

THE

# Teaching Librarian

The Magazine of the Ontario School Library Association  
ISSN 1188679X

## Building a community

PAGE 28

## Fostering connections with colleagues

PAGE 36

# *Reaching beyond*

the walls of the school library community

DEAR  
SCHOOL  
LIBRARY  
PAGE 24

**community** @ your library



The Forest of Reading® program supports all humans and the Freedom to Read. It's the largest recreational reading program in Canada. All children should be allowed to exist in literature. Books matter.

Stand up for all humans.

And pets.

Stand up for pets too.



Forest Of Reading®  
Forêt de la lecture®

[tinlids.ca](http://tinlids.ca)

Canada

Acknowledging support from the Government of Canada.  
Nous remercions le gouvernement du Canada pour son soutien.

Canadian owned.  
Not corporate.  
Not sorry.

# THE Teaching Librarian

Volume 32, Issue 1 September 2024 ISSN 1188679X

## TingL Fixtures

- 7** The Editor's Notebook  
Danny Neville
- 8** President's Report  
Wendy Burch Jones
- 10** Origin Stories: Who We Are  
Southwestern Region Members
- 14** Meet the Authors: Frieda Wishinsky,  
Lindsay Zier-Vogel and Michelle Mulder  
Martha Brack Martin
- 18** Shelf Awareness  
Lisa Noble
- 20** Announcing TMC8! Strengthening  
Foundations for School Library Learning  
Commons in Canada  
Canadian School Libraries & The TMC8 Planning  
Committee
- 36** Building a (Far-Reaching)  
Community of Colleagues  
Shelagh Straughan
- 40** Visual Essay  
Tina Zita
- 41** Drawn to the Form: Creating Comic Book  
Communities  
Diana and Mary Maliszewski
- 44** Professional Resources  
Kasey Whalley

## TingL Features

- 24** Dear School Library - We Love You!  
Wendy Burch Jones
- 28** Community @ My Library  
Aimee Barber
- 30** Inviting Them In: A Plan to Include All Students  
in the Library Learning Commons Space  
Jen Hart
- 32** Adult & Child Book Clubs: Watching Your  
Library Community Flourish  
Lisa Lewis
- 34** Family Literacy Night  
Angie Wurster
- 38** Stronger & Better Together: The Creation of a  
Teacher-Librarian Network  
Jonelle St. Aubyn
- 39** InstaCommunity: Making Connections and  
Swapping Recommendations 2200  
Characters at a Time  
Tara Truscott
- 42** Collaborating in Kingston to Develop Young  
Scientific Minds  
Shelley Woods
- 46** Choosing the Right Books: A Guide to the Selec-  
tion and Deselection of School Library Resources  
Danny Neville
- 47** Inspiring Infographics from School Libraries  
Wendy Burch Jones

## community @ your library

Cover Photo by Bethany Legg on Unsplash

# TingL Contributors

Volume 32, Issue 1



**AIMEE  
BARBER**

is the recipient of OSLA's 2024 Teacher-Librarian of the Year Award. She is a teacher-librarian at Glebe Collegiate Institute in the OCDSB.



**WENDY  
BURCH JONES**

is the current OSLA President and a teacher-librarian with the Toronto District School Board.



**JEN HART**

is a Library Learning Commons Teacher in the HWDSB.



**LISA LEWIS**

is a teacher-librarian, Chair of the Silver Birch Fiction Steering Committee and OSLA Council Member for the Toronto Region.



**DIANA  
MALISZEWSKI**

is the teacher-librarian at Agnes Macphail Public School in the Toronto District School Board.



**MARY  
MALISZEWSKI**

is a graduate of UTSC's Creative Writing program and a contributing writer for blogTO.



**MARTHA  
BRACK MARTIN**

is a retired teacher-librarian and published children's author. She now works as an Educational Consultant and TVO Learn Mathify Ambassador.



**DANNY  
NEVILLE**

is a former teacher-librarian, educational consultant, writer, occasional teacher with the OCDSB, and editor of *The Teaching Librarian* magazine.



**LISA  
NOBLE**

is a demonstrator at Trent University's School of Education. She chairs the school's library committee and facilitates the makerspace.



**JONELLE ST.  
AUBYN**

is the teacher-librarian at Louise Arbour Secondary School in Brampton. She was a recipient of the Teacher's Life Exceptional Educator Award.



**SHELAGH  
STRAUGHAN**

is the senior school librarian and a teacher of AP research at Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ont.



**TARA TRUSCOTT**

is a teacher-librarian with the York Region District School Board who shares reviews and thoughts @trusreads on Instagram.



**KASEY  
WHALLEY**

is a library technician with Sheridan College and past Editor of *The Teaching Librarian*.



**SHELLEY  
WOODS**

is an Education Librarian at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University.



**ANGIE WURSTER**

is a teacher-librarian at William Dunbar Public School, Durham District School Board.



**TINA  
ZITA**

is a teacher-librarian at Aylesbury Public School in the Peel District School Board.

## 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.

## TingL Editorial Board

Lisa Loffredi	York Catholic DSB lisa.loffredi@ycdsb.ca
Martha Martin	Retired, Greater Essex County DSB mlbrackmartin@gmail.com
Danny Neville	Ottawa-Carlton DSB theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com
Kimberly Senf	Elmwood School, Ottawa ksenf@elmwood.ca
Angela Thompson	Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB angela_thompson@kprdsb.ca
Deborah Vert	Durham DSB deborah.vert@ddsbs.ca
Kasey Whalley	Sheridan College kaseywhalley@outlook.com
Tina Zita	Peel DSB tina.zita@peelsb.com

## TingL Submission Guidelines

Please Note: Themes are subject to change.

January 2025 V. 32, Issue 2	“Mystery @ Your Library” Deadline: October 11, 2024
May 2025 V. 32, Issue 3	Theme to be determined Deadline: January 30, 2025

Articles of 150-250 words, 500 words, or 800-1,300 words are welcome. Articles, when approved, should be accompanied by high quality images and/or graphics whenever possible. Text must be sent electronically, preferably in a Microsoft Word (or compatible) file. Images or graphics must be sent separately in a digital format, such as .jpeg, .png, .tiff, or .ai. The minimum resolution must be 1000 px at 150 dpi. With photos that 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](http://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](mailto:teachinglibrarian@outlook.com).

## TingL Subscriptions

*The Teaching Librarian* is a benefit of OSLA membership.

To become a member, contact:

Ontario Library Association  
192 Spadina Avenue, Suite 205  
Toronto, Ont., M5T 2C2  
Tel: 1-877-340-1730  
[membership@accessola.com](mailto:membership@accessola.com)  
[accessola.com](http://accessola.com)

## TingL Editor

Danny Neville  
[theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com](mailto:theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com)

## OLA Design

Laurel McLeod  
Ontario Library Association  
[lmcleod@accessola.com](mailto:lmcleod@accessola.com)

# I READ CANADIAN DAY

# JOIN US!

Help us make accessible reading a priority by supporting I Read Canadian this **Nov 6th!**



Order your shirt today! 50% of proceeds go directly to the I Read Canadian Fund.

Canadian Made



HELP US REACH OUR GOAL \$25K



## HELP GET CANADIAN BOOKS INTO THE HANDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Donate to the I Read Canadian fund

Help us spread the word  
**#IReadCanadian**



**Donate \$25** and you will send a young reader to the Forest of Reading Festival.



**Donate \$50** and you will cover the cost of the annual registration fee for Forest of Reading Program.



**Donate \$150** and you will cover the cost of one set of books for the Forest of Reading Program.

# The Editor's Notebook



Danny Neville

**T**he role of a school librarian is often described as a lonely position. More often than not, we are the only library professional in our buildings. But fear not, dear reader. You are not alone. It may take a dash of effort and perhaps a sprinkle of vulnerability, but rest assured, your people are out there. You just need to find them.

When I became a teacher-librarian, I was very fortunate to have a library technician who worked beside me. Jackie had been working in the library for a few years before I arrived and was a great source of institutional knowledge and technical skill that I would have been completely lost without. But more important than her understanding of the library was her friendship. She was the person I relied on when times got tough, as they inevitably do in the field of education. She taught me how to process books and how to navigate our library management system. And I was never quite able to match her speed at locating any picture book that a patron might need. Jackie and I no longer work together, but I'm so thankful that she was behind the circulation desk with me.

So, why am I bringing up a friend and former colleague? Because, dear reader, in case you haven't already, you need to find your Jackie.

"But what if I'm the only librarian in my school?" you ask. Here are my top 5 ways to broaden your community of school library people.

1. Does your board have a librarian's network? If they do, make sure you're on their list. If they don't, why not start one? Check out Jonelle St. Aubyn's article about the network she's developed within her family of schools.
2. Are there organizations that you can join? Shelagh Straughan's article outlines two organizations that have been extremely beneficial to her on her library journey thus far. What organizations can help you to advance your knowledge and experience that sense of community?
3. Have you thought about joining us at Super Conference? If you can swing it, do it. The next one takes place from January 29 – February 1, 2025, in downtown Toronto. I guarantee you'll find it engaging and inspiring. While you're there, connect with your OSLA Council members. We'd love to chat with you.
4. Are you excited about school library research? Get involved with Treasure Mountain Canada, a research symposium and think tank. Check out Anita Brooks Kirkland's article for more information.
5. How about social media? Follow us, *The Teaching Librarian*, on X, Instagram and BlueSky or check out the "Ontario Teacher-Librarians and School Library Professionals" Facebook group. You'll be sure to find a whole bunch of other library people there as well.

