment be the third classroom. Kindergarten classrooms in our schools are great models for any environment to demonstrate how we can have material out consistently in an organized fashion that allows learners to be inspired and access what they need independently, while moving through the learning space confidently without





Used with permission from Laura Fleming.

teacher support. When the environment is truly set up as the third teacher, the teacher can then facilitate on a deeper level, while also freeing up time to document, provide feedback, and encourage next steps.

In collaboration, teacher-librarians and classroom teachers can foster deep learning and build learning partnerships in constructive, innovative, and inventive curriculums in all spaces that extend beyond the learning commons. Learning is “student-centred and problem-based, ...[and] utilizes the best available resources, technologies, strategies” (*Together for Learning*, 2010, p. 14) to equip learners to solve real world problems—independently and collaboratively, locally and globally.

It’s all about listening carefully to our students’ interests and needs. If we listen with all our senses – we will know best how to guide future learning. Once we accept the humility of not knowing, the possible pathways of learning are endless. We are researchers with our students, modelling our own interests, questions, and discoveries.

**Yes, yes...but what does this mean for learning? How does it relate to the curriculum?**

One of our favourite ways to encourage a maker culture in our school is by providing opportunities for teachers and students to collaborate in the LLC utilizing great literacy. For the past few years, we have begun to use Forest of Reading® books as provocations for making and connecting to a text, while utilizing technology to share, empower and inspire.



Source: <http://bit.ly/2FgqDuP>

Making experiences designed using these provocation texts are chosen with learning targets in mind. They are intended to be open ended and allow for the exploration of various tools that are unique and relevant to the individual while providing opportunities for purposeful collaboration and reflection for knowledge building to occur. It is important to note that what might work for one class may not work for another. Learning experiences must be tailored in collaboration with the teacher-librarian and/or classroom teacher to meet the needs and interests of our learners.

Students are guided through the making process in our learning commons through a four-part lesson approach:

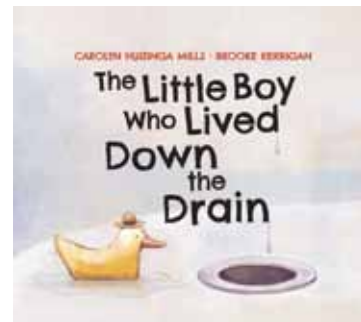
## The Three (Four) Part Lesson



One of our latest explorations was based on the text *The Little Boy Who Lived Down the Drain*. (For a full blog post on this experience, please visit <http://bit.ly/2Ff13I6>)

Learning goals for this experience included but were not limited to:

- I am learning how to express personal thoughts and feelings about what has been read
- I am learning how to sort ideas and information to express my thinking
- I am learning how to create short texts using a few simple text forms
- I am learning how to identify right angles and to describe angles as greater than, equal to, or less than a right angle
- I am learning how to create multimedia artifacts to communicate and share my thinking
- I am learning how to problem solve and work as part of a team



After a minds-on activity, and a strategic read of the text (we stopped at the part where Sally wonders if the little boy is lonely down the drain), students were encouraged to “build a drain” from a variety of loose parts, taking into consideration their knowledge of angles as part of their design. Collaboratively, students and teachers co-constructed a success criteria for our builds.

Constraints placed on the making were that students could not use tape or any type of connector besides their hands to keep

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...continued from page 29

their “pipe components” in place. An iPad was also provided to each group so that students might document their progress and eventually reflect on their learning.

Once students felt they successfully met and documented the success criteria, they uploaded their photos into Pic Collage to label the angles used in their designs.

At this point, learning was transferred back to the classroom to reflect and connect learning.

In the classroom, students were asked to reflect on their design using pictures and words:

- What was the purpose of today’s making?
- What did you learn?
- What did you find helpful?
- What was difficult?
- What would you like to use/do next to improve your design?

Students will revisit their designs during the next collaborative inquiry period.

My colleagues and I take time to reflect on our experiences in the learning commons – to compare notes and documentation we’ve curated throughout the learning process. Three essential questions continue to guide our practice:

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Making is a vehicle for learning that can empower, engage and provide personal meaning. However, it is just that – a vehicle. It is what happens during and after the making —how we document, reflect, dialogue, and share—that shifts a community from a culture of teaching, to a culture of learning.