Whatever you do and whomever you meet, the support we receive from our library colleagues across the province and the world is invaluable. Cast your net wide, take some chances and you'll be surprised at how much support is out there.

Wishing you a wonderful back-to-school and year ahead. ■

Danny

Danny Neville  
Editor of *The Teaching Librarian Magazine*

# President's Report

**“Leading their schools in a myriad of ways, there’s no question that teacher-librarians and library-technicians across the province contribute to the success and well-being of their students and the school community as a whole.”**

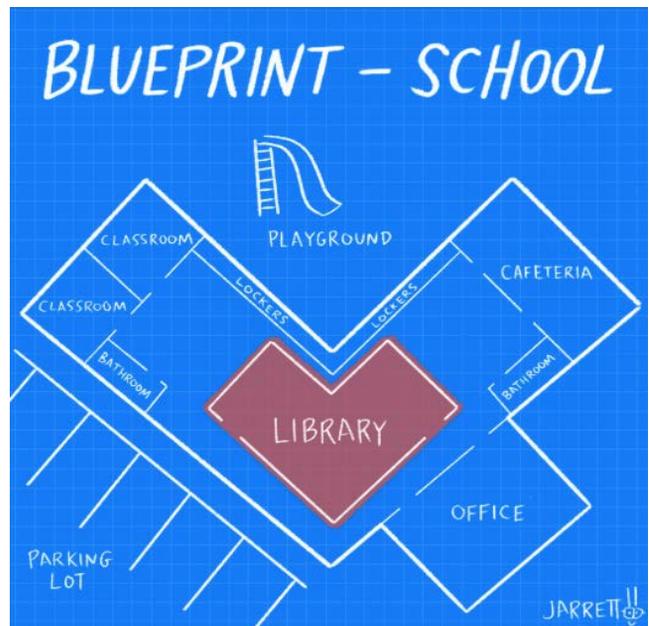
**W**here do I see community in our school libraries?

- There is community when readers gather to share about what they’ve read, excitedly chatting away about plots, characters, endings, and the twists they didn’t see coming.
- I see community when a school rallies to make the library learning commons a priority - both in policy and in practice.
- There is community when school library professionals reach out beyond the walls of their own school library learning commons to find the others in their neighbourhoods, Boards, and regions.

There is a long-running joke about what a group of librarians might be called... a “hush?” Maybe a “shhh?” Yet surely anyone who holds onto this tired trope has not stepped foot into a school library very recently. For all the ones I’ve had the pleasure to visit or teach in, there has been nothing quiet about them. Libraries, at least the ones I know, are buzzing. They are filled with students who are learning exciting new things - and that’s not something to “hush.” Libraries are busy places, in part because school library professionals often do so much to help create a sense of community within their schools. From STEM and robotics clubs, to book clubs and Book Fairs, from knitting and craft clubs to chess and D&D clubs, from coaching sports to leading choirs and plays... school library professionals do it all. Leading their schools in a myriad of ways, there’s no question that teacher-librarians and library-technicians across the province contribute to the success and well-being of their students and the school community as a whole.

It’s no surprise then, that in many schools, the library is the heart of the building. As author, illustrator and great ally of libraries and literacy, Jarrett Lerner, brilliantly illustrates, it can be seen as the centre around which all things can be connected. School communities who understand the potential within their library

learning commons, will centre their LLC in their strategic planning, their budget priorities, their School Improvement Planning, and their social justice and equity work. If the library learning commons is really the heart of a school community - it will be easy to see evidence throughout the school community both in policy and in practice.



The irony is that while the LLC may be the beating heart of a school community, the school library professional that keeps that heart beating may often feel siloed. Especially in the elementary panel, where we are often the lone person in the library, it’s easy to feel disconnected. Which is why finding #libraryland outside of your immediate school community is so important. Where are the other school library professionals in your neighbourhood? Board? Region? How can you connect with them?

...continued on page 9



## Wendy Burch Jones

...continued from page 8

There are lots of days when I am sitting in my little library office (which sits in the far corner of a big library space) and feel very alone. And yet, I am lucky enough to be part of the largest school board in Ontario with a thriving teacher-librarian network. We have a group of about thirty “seasoned” (I won’t say “old”) teacher-librarians who help run between 10-12 Network Meetings three times a year around the city. Some are virtual and some are in-person. And we chat. Gosh, do we love to chat! About everything and anything. Yes, about our schools and libraries. And of course about books... all the books, and about schedules, programming, those bleepity-bleep Chromebooks & iPads and other ancient technologies with which we’re dealing, the Forest of Reading, robots, beginning of year things, end of year things, circulation, data, collection development, policy changes, and what happened on the latest episode of *Bridgerton*. And the part I love most is that everyone walks away feeling validated, seen, heard, and knowing that they are very much not alone. In Toronto, following in the footsteps of many others around the province, we have also created a Library Committee with our union local - another great way to connect with each other, and find community in our advocacy work.

I appreciate that for many of you, whether because of numbers or geography, some of these may not be plausible. And for you I will say that the power of #libraryland on social media is fierce. Whether it’s one of the many groups on Facebook, threads on X/Twitter, stories on Instagram, or communities in BlueSky (where authors/illustrators/librarians have a powerful presence!) - social media is a great place to find each other. To be perfectly honest, most of my “great display ideas” have been inspired from social media (but don’t tell my principal - they think I’m brilliant!). And when it comes to advocacy, #libraryland can be a very loud community online.

Of course, being a part of the Ontario School Library Association is a pretty great community, too. As an OSLA member, there are lots of ways to connect with the Ontario School Library Association/Ontario Library Association community:

1. Take part in an OSLA workshop
2. Connect with OSLA on social media [add SM handles]
3. Come to OLA Super Conference (either in person or virtually)
4. Volunteer on an OLA committee
5. Volunteer for the Forest of Reading
6. Write an article for *The Teaching Librarian*
7. Nominate a colleague for an OSLA Award
8. Volunteer on OSLA Council by filling a vacant council seat



This fall, the OSLA will be inviting you to take part in the “Dear School Library” project. It is an opportunity to involve your school community in taking a moment to think about what makes your school library special. Why might they love their school library? Look for details on page 24. If you scan the QR code, you’ll find more information

on our website. We hope you’ll participate and share your “Dear School Library” story for an opportunity to win some great prizes! I can’t wait to see all the #SchoolLibraryJoy flood social media this October in recognition of Canadian School Library Day on Monday, October 21st. Now *\*that\** will be a great show of community. What a great way to get to know each other and see what we’re all up to in our LLCs!

Yours in community always,

Wendy Burch Jones  
2024 OSLA President

#SchoolLibraryJoy 📖



Mayor Olivia Chow and 2024 OSLA Council President Wendy Burch Jones at the Dear School Library booth during the Forest of Reading Festival

Photo credit: Flora Shen, Tour & Communication Advisor, Office of Mayor Olivia Chow

## Southwestern Region Members

# Origin Stories: Who We Are

### Dawn Telfer

I grew up on a farm in rural Southwestern Ontario. The closest grocery store was a 20-minute drive, and the nearest public library was in a larger town 30 minutes away. I learned to read before starting school, but my first memories of books and library visits sparked from the Amelia Bedelia series when I was in Grade 1. From September to June, the school library was where I found my reading materials. Our elementary school teacher-librarian was known for her short stature, gruff voice and insistence on quiet and order in the library, but I also remember getting to see her softer side as she would come find me when a new book in my current favourite series would arrive. Summers meant feeding my passion at the St. Thomas Public Library with the Summer Reading program. I waited with anticipation each week for our family trek to the library where we returned piles of books, selected new ones and added the number of books we had completed that week to the tracking charts for the summer, excited to see where we fit amongst all the other young readers.



Fast-forward 20+ years. As a French Immersion educator with TVDSB, visiting the school library with my Grade 2 class was an essential part of our week. Watching my students explore, find something new, sign out a loved book for the 12th week in a row - it connected to my hope of having every student see themselves as a reader and get excited to dive into a text. When the opportunity arose to move into the teacher-librarian role, I jumped! Being a teacher-librarian allowed me to share my passion for reading with both students and educators. Reading picture books to the school at our monthly assemblies was a highlight for many years.

Advocating for school libraries can take many forms. I'm thankful to have been involved in advocacy efforts, not only at the school level, but also during my term as Learning Technologies and Library Learning Commons Coordinator with TVDSB. It has also been a blessing to be involved with provincial advocacy efforts through the OLA Advocacy Committee, OSLA Council and as part of the Super Conference planning team. Being part of the OISE Course Facilitator team has also allowed me to support and learn alongside the many educators who continue to learn about being teacher-librarians through their AQ courses.

### A Home Away From Home Bridget Lavigne

My mother was a master storyteller. When I close my eyes, I can vividly picture being wrapped safely in her arms as we sat in a rocking chair next to a roaring Irish fire. Her stories never came from books. Rather, they were tales from her childhood. She told me of her adventures sneaking into the gardens of the wealthy and picking up apples that had fallen from the trees. She told me stories of basking sharks, row boats with missing oars and of dogs named

Danky. It is through these stories that I fell in love with words and was able to create images in my mind to accompany her stories.