Skillen (2014) confirms,

“...It is not merely the act of constructing that is essential. Powerful things happen when that act of constructing mediates deep conversation with others. The very act of articulating ideas, sharing thoughts, confusions, ahas, questions, potential solutions makes knowledge building explicit. Sometimes words are spoken. Oftentimes facial expressions and body language communicate. We might draw diagrams or build prototypes. All these serve to make the thinking visible and, therefore, discussable—not only with others but for oneself. (Skillen, 2014, np)

Create. Collaborate. Connect. Share. Modify. Tinker. Persevere. Reflect. Explore.

Push learning forward. Build a community that learns.

This is what making can mean for your learning commons. ■

# **GIVE. READ. GROW.**

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**Every young person should  
have access to Canadian books.**

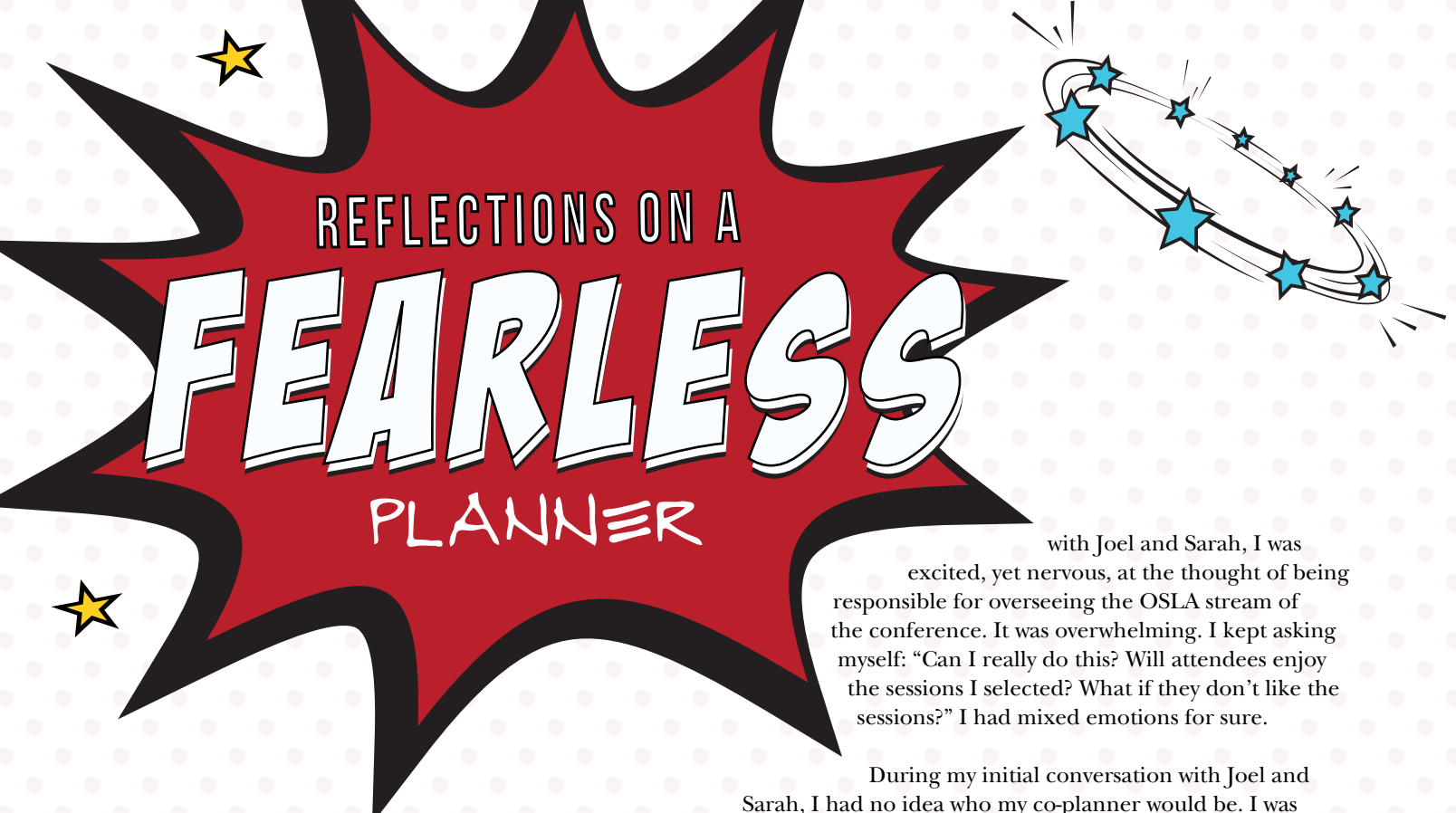
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- 🍁 A rock concert of reading: allowing children to experience a local Forest of Reading event, where they can meet and participate in workshops with their favourite Canadian authors.
- 🍁 Cultivating a love of reading: Cover the cost of Forest of Reading program in Indigenous, rural and priority communities.