When we arrived in Canada, I was seven years old. It was during this time that I fell in love with the written word. The first book I remember ever being read to me was *Charlotte's Web*. Ms. Gosso, my second-grade teacher, invited us to sit around her rocking chair as she captivated us with words from the novel. The first line, "Where's papa going with that ax?" is seared into my memory. It was because of my mother's gift of oral storytelling I could imagine myself standing right next to Fern.



...continued on page 11

...continued from page 10

It was difficult for me arriving in a new country and trying to make friends. I was sensitive like Fern and I didn't fit in because I had a strange accent. At times, I felt very isolated so, I turned to reading to ease the loneliness. Through reading I travelled to Giant's Country with Sophie and the BFG and I wandered all around Walnut Grove with Laura Ingalls.

Our school library became a sanctuary for me and I cherished our weekly trips down the hall. Apart from our librarian reading to us and showing films from the old projector, my favourite thing to do was to pull open the drawers of the old card catalogue to find my next book to read.

In middle school, I discovered the small public library close to my home. Looking back, it was nothing fancy; just two small portables propped up by cinder blocks with a set of wooden steps. To me, it was heaven. It was a space where I could escape the summer heat and read for hours uninterrupted.

High school introduced me to a multitude of characters including Ponyboy, Johnny and Dally. It introduced me to Catherine and Heathcliff, to Ralph, Jack, Piggy and a writer named Shakespeare.

Our high school library was a place to gather with friends at lunch and play games or study for upcoming tests. I spent countless lunch hours giggling with my friends and listening to the latest gossip. Even though we would get "the look" from Mrs. Wells when we laughed too loud, our library was always a welcoming and safe space.

I knew that when I received the privilege of taking over the role as our school's teacher-librarian, I wanted to create a space where all students and staff felt welcomed and safe just like I did as a child. I wanted them

to know that there was a space waiting for them when they needed a break from the demands of the world, and a space to help spark creativity. I wanted our students to see themselves in the books that are on our shelves while also having the opportunity to learn about other people's perspectives and lived experiences.

If you want to picture our little space, all you need to do is close your eyes and think of Meg Ryan's quaint bookshop from the film *You've Got Mail*. We don't have all the fancy touches like the larger Fox Bookstore from the film, but in my opinion, what we do have is just as important. We have a home for all students and staff.

I have worked consistently throughout my eight years as our school's teacher-librarian to create a space that feels like a warm embrace from your mother. I want it to be a soft spot to land when one needs a moment to just be their authentic self.

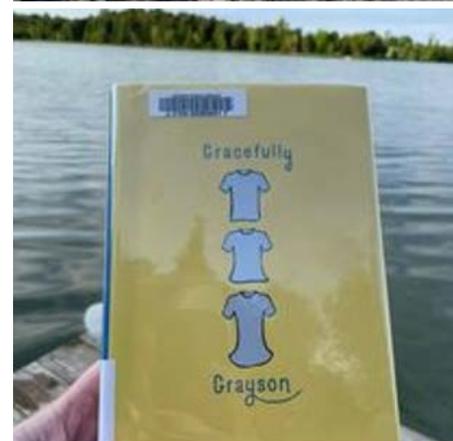
It always makes me smile when a visitor arrives in our space and comments on how special it is. To me, it doesn't matter how big and fancy a learning commons is, or how small and comfy a school library is. This space is the heart of any school and to be a caretaker of this heart is a gift that I treasure daily.



### Dawn Marie Deagle

I was raised by a single teen mother. Books, along with secret reading places in nature, saved me from the unpredictability of my early childhood. I was fortunate to grow

up along the Thames River and had close relationships with several trees. One had a nook that cradled me while I read next to the babbling river and immersed myself in many wonderful stories. Books and the sound of water continue to be a calming force in my life.

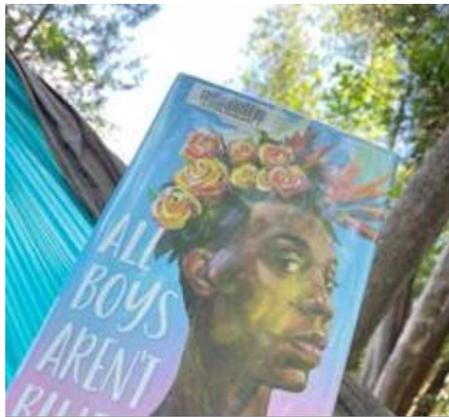


I am a reader who was blessed with an early facility for reading and the opportunity to learn from and appreciate the many characters in my books who served as mentors. These role models and their stories helped guide me along my journey as the first in my family to attain a post-secondary education. Growing up and through post-secondary education, school and public libraries presented me with endless literary mentors which allowed me

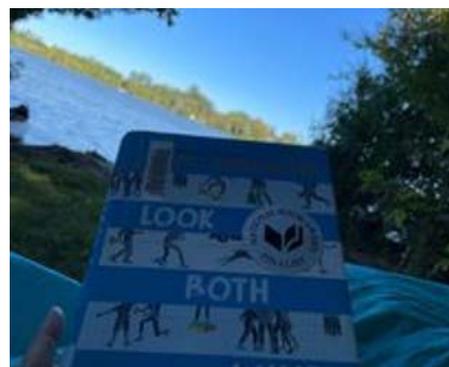
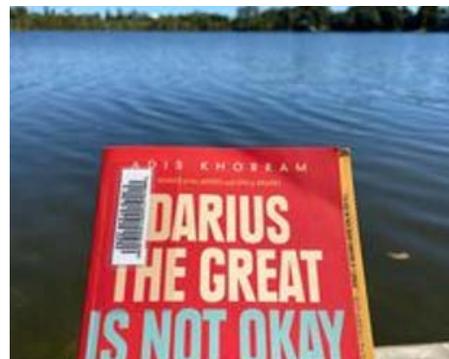
...continued on page 12

...continued from page 11

to see perspectives not available to me in my day-to-day life. The first novel I remember connecting with was *Harriet the Spy*. Harriet showed me how you could be independent and observe what was going on around you. *Archie* comics gave me a glimpse of how high school friendships might be and the importance of true-blue friends. *Anne of Green Gables* showed me that a girl with a good head on her shoulders could be successful despite not having a positive start in life, especially with a friend like Diana cheering you on. I grew up with Anne and Diana through all the sequels and they filled me with a comforting sense of hope for the future while finding happiness today.

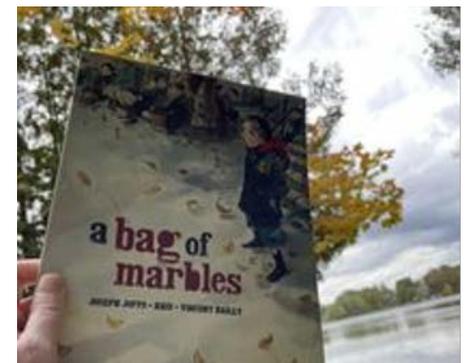
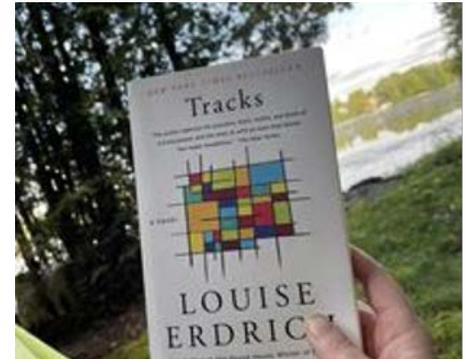


For the first half of my career, I taught in schools where the majority of my students were living in poverty. I intentionally read aloud novels with potential mentors for my students. Books like *Jakeman* and *No Fixed Address* allowed my students to see how others navigate similar family situations; others, like *Touching Spirit Bear* showed my students the importance of empathy and the role of nature in healing people through the most challenging life situations. Books like *The Barren Grounds* help students to understand how trauma can have effects persisting and compounding across generations. I have used reading response journals to be able to maintain ongoing conversations with my students in order to connect them with the “perfect” book. I believe that we are all readers—some just take longer to find the book that sparks their love of reading.



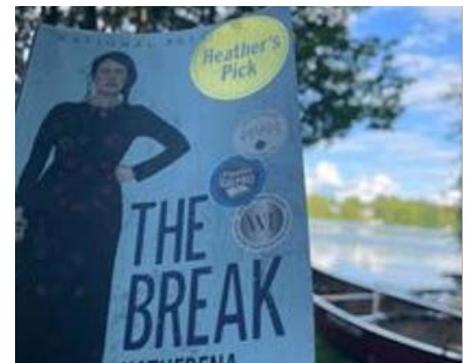
For these reasons, I feel honoured to have always had colleagues come to me for book recommendations or lesson ideas. When the opportunity to move into the role of Teacher-Librarian was presented to me 5 years ago, I was thrilled beyond words. I am so very fortunate to be able to be the bridge between every student and books that serve as mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors. My school population is diverse with over 30 languages spoken in the homes of our 300 students. I am working hard to get

books in our school library that represent as many of these languages as possible in hopes that students will be able to find inspiration within them. I can personally attest to the power of books in supporting children who are facing challenges.