**Donate at [ireadcanadian.com](http://ireadcanadian.com)**





# REFLECTIONS ON A FEARLESS PLANNER

with Joel and Sarah, I was excited, yet nervous, at the thought of being responsible for overseeing the OSLA stream of the conference. It was overwhelming. I kept asking myself: “Can I really do this? Will attendees enjoy the sessions I selected? What if they don’t like the sessions?” I had mixed emotions for sure.

During my initial conversation with Joel and Sarah, I had no idea who my co-planner would be. I was so relieved when I was notified that Michelle Campbell, Supervisor of Library & Media Services with the Upper Grand District School Board, would be my co-planner for the 2017 Super Conference. I had the pleasure of working with Michelle a few summers ago on a Digital Citizenship project for the Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee (OSAPAC), so I knew we would make a great team.

However, Michelle was unable to continue in the role of co-planner for the 2018 Super Conference. Nerves quickly set in as I was once again without a co-planner. I was so excited when Alanna King, teacher-librarian in the Upper Grand District School Board, agreed to take on the role of OSLA co-planner for the 2018 Super Conference. I knew we would work well together as I had made connections with Alanna through social media PLN’s as well as at various conferences that we have both attended.

It takes approximately 12 months of planning for Super Conference to come to fruition. Once one Super Conference ends, the next one begins. A week after Super Conference is the wrap up meeting where members of the planning team discuss successes and what needs to be changed or improved for the following year. The planning team meets approximately five times in person and through teleconference three times over the course of the year. Planners also spend time over the course of the year communicating with their respective councils. They attend council meetings to ask members for suggestions around topics for sessions as well as asking for input around spotlight speakers.


The big planning meeting happens in June. This is when the planning committee spends a day going through proposals to

**G**rit. Perseverance. Resilience.  
Risk Takers.

We are fearless.

The theme of the 2018 OLA Super Conference was “Fearless by Design”, which was held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre from January 31–February 3.

Teacher-Librarians are fearless by design. We tend to jump in with both feet when presented with new learning opportunities. We aren’t afraid to take risks and learn from and alongside our students and colleagues.

 Fear has no place in our school library learning commons. I often tell students before they enter the library to leave their fears at the door. Some of the best learning happens in school libraries – the place where failure is accepted and where every learner should feel safe, supported, included and heard.

I have had the extreme pleasure of being a member of the 2017 and 2018 Super Conference Planning Team on behalf of the Ontario School Library Association (OSLA). My name was brought forward to OSLA Council by one of my Simcoe County District School Board colleagues and the OSLA Vice-President at the time, Melissa Jensen. Thanks Melissa for giving me the nudge to take on this role!

I was one of the co-planners who took over the role from Joel Krentz and Sarah Oesch. During my initial Google Hangout



## Jess Longthorne

see what the latest trends and interests are in the library world. This might be the most emotional day for planners. It was for me. I felt exhausted, excited, apprehensive and worried after a day of accepting and rejecting proposals. There is nothing easy about reading through approximately 90 proposals and having to narrow down your selections to just 28. Then comes the task of researching and selecting a spotlight speaker. With countless emails, Google and social media searches, this isn't an easy task, especially with a limited budget.