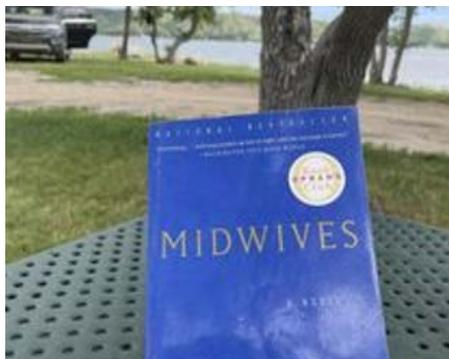


Together, the students and I have created a library that is a safe and welcoming space for all—it truly is the heart of our school. Students come to have a quiet moment, to work on a puzzle or school projects, to play a game, to have GSA meetings, to find a sunny spot to read, or even to observe the fish, frog, or lizard in their beautiful habitats. My heart is filled with endless joy when I see students settle into the space with a sense of happiness, peace, and belonging.

<https://youtu.be/3C15vntZuks?si=v9npeqA3hbJaHEI->



...continued on page 13



My favourite reading tree by the Thames is sadly no longer standing upright, but many happy memories were made here.

I often read in a hammock now and by water whenever I can!



**Libraries & Learning for Living and Loving Life**  
**Larry Farquharson, Dept. Head of Library, H. B. Beal Secondary School, TVDSB**

Before becoming a homemaker, my late mother Alice was an elementary teacher (in the one-room rural schoolhouse days) and dedicated life-long learner. My late father, John, valued and supported education, though his primary focus was the family farm.

Growing up, we were surrounded with books and reading, and the farm provided a fertile classroom to explore and learn. But as a rural family, regularly accessing a local library was not possible. Fortunately, the Middlesex County Library had an outreach program to borrow books by

mail. The librarians would choose material appropriate for our ages, and we would receive a package stuffed with books with a pre-paid return label. It was always a surprise to see what adventures would await in that green bag!

These combined elements established a foundation for the love of reading and learning, and perhaps logically contributed to my pursuing the teaching profession.

I began my career as an occasional itinerant elementary music teacher in a county school board. After a few years, I accepted a full-time position in a large urban secondary school teaching information technology and business. I acquired my first computer, a TRS-80 Pocket Computer, in high school. For me a PC was a tool to create and produce something. My computing proficiency got me that job!

This was just as the Internet and access to vast amounts of information at your fingertips was emerging. I held this teaching position for 11 years, which included six years as “Site Admin,” with responsibility for selecting, deploying and managing the instructional IT – and the people using and learning it!

It became clear that with PCs, networks and the overload of information, there was a desperate need for students (and teachers) to develop the critical technical and filtering skills and knowledge for appropriately accessing digital information in a meaningful way. The Information Age of books, bits and bytes had launched, and we needed to properly equip students to become information-savvy learners who knew what they needed and where to find it.

My priority became explicitly teaching research and discernment strategies for developing robust information literacy skills and situational awareness. I set my sights on what would be the best pathway to achieve that: teacher-librarian. I was assigned a couple of library lines. Lift off!

The board had an excellent advocacy presence among TLs and recognized the importance of supporting and staffing school libraries. We are indebted to

these visionaries for establishing such a necessary foundation that, for the most part, continues to this day. We are one of the few boards in Ontario still maintaining the teacher-librarian role in both elementary and secondary schools. I completed the Librarianship Specialist, which only solidified my enthusiasm and commitment to pursuing the role and the exciting landscape of information in all its forms and guises, and with all its pitfalls and foibles.

When I became a Department Head of Library, it was at a small vocational school with an amazing array of programs and an equally amazing array of student characters! What an exceptional opportunity for skill-building...mine! I learned a lot in those few years.

Regrettably, the school closed, and after an unusual mid-career journey traversing four schools in four years, I landed at a very large school with two full-time teacher-librarians. Bazinga!

My newly-minted TL colleague (an experienced business and technology teacher) and I set to work to establish the library as our classroom and a co-instructional learning destination with a focus on productive purpose and information literacy at the core. We encountered some challenges and unexpected detours but were committed to establishing a rigorous research mindset rooted in accessing and filtering information that is relevant, credible, authoritative, accurate and trustworthy, all while navigating the increasingly diverse needs and dynamics endemic to the contemporary education environment.

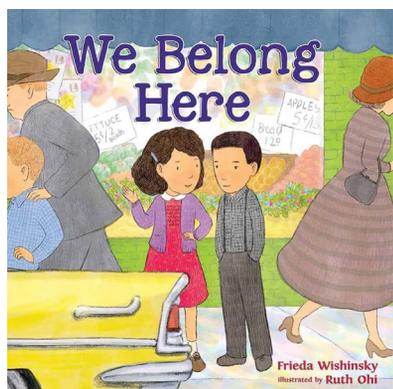
As we confront an ever-shifting and challenging information and education landscape, it is vital that qualified school library professionals are fostered, maintained and supported – and funded – to ensure we are truly building each student’s tomorrow every day, for life-long learning, achievement, personal fulfilment and becoming a valued and informed member of society.

I am honoured and privileged to have the opportunity to contribute. ■

# Meet the Authors Frieda Wishinsky, Lindsay Zier-Vogel and Michelle Mulder

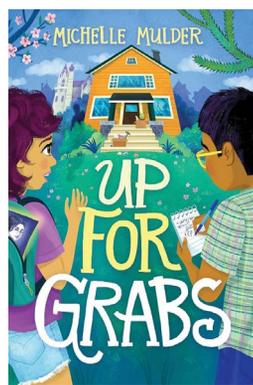
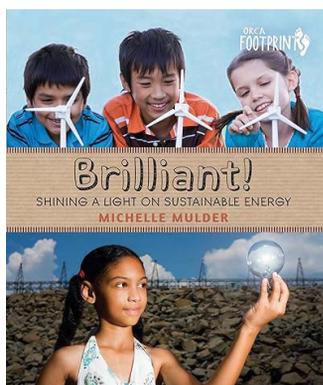
**W**ith this year's first issue of *The Teaching Librarian* focusing on the theme of Community @ Your Library, it seemed fitting to interview a "community of authors," and who better than three Canadian authors whose works embrace the concept of community in different but equally fascinating ways?

Frieda Wishinsky's experience as a special education teacher shows in her writing. She published her first book in 1990 and has gone on to publish over 80 more...and counting! She is often found traveling from Toronto to communities

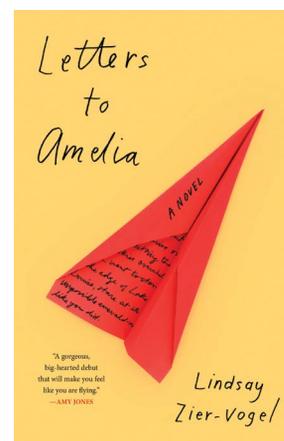


near and far, and has a keen eye for her surroundings, sharing her observations of people and places in photographs and in stories. A nature lover with a passion for history, family and relationships, Frieda's latest book about finding community is *We Belong Here*, illustrated by Ruth Ohi.

Michelle Mulder traveled extensively once they started university, and perhaps those adventures are where they developed their love of placemaking. Michelle has written a number of middle grade nonfiction books in the *Orca Footprints* series, all exploring different ways we can protect the Earth and celebrate its communities. Their latest novel, *Up for Grabs*, features the community of Victoria as an integral part of the story, and its launch encouraged readers to explore their own communities in some very creative ways.



Lindsay Zier-Vogel is an artist, teacher, author and grant-writer. She is also the creator of *The Love Lettering Project*, a community engagement project which began in 2004 and has been celebrated in over 350 events around the world. In 2021, Lindsay's novel *Letters to Amelia* came out, and she further celebrated her love of letters as a way to celebrate community with the release of her picture book, *Dear Street*, in 2023.



**TingL:** You've all written works that focus on "community," both literally and as a concept. Michelle, where did that inspiration start for you?

Michelle: Growing up in suburban Vancouver, I played with

...continued on page 15

## Martha Brack Martin

...continued from page 14

the other kids on our street, and our families sometimes had supper together, but we could go weeks without seeing each other, too. When I moved into a dorm in university, I shared a bathroom and a living room with nineteen other people. We ate together, did homework together, lent each other things, shared in celebrations and propped each other up when necessary. I had a sense of belonging like never before, and ever since, everywhere I've lived, I've built relationships with my neighbours. A few months ago, my family moved to Salt Spring Island, BC, and these days, we often arrive home to a bag of walnuts, a bouquet of flowers, or an invitation to tea. This is my kind of place!

**That sounds wonderful! It's nice to know places like that still exist. Lindsay, your *Love Lettering Project* and *Dear Street* both ask readers to appreciate their communities and share the love. Why is that so important to you?**

Lindsay: It's really easy to focus on what doesn't work in a community, and noticing these things matters. It's not a bad thing. Circumstances won't change unless they're talked about, especially to elected officials. And it's equally important to focus on what works in a community—the joyful, wonderful things—the free swimming pools, a local library, a friendly neighbour. Shifting one's perspective from what doesn't work to what does work is a really powerful shift, because as soon as you notice one thing that works in your community, you'll often notice another. It's important to see what works so we can protect and celebrate and advocate for our communities.