However, hard work aside, the end result is exciting: Laughter Yoga, All Conference Party, Super Film Fest, Games Night, First Timers Event, Poster Sessions, Super EXPO, Keynote Speakers, Author Signings, Vendor Displays. These are just some of the special events that occur during Super Conference. The planning team's main goal is to make sure there is something for every library, literacy and technology lover at this conference.

Advocacy was also a big part of this year's Super Conference. OSLA council members presented a session called "Stand Up and Be Fearless in Your School". Members highlighted the important work being done through the formation of the ETFO Library Standing Committee to support teacher-librarians and our school libraries, such as when members attended "Library Day at Queen's Park", where they spoke to government officials about how teacher-librarians and school libraries are essential to support equity and diversity initiatives in our schools. They also spoke about the need to mandate how schools and school boards spend the funding they are allocated by the Ministry of Education for school libraries.

I have had the opportunity to attend many conferences as an educator, but there is something very special about the OLA Super Conference. The role of a teacher-librarian can feel isolating at times especially for elementary teacher-librarians. This conference allows us to make valuable connections.

It reassures and reinforces that we are not alone in our role. The Super Conference also celebrates the amazing teaching and learning that is happening in school library learning commons across Ontario and, in some cases, across Canada.

I have been on both sides of this conference

now. As a co-planner, it is stressful, tiring and emotional. Seeing sessions that were once on paper come alive, finally putting names to faces after months of emails and having attendees stop you and offer positive feedback is so very rewarding and emotional.

I must admit I was teary-eyed after the conference was over.

I am looking forward to returning to the 2019 Super Conference as an attendee. I will have a greater appreciation for the work that goes into planning the conference and will make sure I fill out the evaluation forms. Evaluation forms? Really? Feedback is important. As educators, we do this everyday. We give students feedback. We ask students for their feedback through self and peer evaluations. We ask students for feedback on lessons and projects. We are given feedback from our administration during performance appraisals. Feedback can be scary but it also can be encouraging and, wait for it, helpful. It helps us improve as educators. Conference feedback helps planners improve the conference and make it better.

I must admit I won't miss the stress of worrying whether presenters and convenors will show up for sessions or whether the Wi-Fi will work. However, I will miss the amazing people I had the pleasure of working with for two years, led by the amazing Michelle Arbuckle, Director of Member Engagement & Education of the Ontario Library Association and fearless leader of the Super Conference.

A shout out to Michelle Campbell and Alanna King for being amazing co-planners. I am so fortunate to have been given the opportunity to work alongside the both of you! Being a member of the planning team has helped me both personally (stepping out of my comfort zone) and professionally. This experience also has given me the opportunity to make strong connections with other librarians, both at a school level and a public level, that I wouldn't have gotten otherwise. It also has allowed me to stay updated on current trends in libraries and what other teacher-librarians are doing in their schools with students. When I told my husband my time as co-planner was coming to an end he said: "What are you going to do now? You are not the type to just sit still and do nothing." Hmmm. I'm sure I will find something. After all, I am a fearless teacher-librarian. ■



# REFLECTIONS ON A FEARLESS CONFERENCE



**F**ebruary 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 was the day I anxiously anticipated since last year. My annual participation in the largest library conference in the country, organized by the Ontario Library Association, has been a constant source of education, energy and inspiration to implement the best practices and innovative technologies used by library and information professionals.

As usual, I was not disappointed. Each year, the conference focuses its program around a theme. This year, the theme was “Fearless by Design”. The theme alone covers a whole array of issues, from ensuring access to facts and truth in the era of “alternative truths” and “fake news”, to empowering libraries and librarians to take risks in providing the right to information, literacy and education for all, to quote OLA President, Leslie Weir.

The important part of the conference was finding your own voice and telling your own story. All conference speakers called for the courage to share one’s own narrative, no matter how painful the past and how prejudiced the audience.

I was especially impressed by these three speakers: Jesse Wenté, Jael Richardson, and Naomi Klein. Below are my observations and notes from their lectures.

## **Thursday Keynote Speaker: Jesse Wenté, Ojibwe Broadcaster, Curator, Producer, Activist**

In 2012, Wenté curated the world’s largest retrospective of Indigenous films, titled *First Peoples Cinema: 1,500 Nations, One Tradition* and its accompanying gallery exhibition, *Home on Native Land*. He is currently producing his first film, a screen adaptation of Thomas King’s best-selling book, *The Inconvenient Indian*. He has recently become the first head of newly created Indigenous Screen Office.