**Frieda, where do you think your passion for writing about “community” originated?**

Frieda: For me, community is about trust, kindness and caring. I am an only child, so I had no siblings to play or fight with or love. And because of World War Two, I have few relatives. Most of my family were killed in the war. All of this left me with a sense of loss. I realized as a child that it didn't matter what religion that individual grew up with, what place they called home or what their ethnic background was. What mattered was who they were. Were they kind, intelligent, supportive, empathic?

Over the years and in different situations I've developed a good sense of who I can connect with, who I'd like to become friends with and who I'd like to make part of my community. I think that the combination of those factors is where my desire for community started.

**Lindsay, as a child, were you aware of belonging to a community?**

Lindsay: I didn't have a strong geographical community as a kid. We lived on the corner lot of a busy street. I was bussed to school and there weren't kids my age nearby. It was something I always wanted. After I finished grad school, I lived in the Annex neighbourhood in Toronto and had my closest friends across the hall, across the street, down the street and a street over. I had the physical community I'd always wanted. I've cultivated that now as an adult with my own kids. My *Love Lettering Project* was born from this desire to connect with the physical places we share and celebrate placemaking and community-building.

**Michelle, placemaking is really important to you, too. Do you think we are more or less aware of being part of a community today?**

Michelle: I think community means something very different to us today in North America than it did to people here a hundred years ago. Back then, people interacted regularly with neighbours because, without cars, they spent most of their time in their neighbourhoods. These days, people might not know their neighbours, and community can mean the people at school, online gaming friends, or a whole range of people living in other parts of the planet. For minorities like LGBTQ2IA+, online communities can literally save lives. For others, online communities sometimes leave members feeling more isolated than before. In *Up for Grabs*, I tried to feature in-person community, hoping to spark curiosity about the people in the reader's own neighbourhood. Who knows what kinds of fascinating characters, new friends, life experiences and stories are living right down the street?

**Well, we all certainly had a chance to ponder our in-person neighbourhoods when the Covid-19 Pandemic kept us isolated in our homes, didn't we? How do**

...continued on page 16

...continued from page 15

**you think the Pandemic affected the way we view the concept of community?**

Lindsay: Some of my favourite memories from that terrifying, bewildering time include standing on the sidewalk, three sidewalk squares apart from my neighbours, talking about our days. Our worlds had all shrunk so much, and any connection to someone outside my immediate family was such a lifeline. My community wasn't through my work as a writer or an arts worker, or through my kids' school, or even really my extended family. My community became my immediate neighbours—sewing masks for each other and sharing rolls of toilet paper and tips on where to buy rubbing alcohol.

I did so much more exploring of my immediate neighbourhood during those days and finding ways to connect with people—porch visits, and backyard hangs, even in the winter. We were all so desperate to connect and had to use outdoor spaces to do this.

**Thank goodness we had outdoor spaces to visit! I mean, I appreciated them as an adult, but as a teacher I knew they were even more important for the kids who were trapped in houses all day.**

Frieda: Absolutely.

**Since we are talking about kids, do you believe that children are able to forge relationships and build community – or appreciate it – more easily than adults?**

Frieda: My six-year-old granddaughter likes her friends for who they are. She doesn't care about their colour, gender or where they come from. Kids and kids' books can teach us all a lot about the power and beauty of friendship and community.

Michelle: I think kids naturally take an interest in the world around them. They ask good questions, and - not yet able to drive - they might spend more time walking or playing outside, making it easier to meet neighbours.

Lindsay: I think children's worlds, though expansive, are also smaller in comparison to adults'. If I ask a kid what they love about their neighbourhood, they'll say "the park" or "the library" or "the swimming pool." They don't know the

specific name, it's THE park. It's THE library. They don't need to know the name, or the branch. It's just theirs. Their park. Their pool. Their library. I love that so much.

**Is this why community plays such a big role in children's fiction?**

Michelle: For me, that's where the adventure is! I remember growing up feeling that my family was quite predictable. Other families were a whole new world, though. They ate different foods, listened to different music, and watched different things on TV. Parents did different jobs and they talked about different things at the supper table. All of these differences made for very interesting stories and new ways of seeing the world.

**Frieda, as a child, how did books shape your appreciation of community?**

Frieda: Books themselves *gave* me a community. I was an avid reader and I found "community" through the characters I met in stories. I found kindred spirits in fiction and in non-fiction. I connected to characters who lived different lives than my own but who were caring, kind, daring, curious and smart.

**Has making a career as a children's author given you another community?**

Frieda: One of the best parts of my writing career is the sense of community in the kids' book world. Many people who are attracted to writing or illustrating for kids are kind, caring, smart and supportive. Maybe that's because those of us who write for kids remember what it felt like to be a kid. Many of us recall the pain of being an outsider. Many of us have memories of being bullied because we were different, shy, vulnerable or we came from somewhere else.

**What did belonging to a community do for you, as a child? Who wants to answer that?**

Michelle: I will. My parents weren't into gardening, but our next-door neighbours were. I clearly remember going over to their house one warm day, while they were weeding a vegetable bed, and announcing that I really, *really* liked carrots. Carol pulled a tiny one out of the ground, handed it to me, and showed me how to rub the dirt off with my fingers.

...continued on page 17

...continued from page 16

Popping it into my mouth was a whole, unimaginable flavour experience, and just like that, I knew I wanted to have a garden when I grew up. Being part of a community gave me both other kids to play with and different adults to learn from. It showed me more of the many, many ways of being in the world.

**There are a number of communities today that seem to be under attack. How can we stay hopeful in a world where wars and hatred seek to weaken, or even destroy, marginalized – and even nonmarginalized – communities?**

Michelle: Talking to each other - and learning to see each other as human beings first - is one of the most powerful ways to combat prejudice, I think. Online, we can find ourselves in silos of people who all think similarly. Without interacting face-to-face in real time, it can be easier to vilify people who represent “difference.” One of my favourite ideas for bringing together people of different backgrounds is the Human Library Project: a handful of volunteers from all walks of life are available so that participants from the public can ask about their life experiences in private, scheduled interviews. These conversations can create connections and put a human face on people who were previously just “others.” In these times when many communities are under attack, I think the most important thing we can do is to remember our shared humanity and to approach difference with curiosity. Conversation and genuine interest are powerful tools for peace.

Frieda: Attacking outsiders or marginalized communities isn't new. It's happened through the centuries. Stories about the past and present, fiction and narrative nonfiction, help us see people as individuals, worthy of respect. Books have been, and continue to be, an important tool in creating empathy and hope.

**Maybe that's part of why libraries are often viewed as sanctuaries for those who are seeking community. It's true for public libraries AND school libraries. How can library staff nurture that sense of community in a time of reduced funding, staff cutbacks and book challenges?**

Lindsay: Libraries do so, so much for building community—

they are inherently a safe, welcoming space, and featured displays with books from different communities allow people, including kids, to see themselves reflected and celebrated.

Michelle: For me, community is all about having a sense of belonging and being valued. The library I visited weekly as a child was in a low-ceilinged basement with fluorescent lighting and chipped linoleum floors. The book collection wasn't huge, but the librarian always seemed happy to see me, and often she'd put aside a book or two that she thought I'd enjoy. Not only did I feel seen and welcomed, I then went home and saw myself in those books. That's community at its finest! I offer this anecdote, not in any way to diminish the frustration of reduced funding, staff cutbacks and book challenges, but to say that for me as a young person, a smile of recognition and a few book recommendations were far more powerful than library staff might ever have realized. Especially when times are tough, I think it's crucial to remember the power of truly seeing others and making them feel welcome in the simplest of ways.

**As a teacher-librarian, that feeling of being welcome and seen was always my wish for the students who visited the library. Frieda, as an author, what's your wish for the children who read your books?**

Frieda: I wish more kids had real connections and face-to-face encounters. I wish that every kid could find a community of friends who give them a sense of comfort and belonging. Discussing ideas or experiences with friends helps build confidence and gives us strength to face the tough things we all encounter. And community is also fun. There's nothing like sharing laughs with a friend.

**So true. Thanks, “Team Community” for sharing your thoughts with me today. I**

---

**Some answers were edited for brevity. To learn more about these wonderful authors, visit their websites here:**

<https://friedawishinsky.com/index.html>

<https://www.michellemulder.com/>

<https://lindsayziervogel.com/>

# Shelf Awareness

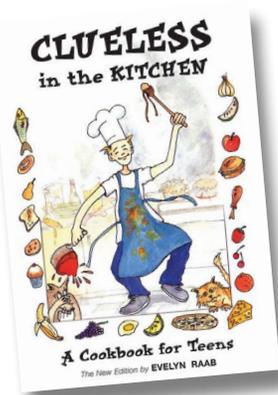
**H**ey all! Welcome back. I am more than a little excited about this issue's theme of Community @ Your Library. Building community spaces is my passion and I know I share that with many of you. So, let's dive into some titles that may help you do that, as you gather with new and familiar faces in your library learning commons spaces.

I decided to go a little outside the box on this topic and start with some non-fiction titles. For me, building community in a library or makerspace has often meant inviting groups who want to create something together. Whether it's food, social change or slow-stitching, teens are often looking for ways to be in community while creating. I'm offering suggestions here, but they are only a jumping off point. Let your community help you figure out what is going to serve them best.

## *Clueless in the Kitchen*

**Evelyn Raab (George Walker, illustrator)**

Firefly Books, 1998 (or Key Porter 2011)



I'm going into the wayback files for this one, because it is an oldie but a goodie. Many people I know have been using this since its original publication (it's on something like its 13th printing) and swear by it. It's entertaining, a little sarcastic and includes important tips like how to set up a kitchen cheaply and how to clean out a kitchen drain. This is not where you're going to learn to make the newest TikTok trend, but it might help you with the skills you'll need to branch out from that video. It doesn't have gorgeous pictures of what you're making,

which is a downfall, but if food turns out well, why not have your cooking group create a video of their success?

Pair this with:

## *The AntiRacist Kitchen*

**Nadia L. Hohn**

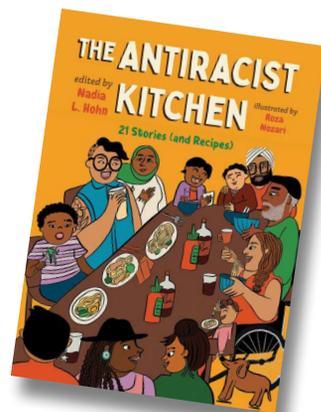
Orca, 2023

There is a sad story to go with this amazing book. I ended up being the last person in line to get it signed by Nadia at the OLA Super Conference in January. Unexpectedly, another conference attendee unwittingly entered the line, and by the time it got to me, there were no more signing copies! And then, SK Ali, who has a story in the book, wandered by and signed my friend's copies! (See, you need to go to OLA - free books, and friends, and getting things signed!)

Back on topic! This is a beautiful book. It's geared to a middle-grade audience but could be a jumping off point for teen discussions around food and community as well. My hope is that students might

be willing to share recipes from their own homes and cultures as well. This would also allow for possibilities like cooking foods from different cultures for a fundraising event. There are lots of opportunities with this book to talk about how food can bring us together.

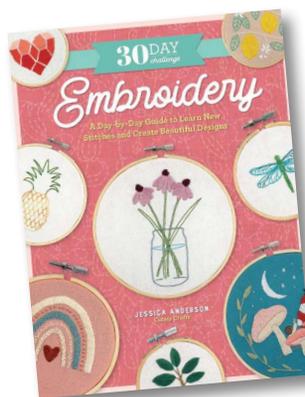
In the makerspace I operate at the Trent School of Education, gathering to slow stitch (look it up - it's the idea of freeform stitching in whatever way makes you happy) or knit or bead or crochet or embroider has been a popular draw. I am a beginning stitcher myself and have found these books helpful.



## *30 Day Challenge Embroidery*

**Jessica Anderson,**

Quarry Books, 2024



This is a terrific starting point for beginning stitchers. The book is ideally organized. Each project uses one new stitch, and your skills build as you move through the book. The patterns are simple and engaging, and there are downloads to let you easily make copies of the patterns for transfer to different media (jean jacket stitching, anyone?). Embroidery is not a high-cost activity to bring into your space. Thread can be thrifted (or donated, if you put a call out), needles are not super-expensive and hoops can be bought

in bulk from your choice of retailer. The smaller 3-4" hoops are a great place to start. I was amazed at what beginning stitchers started to be able to create once they got started. Projects created with this book could be used for fundraisers, or students could use them to subtly (or not so) add an accent to a piece of clothing that speaks their mind.

## *Visible Mending*

**Arounna Khounnoraj**

Quadrille Press, 2020

If the young adults you are working with are environmentalists at heart, having this book (or Katrina Rodabaugh's *Mending Matters*) on hand can be a game changer. The focus of the visible mending movement is around zero-waste textile usage. So, if you have a tear in that favourite pair of jeans, instead of pitching them, learn how to repair them in a visible way. This book looks at basic mending techniques, as well as ways to cover a stain or a tear with

...continued on page 19



embroidery (my personal current favourite way to extend the lifespan of my clothing) and introduces the reader to why they might want to do this. Imagine the impact you could have by teaching a simple skill like sewing on a button or repairing a torn sleeve, and then having your novice sewists teach others. Clothing waste and fast fashion are a massive worldwide issue and a fabric “repair café” gathering could help your students approach

it with hope, rather than despair. Again, because these techniques are done by hand - needles, hoops, threads and a variety of scrap fabrics are really all you need (and if you put out a call for fabric scraps, be prepared, because you will be amazed at what shows up). Both the authors mentioned here have a strong Instagram presence as well, and Khounnoraj (who is @bookhou on Instagram) regularly shows her process as she’s doing repairs.

One upcoming book that is worth picking up if you have budding “craftivists” in your space is Shannon Downey’s (@BadAssCrossStitch on Insta) amazing *Let’s Move the Needle* (Storey, October 2024). It’s a lot of different things - a history of craft as protest, a guide to identifying the issues that are really important to you and a way to think about using ‘making’ to change the world. It’s not a how-to guide for the things you want to make. It’s a how-to guide for how to use those things, and your passion for making them, to build a better community.

**What will your students enjoy?**

All of these texts are invitational. The whole idea is bringing people together to learn something new. I have been amazed over the past year at how easily people start to chat, make connections and build community once they have a project in their hands, or once they are working on something collaboratively. It’s as though the making allows some of their barriers to come down. I’ve focused on cooking and stitching here, but anything works. Got gamers? Get someone in to start teaching them D&D basics and pick up a basic set of the player’s guides. Knitters and crocheters? There’s a wealth of resources out there (I would be hard pressed to suggest just one). Find people in your community who can share their expertise with your teens, then pick up some complimentary print resources. You’ll be amazed at what you can find.

I didn’t want to leave you completely without a novel suggestion, and this author is both incredibly proud of the community she comes from and uses the idea of community (both found and where you’re from) as the heart of her writing.

**Into the Bright Open**

**Cherie Dimaline**

Feiwel and Friends, September 2023

Cherie Dimaline is familiar to most of us as the blockbuster author of *The Marrow Thieves*. She is Georgian Bay Metis and

sets much of her writing in those communities. She has talked in interviews about growing up in a community of strong women, and those women making it clear to her that her responsibility was to share the stories of her community. In *The Marrow Thieves*, she builds a story of a community formed by accident, travellers bound together by common purpose, and creates a powerful testament to the way our communities can hold us up.

In her newest novel, *Into the Bright Open*, Dimaline has gone back to the community she is from, and back to its history. This novel is a riff on Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*, but it is set in a turn of the century town on Georgian Bay (most likely Penetanguishene). That setting allows Dimaline to directly address themes of racism in the conflict between the white townsfolk and the Indigenous community that has been there much longer than the town.



When 15-year-old Mary is orphaned and forced to move from her wealthy status in Toronto to her uncle’s home on the Bay, she is utterly unprepared. Having been raised privileged and largely ignored by her parents, she has no idea what to do with the friendship offered to her by the members of her uncle’s staff. Both he and his “evil stepmother” wife are absent through parts of Mary’s time in the house. Mary, to her surprise, finds a group of people and a place that she cares deeply about, including a romance with a young Metis woman, and an opportunity to restore the beauty of a hidden garden on her uncle’s property. The reader gets to experience Mary figuring out who she is as she also works to solve the mystery of what’s going on with her cousin, hidden away in the attic. Lots of fun fairy-tale-ish tropes here that Dimaline enjoys turning on their heads.

**What will your students enjoy?**

The atmosphere. This is a lush, detailed rendering of a historical landscape that many of us don’t know much about. The romance will capture many of your readers, as will the strong-willed characters. If you have any students who are fans of the original *The Secret Garden*, it would be interesting to see what they make of this rendering. It’s also part of a series of queer re-imaginings of classics, so it would make a great “If you like this, try this” jumping off point.

It’s September, all. That means that we’re trying to do all the things, while still trying to grab those last days of sunshine and long walks. I hope that some of the suggestions here will guide you to community yourself - either with your student readers or with your colleagues and friends. Maybe it’s you who needs a gathering to talk about books or make something with your hands. I wish you community this fall. We are nothing without it, and so very much stronger with it. ■

# Announcing TMC8! Strengthening Foundations for School Library Learning Commons in Canada

Canadian School Libraries (CSL) is pleased to announce that the eighth biennial TMC Symposium (TMC8) will take place in Toronto, Ontario on Friday, January 31 and Saturday, February 1, 2025. The symposium is presented in partnership with the Ontario Library Association (OLA), Ontario School Library Association (OSLA), and The Association of Library Consultants of Ontario (TALCO). Full information regarding rates and registration will be available on the TMC website (<https://tmc.canadianschoollibraries.ca/>).

## What is TMC?

Treasure Mountain Canada is a participatory learning experience designed to bring researchers and practitioners together to discuss and debate current Canadian research and scholarly writing which has an impact on the role of school libraries vis-à-vis educational strategy and transformation. Papers and work from previous TMC experiences are archived for viewing and study in the Canadian School Libraries Research Archive (<https://researcharchive.canadianschoollibraries.ca/>).

## TMC History: Transforming Research to Action

**TMC1** – The first Treasure Mountain Canada, held in Edmonton in 2010, focused on *Transforming Canadian School Libraries to Meet the Needs of 21st Century Learners*.

**TMC2** – In Ottawa 2012, the focus became *Learning for the Future: Working Towards Revised National Standards for School Libraries in Canada*.

**TMC3** – In Victoria 2014, the focus was the launch of *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada* (<https://ilsop.canadianschoollibraries.ca/>).