Negative portrayal of Indigenous people by the media is Canada’s storytelling issue. It reflects how the larger community relates to indigenous issues.

Wenté has called for a cultural appropriation debate in Canadian literature. He pointed out that it was public policy to steal native stories for 70 years, and there is still a fear to change from people who are told they cannot do things

the way they used to. The debate also concerns authors who write about Indigenous issues without innate knowledge. Wenté refers to them as “cottage country natives”.

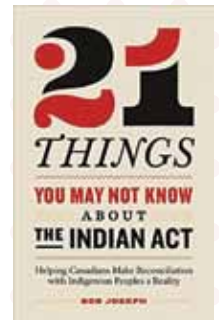
He also talked about the amendment to the Indian Act whose Potlatch Ban outlawed all Indigenous ceremonies. In the aftermath of that, all stories and artifacts were taken away from their rightful owners to be placed in museums and archives.

Wenté reminisced about his grandmother Norma who only spoke Ojibway when she was taken to a residential school in Spanish, Ontario (St. Joseph school for girls) when she was six. She spent ten years at the school where all stories were taken away from her. In the process, she was taught to be ashamed of her heritage. When she moved to Toronto after finishing the school, she claimed she was Italian. To add insult to injury, she worked at the Albany Club – a private club founded by Sir John A. Macdonald.

That narrative gap was appropriated by sports clubs and cinema as well. For example, football mascots created at the time bore such names as Cleveland Indians, Washington Redskins and Kansas City Chiefs. *Once Upon A Time in the West*, *High Noon*, *Rio Grande*, are just a few movies from the whole “western cinema” genre created at the time that used “Indian” motifs to steal or change the narrative. Despite efforts to right the wrongs over the last few years, Canadians are radically misinformed by these stories.

Wenté proposed de-colonizing libraries. He went on to say that in light of cultural appropriation of Indigenous history, we have to question everything. We need new people in the newsrooms to get different perspectives. A well-functioning ecosystem is, in his view, needed for natural sustainability. We should listen to nature and diversify to get different perspectives. To illustrate his point, Wenté said: “Anishinaabe have lived here for 15 thousand years and Canada just celebrated the sesquicentennial ‘birthday thing’.”

Society needs to overcome a fear of what it means to reconcile.



## Anna Szumilas

We need to realize that Canada as you know it does not exist. In a nutshell, it is about stewardship. We don't own anything; we keep it; it is the land that owns us.

### Friday School Libraries Spotlight: Jael Richardson, Festival of Literary Diversity (FOLD)

Jael Richardson is the author of *Stone Thrower*, a moving memoir about her father's life. She also is a founder and a creative director of FOLD ([thefoldcanada.org](http://thefoldcanada.org)) where diverse writers can share their craft. She also is a literary contributor to the CBC radio program *Q*, where she talks about diverse books that she has read. An avid reader from early childhood, when she found the play *Harlem Duet* – a modern-day prequel to *Othello* set in Harlem in the 1960s by Djanet Sears – as a student at the University of Guelph, “she was woke”. She read her own struggle on the page.

According to Richardson, we have a certain perception of who is capable of teaching and who is capable of telling their story. According to her, libraries play a powerful role in shaping identity and culture. Every library contains a collection of stories that tell a larger story, and librarians are the gatekeepers. Books are the only way to meet people who are different, like *Othello*. Her advice to teacher-librarians: “Put them on display and challenge the expectations of your readers.”

Jael Richardson says that our professional status requires three things from us: work diversely, read diversely and live diversely.

#### Work diversely

This concept begs us to understand and accept how our position of power and privilege contributes to a complex systemic problem, how we work for a system that is flawed and how we determine who is missing from our collection. School libraries have a responsibility to give voice to black women, Indigenous women, disabled people, and other disadvantaged individuals.

#### Read diversely

To find out what's missing, we need to do the work. Educators have to actively pursue and explore books by people who are different from us, so we can expand our understanding of the world. It takes more work, but it is more rewarding and influences other people who we serve.



Jael Richardson poses with Super Conference planners and OSLA presidents.

#### Live diversely

We need to get uncomfortable in our everyday life, so we can better understand and empathize with our fellow humans. We are, after all, human first.

Choose places that make you awkward. Embrace the feeling to identify with the experience of others who are marginalized but find themselves in their own group. Just listen. Learn diversity. It will take a long time but will reap the best results.

#### Here is Jael Richardson's Diverse Book List:

- Bob Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*
- Jael Richardson, *The Stone Thrower*
- Djanet Sears, *Harlem Duet*
- Carol Daniels, *Bearskin Diary*
- Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You*
- Imbolo Mbue, *Behold the Dreamers* (Obama-era New York)
- Yaa Gyasi, *Homegoing* (about two Ghanaian sisters)
- Max Wirestone, *The Questionable Behaviour of Dahlia Moss* (third in a series)
- Sharon Bala, *The Boat People*
- David Chariandy, *Brother*
- Omar El Akkad, *American War*
- Nicola Yoon, *The Sun is Also a Star*

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### Friday Keynote Speaker: Naomi Klein

Naomi Klein was probably the most anticipated author at the conference. *No Is Not Enough*, her latest book, is one attempt to uncover how we got to this surreal political moment. Naomi Klein was interviewed by Maureen Johnson, Library Service Manager at Toronto Public Library.

Not surprisingly, the conversation was politically charged. According to Klein, Trump is not an aberration, but a logical extension of the worst, most dangerous trends of the past half-century—the very conditions that have unleashed a rising tide of white nationalism the world over.

We live in a surreal world, Klein said. It is shocking that Trump was elected in the US, but Canadians also “need to find our inner Trump and slay it.” According to Klein, Canadian smugness is dangerous. Nevertheless, the decolonial idea of a public world is not the taxpayers’ idea. Klein is grateful to librarians for connecting readers with books and filling in the gap between what is going on and what should be the narrative. Librarians have a critical role to play in this social reality to help us learn from our history. Libraries have the advantage as a free and open space. Klein encouraged us to fearlessly push the boundaries through collections redefining what is a centre and what is a margin of society. She pointed out that Ontario libraries are public in terms of being community-owned which gives us certain immunity and distance from the political game.

Naomi Klein is a passionate advocate for the Leap Manifesto – a political manifesto issued by a broad coalition of Canadian

authors, artists, national leaders and activists in September 2015, during the Canadian federal election campaign. It brings together people from different backgrounds to talk about what the Canada that we want should look like. The Leap Manifesto reminds us that the power of common ground means sharing and, that’s what libraries do, said Klein. She urged librarians to be fearless facilitators where conversations,



Anna Szumilas (right) convened a session called *Speed Dating with Dewey Divas and Dudes*, who introduced 100 books in 90 minutes.

conflicts, and constructive arguments can happen in the atmosphere of trust.

Klein concluded in saying that our historical moment demands more – a credible and inspiring “yes,” a roadmap to reclaiming the populist ground from those who would divide us, one that sets a bold course for winning the fair and caring world we want and need.

Apart from these three powerhouses, there was a lot more to remember from the conference. There were poster sessions, book signings, and a style lounge where many attendees had a makeover and glamour photos done in no time at all. Not to mention many opportunities to network and socialize with our colleagues from different school boards.

The Ontario School Library Association highlights were special awards for Richard Reid representing Durham District School Board, the recipient of the Larry Moore Distinguished Service Award, the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) which was awarded the OSLA Award for Special Achievement, and Sue MacLachlan, representing Hamilton-Wentworth DSB, who was named OSLA Teacher-Librarian of the Year.

There also were plenty of opportunities to volunteer. The conference would not have succeeded without tireless planners, presenters and session conveners.