**TMC4** – In Toronto 2016, in partnership with the Ontario Library Association (OLA) and Ontario School Library Association (OSLA), the symposium focused on deeper implementation of *Leading Learning*, and evidence that the standards are making an impact on teaching and learning in Canada. Discussions around the future of a national school library voice led to a call for action to create a new national presence for school libraries in Canada, thus fostering the beginnings of CSL.

**TMC5** – In Winnipeg 2017, in partnership with Manitoba School Library Association (MSLA) SAGE Conference, the theme was *Culturally Relevant and Responsive School Library Learning Commons*. The work of TMC5 led to a CSL project to help schools build *Culturally*

*Relevant and Responsive School Library Learning Commons* (<https://www.canadianschoollibraries.ca/relevant-responsive/>).

**TMC6** – In Toronto 2020, the symposium was developed in partnership with the Ontario Library Association (OLA), the OLA Super Conference, the Ontario School Library Association (OSLA) and The Association of Library Consultants and Coordinators of Ontario (TALCO). The theme of *Participatory Learning in the Library Learning Commons* kick-started discussions around diversity audits and building inclusive collections. This work culminated in the creation of the *CSL Collection Diversity Toolkit* (<https://www.canadianschoollibraries.ca/collection-diversity-toolkit/>).

**TMC7** – In New Westminster, British Columbia in partnership with British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association (BCTLA), with the theme, *Post-Pandemic Library Learning Commons: From Crisis to Invention*. The TMC7 call to action, the review and updating of *Leading Learning Standards of Practice* themes, has been completed. An unexpected spin-off from the update was the need to address foundational guidelines for successful school libraries. Consequently, Canadian School Libraries has developed and published a new document, *Foundations for School Library Learning Commons in Canada: A Framework for Success* (<https://www.canadianschoollibraries.ca/foundations-frameworks/>). Work to develop a new resource to support Digital and Media Literacy in the LLC is in process.

## Why should you participate in TMC8?

We recognize the outstanding contributions so many of you are making to teaching and learning in Canada. Your work needs to be recognized by the greater education community – and documented, so that it can become part of the debate. The most compelling innovations in K-12 libraries come from you, the professionals in the schools. TMC offers you a great opportunity to explore your own practice more deeply, answering key questions through action research, and telling the story so that others can benefit from your experience. CSL is here to support the process with targeted resources, including the CSL Research Toolkit, which removes the intimidation factor from the idea of conducting research!

## What is the focus of TMC8 Call for Papers?

CSL recently published a new document, *Foundations for School Library Learning Commons in Canada: A Framework for Success* (<https://www.canadianschoollibraries.ca/foundations-frameworks/>). This guideline establishes strong policy, robust funding, and a commitment to equity of access as foundations for the LLC and the

...continued on page 21

# TMC8 Planning Committee

...continued from page 20

successful implementation of CSL standards of practice document, *Leading Learning: Standards of Practice for School Library Learning Commons in Canada* (<https://llsop.canadianschoollibraries.ca/>). We are inviting you to study the new support document, explore the foundations and frameworks and considering your own practice, decide on a sub-theme you would like to focus on for your own research. We suggest either teacher action research and/or academic research related to the theme and strands.

## TMC8 Theme: Foundations for School Library Learning Commons in Canada: A Framework for Success

**NOTE:** In your research, plan to explore your focused sub-theme issue through the lenses of strong policy, robust funding and equity of access.

**How might you apply a sub-theme to focus your research?  
Where can you find more help?**

TMC8 Sub-Themes	Possible Topics	Focus Questions to Consider
Physical and Virtual LLC Spaces	<p><b>Differentiated Learning Spaces</b></p> <p><b>Participatory Learning</b></p> <p><b>Virtual Participatory Learning Spaces</b></p>	<p>How might we transform LLC physical spaces to drive participatory learning?</p> <p>How might we work towards a school-wide culture of participatory learning?</p> <p>How might we assist schools with virtual participatory spaces for student portfolios and ongoing learning?</p> <p>How might we encourage participatory learning outside the timetable?</p>
Technological Infrastructures	<p><b>BYOD</b></p> <p><b>Special Needs</b></p> <p><b>Supporting Communication and Creativity</b></p>	<p>How might technology and network infrastructure support flexible learning, both independent and collaborative, in the LLC?</p> <p>How might we use technology for participatory learning?</p> <p>How might we ensure a balance between protecting student data (privacy) and the need to offer apps that are familiar?</p> <p>How might we balance technological security needs and apps that need permissions to read student files in order to work? (e.g. Text to Speech)</p> <p>How might we design learning opportunities that can use technology to enhance communication for students who need it?</p>

...continued on page 22

...continued from page 21

<p><b>Human Resources</b></p>	<p><b>Staffing Models</b></p> <p><b>Collaboration</b></p> <p><b>Community Partnerships</b></p>	<p>How might we work together with teachers to maximize the potential of the LLC for teaching and learning?</p> <p>How might we support professional development within families of schools? Districts? Beyond?</p> <p>How might we provide mentorship in an interconnected world?</p>
<p><b>Accessibility</b></p>	<p><b>Universal Design for Learning</b></p> <p><b>Audiobooks/eBooks</b></p> <p><b>Special Needs Learners</b></p>	<p>How might we apply universal design in the LLC?</p> <p>How might we bring audiobooks/eBooks into libraries in meaningful ways?</p> <p>How might we utilize LLC resources, technologies and spaces to deliver and support learning for all?</p>
<p><b>Ethical Standards</b></p>	<p><b>Freedom to Read</b></p> <p><b>Collection Audits</b></p> <p><b>LLC Volunteers</b></p> <p><b>Protecting Privacy</b></p>	<p>How might we evaluate resources and understand how our biases affect our viewpoint?</p> <p>How might we ensure that library volunteers are aware of and abide by ethical standards?</p> <p>How might we ensure that collection management and circulation routines do not infringe on equity of access?</p> <p>How might we protect student privacy and confidentiality of records, supporting their freedom to read and explore ideas?</p>
<p><b>LLC Management</b></p>	<p><b>Flexible Scheduling</b></p> <p><b>Collection Development and Management</b></p> <p><b>Circulation Routines and Expectations</b></p>	<p>How might we build flexible time into a schedule?</p> <p>How might we manage flexibility within an inflexible schedule?</p> <p>How might we manage the collection to maximize appeal and usefulness?</p> <p>How might we ensure that routines for managing overdues and lost items do not infringe on equity of access?</p> <p>How might we ensure that access to the virtual library and licensed online databases is as barrier-free as possible, from school and from home?</p>

...continued on page 23

...continued from page 22

<b>A Culture of Growth</b>	<b>Approaches to Research and Inquiry</b>	How might we ensure the emotional, physical, mental and academic safety of students within the LLC?
	<b>Technology for Learning</b>	
	<b>Independent Reading</b>	How might students use assessment and metacognitive strategies in the LLC to improve their learning?
	<b>Collaborative Learning</b>	
	<b>Supporting Student Growth</b>	How might we design learning experiences that offer students real-world relevance?
<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Documenting Learning</b>	How might we help students and staff know what learning is going on in our space and how they can get involved?
	<b>Cycle of Accountability</b>	
	<b>Marketing and Advocacy</b>	How might we design for engagement?
	<b>Patron Accountability</b>	How might we 'sell' the Library within your school? To staff? To Students? To administrators?  How might we help students/patrons hold us accountable to provide a great LLC?

**CSL Research Archive** (<https://researcharchive.canadianschoollibraries.ca/>)

**CSL Research Toolkit** (<https://www.canadianschoollibraries.ca/research-toolkit/>)

**TMC8 Resources to Get you Thinking** (<https://tmc.canadianschoollibraries.ca/tmc8-resources-to-get-you-thinking/>)

### How can you participate in TMC8?

We need everyone's voice at the table. There are many ways you can contribute your thoughts, ideas and questions as we work together to explore *Foundations for School Library Learning Commons in Canada: A Framework for Success*

- Contribute a paper
- Follow and participate in the TMC Canada Blog in the weeks leading up to the symposium
- Study and respond to TMC8 papers
- Share more ideas on Twitter and tag #TMC Canada2025
- Attend the Ontario Library Association Super Conference from January 29 to February 1, 2025
- Register for the symposium and add your voice in person (watch for registration details)

**You can find everything you need to know on the TMC8 Call for Papers webpage:** <https://tmc.canadianschoollibraries.ca/tmc8-call-for-papers/>

**TMC8 Planning Committee:** Carol Koechlin, CSL Board and TMC Co-Founder, Anita Brooks Kirkland, CSL Chair, Melanie Mulcaster, CSL Board, Joseph Jeffery, CSL Vice-Chair, Jonelle St. Aubyn, CSL Representative, Wendy Burch-Jones, OSLA Representative, Richard Reid, OSLA Super Conference Planner, Kate Johnson-McGregor, TALCO Representative. ■

Wendy Burch Jones

# Dear School Library - We Love You!

## Dear School Library at the Forest of Reading Festival

Oh! The #SchoolLibraryJoy that radiated from our “Dear School Library” project at the Forest of Reading Festival in May was palpable. Readers were smiling from ear-to-ear as they wrote meaningful, often heartfelt messages on these little pink hearts.