In a word, Super Conference 2018 was an unforgettable feast, a library heaven. There are enough ideas and resources to last till next year. ■





# THE Teaching Librarian Event Calendar

For more information on OLA events and programs, visit [accessola.com/events](http://accessola.com/events)

## APRIL

### ALL MONTH

Voting for Forest of Reading® school-aged award programs

### FRIDAYS IN APRIL

Forest Fridays Presents Bree Galbraith, Jeff Lemire, Karen Nesbitt, and Jess Keating

### 23

Official Forest of Reading Voting Day (school-aged programs)

### 20

OPLA's RA in a Day

## MAY

### ALL MONTH

Voting for Forest of Reading Golden Oak Award™ program open

### FRIDAYS IN MAY

Forest Fridays Presents Shelly Becker, Faith Erin Hicks, and Sarah Elton

### 11

Festival of Trees (London, ON)

### 15, 16 and 17

Festival of Trees (Toronto, ON). Forest of Reading 2017 school-aged award program winners announced

### 18

Festival of Trees (Waterloo Region, ON)

### 25

Call for Proposals Deadline for Super Conference 2019

## JUNE

### 1

Forest of Reading Golden Oak winner announced

## JUNE

### TBC

Forest of Reading Kid and Teen Committees' Summer Reading Lists will be released

### TBC

OLA's Annual General Meeting

## JULY

### 12—13

Annual Institute on the Library as Place

## AUGUST

### TBC

Marketing Libraries Think Tank

Have an event you'd like to feature to *The Teaching Librarian* readers? Please email [communications@accessola.com](mailto:communications@accessola.com) with the name of the event and date for inclusion in upcoming issues.

## *The Teaching Librarian* is looking for contributors!

Interested in writing for *The Teaching Librarian*? Here are themes and submission deadlines for upcoming issues:

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# Empowering Learning in Peel

## A Mania for Change

By Jennifer Brown

As language evolves, we often must redefine our own understanding of vocabulary and its impact on our society. The word “mania” can easily bring forth a negative connotation of feeling “out of control” or experiencing an unrealistic sense of joy or extreme happiness.

Merriam-Webster offers two such definitions of mania:

1. excitement manifested by mental and physical hyperactivity, disorganization of behavior, and elevation of mood;
2. **a:** excessive or unreasonable enthusiasm; **b:** the object of such enthusiasm<sup>1</sup>

If we choose to step back from our preconceived notions about the negative impact of such a “state of excitement” or “excessive enthusiasm”, we may notice that embracing some level of “hyperactivity”, slight “disorganization of behaviour” and an “elevation in mood” has an unexpectedly empowering result.

In education we are notoriously stereotyped as being resistant to change, as valuing conformity, defining success in terms of simple grades and as stifling any sort of “unreasonable enthusiasm” in our students. However, in recent years education has shifted. There is a sense of joyful mania as more and more educators recognize the need for 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies, access to a wide range of technology, multiple literacies and the importance of student-led inquiry in a world where information (fake or otherwise) is immediately at our students’ fingertips.

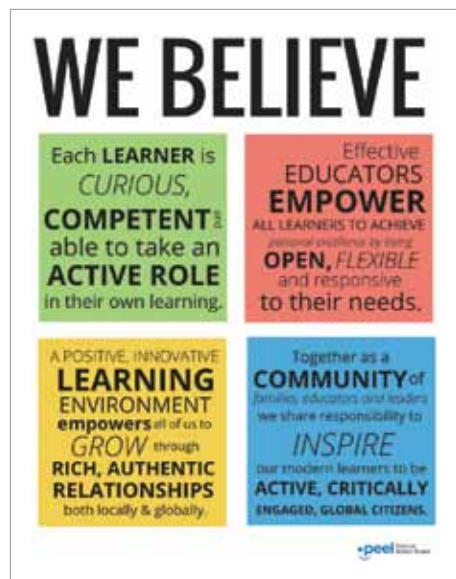
Popular educational books like those by American educators John Spencer and A.J. Juliani, the well-known *Hacking Learning* book series and Canadian texts like Jennifer Casa-Todd’s *Social LEADia*, are prime examples of this shift in mindset about how students learn and the redefinition of a successful learning environment.

What all these texts have in common is a sense of excitement for student learning, a sense of enthusiasm for student voice and a sense of urgency in changing our approach to teaching practice. Educators are recognizing that we are no longer the centre of learning but rather the supporters of student-driven passions and growth. This sort of educational “mania” can be seen as a call to action that demands that we step out of our comfort zone to foster long-term student success.

Versions of this “comfort zone” image are used in numerous professional development sessions and often as a tool to encourage students to venture beyond their existing strengths in conversations around growth mindset.

### What has the potential of creating a greater sense of “mania” more than venturing outside our comfort zone and exploring the unknown?

In the Peel District School Board (PDSB), this educational “mania” has evolved into a recently-published document and website called Empowering Modern Learners: INSPIRE-INNOVATE-IGNITE (EML). This seemingly simple ten-page document offers educators and families the chance to revamp, revisit and reinvent our definitions of student learning. It endeavours to empower students by challenging the entire system to stand behind four belief statements, embed multiple competencies for the modern learner and embrace six innovative elements to drive our work.



Looking thoughtfully at the EML’s Belief Statements and 6 Elements, it only seems natural that a school library learning commons is the ideal germination point for this approach to modern learning to grow and spread throughout school culture. Consider the Canadian School Libraries document *Leading Learning’s* description of a library learning commons:

A learning commons is a whole school



approach to building a participatory learning community. The library learning commons is the physical and virtual collaborative learning hub of the school. It is designed to engineer and drive future-oriented learning and teaching throughout the entire school. Inquiry, project/problem-based learning experiences are designed as catalysts for intellectual engagement with information, ideas, thinking, and dialogue. Reading thrives, learning literacies and technology competencies evolve, and critical thinking, creativity, innovation and playing to learn are nourished. Everyone is a learner; everyone is a teacher working collaboratively toward excellence.<sup>2</sup>

The natural relationship between a thriving library learning commons and the PDSB’s Empowering Modern Learners vision document cannot be overstated. School library professionals stand at the forefront of this movement and have a moral imperative to lead staff, students and families in this “outside our comfort zone” adventure.

Like any shift, there are those who feel a sense of euphoric mania that fuels the journey. And there are those who feel overwhelmed by fear and trepidation. If we are able to set aside our fears, we may see that all the “new” pedagogical initiatives impacting school libraries today are just manifestations of the rethinking of our beliefs about student learning:

- Social Justice and Equity collection building
- Focus on student choice in reading materials
- Makerspace
- Loose Parts Play
- Robotics
- Lego walls

- Mindfulness
- Flexible Seating
- Bring Your Own Device
- Going paperless
- Gradeless Assessment
- Descriptive Feedback
- Blogging, Vlogging, Podcasts
- Flipped classrooms

In our library learning commons these are not trends or buzzwords. They are the tools through which we show our students that we believe in them, we trust them, and we are willing to go alongside them on a learning journey with an unknown destination. All learners, including our youngest students, have the potential to reach their highest goals.

Our Ontario Kindergarten Program Document reminds us:

“All children are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential and experience. They grow up in families with diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives. Every child should feel that he or she belongs, is a valuable contributor to his or her surroundings, and deserves the opportunity to succeed. When we recognize children as competent, capable, and curious, we are more likely to deliver programs that value and build on their strengths and abilities.”<sup>3</sup>

So, it’s okay if others think our libraries appear a bit manic at times. It’s okay if students exhibit a little extra excitement in our learning environments. It’s okay if others perceive these additions to the school library as a bit disorganized compared to the traditional design. The key is that evolution of the library learning commons for student success remains the object of our enthusiasm. Making each and every decision with our core beliefs about children at the centre means that our current mania is student empowerment. What could be more exciting than that? ■

Sources:

1. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mania>
2. <http://llsop.canadianschoollibraries.ca/library-learning-commons/>
3. <https://www.ontario.ca/document/kindergarten-program-2016/introduction>

# Thank you!

**to Diana Maliszewski**  
Editor-in-Chief

Thank you, Diana, for your 12 years of service to *The Teaching Librarian* magazine.

Diana served as the editor-in-chief of *The Teaching Librarian* from 2006 to 2018. Under her leadership, this publication has told the stories of our school libraries with sound facts, exceptional readability, and creative wit.

In 2015, the publication was the recipient of the Canadian Society of Association Executives (CSAE) Communication Award of Excellence for Best Publication.

We are grateful to Diana for her contribution to the field of school librarianship.

From all of us at the Ontario Library Association, the Ontario School Library Association, and the editorial board of *The Teaching Librarian*, THANK YOU!