Inspired by Lindsay Zier-Vogel’s 2024 Blue Spruce Honour Book “*Dear Street*” and her Love Lettering Project, the Ontario School Library Association (OSLA) has embarked on a “Dear School Library” project. At the Festival, we asked readers to share their thoughts about their school libraries and the results were incredible.

Festival attendees were asked to consider the following prompts:

- What do you love about your school library?
- What makes your school library special?
- How does your school library make a difference for you?
- Why do you love coming to your school library?
- Why might you look forward to time in your school library?
- What special memories do you have of your school library?
- How do you feel in your school library?

We also asked some of our author and illustrator allies to weigh in and tell us why they thought school libraries were important. Paul Coccia, author of the 2023 Silver Birch nominated “*On The Line*” wrote that “*coming from a family of teachers and teacher-librarians, school libraries are close to my heart - they are the heart and life’s blood of the school community.*” Kate McLaughlin, author of the 2024 White Pine Award for her book “*Pieces of Me*” said, “*Thank you so much for being a safe space where kids can explore new worlds and find themselves in story.*” Colleen Nelson, 2023 winner of the Silver Birch Award for “*The Undercover Book Club*” wrote “*Thank you for giving all kids a soft place to land!*” And 2024 Red Maple nominee, Erin Bow, shared that “*I spent high school mostly in the school library. I read Richard Feynman, T.S. Eliot, and Star Trek novels. It made me who I am - and it kept me alive.*” Even Toronto mayor, Olivia Chow, stopped by to tell us how much she appreciates school libraries.

## Now It’s Your Turn

Consider what this could look like in your own school community. How might you collect student voice? With this initiative, we aim to unite school library professionals across Ontario in an advocacy project that will produce qualitative data they can use in their own school-level & district-level advocacy work. With the hearts that we receive back, we will summarize the qualitative data received from school libraries across the province into a postcard/infographic that both the OSLA & school library professionals can use in their advocacy work moving forward.

We are looking to capture as much student voice as possible around

why our school libraries in Ontario are important. What we know, from experience, is that the most authentic responses are likely to be inspired when students are in their school libraries, rather than lakeside at a busy book festival.

Our request is that you take this project back to your library learning commons and roll out your own “Dear School Library” project in your school community.

You can find the templates here: <https://bit.ly/DearSchoolLibrary>

## Celebrating Canadian School Library Day

We know how amazing our members are and how much passion you put into your LLCs. So, we want to celebrate and let the world know about all the #schoollibraryjoy that comes out of these projects across the province.

If you haven’t yet, you’ll soon see an email from the OSLA outlining the details. Just remember to capture some photo evidence of your “Dear School Library” project as it unfolds in your school community. Then share it on social media between October 15-25, 2024 for the chance to win some incredible prizes from our partners at TinLids, Saunders Books, the Forest of Reading and The Library Marketplace. We can’t wait to see all the #schoollibraryjoy flood social media - just in time to celebrate Canadian School Library Day on October 21st.



You can find the Canva templates online using this QR code:

OR

This link: <https://bit.ly/DearSchoolLibraryI>



<https://bit.ly/3zfTorz>

Use this QR Code or bitly to leave a “Dear School Library” video response!

# Dear School Library...

## A Love Lettering Project by the Ontario School Library Association

### The Dear School Library Project

**What:** a project to capture student voice around why our school libraries in Ontario are vital.

**Why:** to gather qualitative data we can use in our own school-level & district-level advocacy work.

**How:** to roll out this initiative in your own school community, please click on this link:

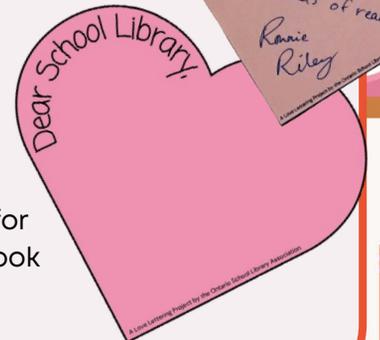
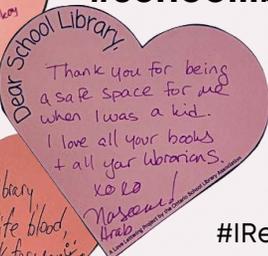
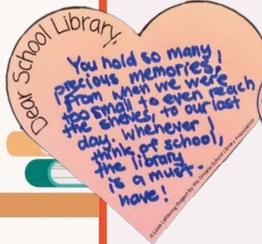
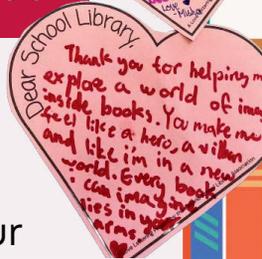
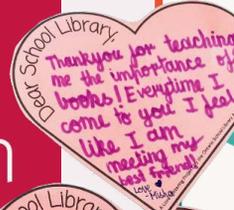
[bit.ly/DearSchoolLibrary](https://bit.ly/DearSchoolLibrary)

**When:** the plan is to collect the library love letters through Fall 2024, then post about this initiative on social media between October 15-25, 2024 for the chance to win prizes\*

Be sure to tag us: **@OSLACouncil** and use the hashtags **#schoollibraryjoy** & **#CanadianSchoolLibraryDay2024**

**\*Prizes include** 2025 Forest of Reading Book Sets, #IReadCanadian book bundles, \$100 Gift Certificates for TinLids, free Forest of Reading Registrations, and fun book merchandise from The Library Marketplace.

Inspired by Lindsay Zier-Vogel's, 2024 Blue Spruce nominated "Dear Street" and Love Lettering Project.





# The Forest of Reading® Festival

Making as much noise for books as we did at this year's Forest of Reading Festival was a real highlight, and it was so exciting to be able to reach our readers from far through our Digital Award ceremonies. Here are some of our favourite moments.



**To learn more, visit:**  
[forestofreading.com/festival/](https://forestofreading.com/festival/)



# Fête de la Forêt de la lecture

In 2024, the Forest of Reading® developed a new French language field trip opportunity to celebrate with 600+ young people. Celebrating our French programs separately provided Le prix Mèlèze and Le prix Tamarac a unique spotlight!



**To learn more, visit:**  
[forestofreading.com/fete-eng/](https://forestofreading.com/fete-eng/)

# Community @ My Library

Aimee Barber

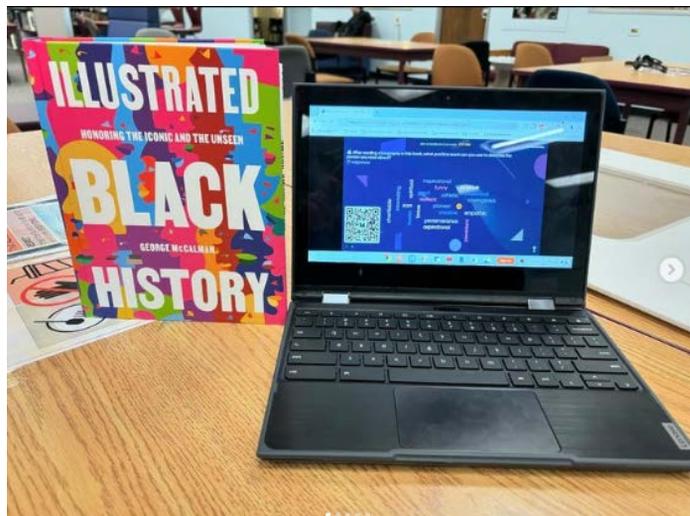
**A**s the teacher-librarian at Glebe Collegiate Institute, I have always believed in the importance of building a community so my students feel more connected to the library. The space is much more than just books. It is a place where students can access whatever - and whomever - they need to learn and be successful. It is a place to foster a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose. I have tried to create a library that reaches students both through in-person contacts and social media.

Some of the in-person strategies include inviting community members to speak to and connect with our students. For instance, every year I host a Human Library. I invite a variety of community members with a range of occupations and lived experiences, so that students can see a diverse representation and see themselves in a wider world.

I have also welcomed many guest speakers, both virtual and in-person, to engage with students. For example, I have most recently welcomed Clarissa Arthur, the Executive Director of the Education Foundation, to speak to students on International Women's Day.

Throughout the pandemic, we were fortunate enough to have virtual guest speakers, such as Member of Parliament and current Speaker of the House, Greg Fergus, join us for Black History Month; Former Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry of Canada, Navdeep Bains, join us for Sikh Heritage Month; and National Correspondent for CTV News, Judy Trinh, join us for Asian Heritage Month. It was particularly important for me to connect our students to community members virtually throughout Covid so they could continue to engage with others and learn from their experiences, even as we were physically separated from each other.

In addition to hosting guest speakers during heritage months, I have also hosted classes to participate in gallery walks where they interact with resources to learn more about Canadian history. For example, every year I invite classes to a Black History Month Gallery Walk where they learn about Canadian Black athletes, artists, and politicians, view our library book collection written by Black authors, listen to Black musicians or watch a short film highlighting Canadian Black history. In collaboration with our Black Student Association, I want to work with our students to provide meaningful, engaging learning opportunities within the library space.



*Station during Black History Month (February 2024)*

Also, to help our Multi-Language Learners (MLs), I host a Winter and Summer Celebration with them. I invite all our MLs to the library during lunch hour and go over free activities available to them within the local community. I explore the events that are taking place during these seasons and put together a slideshow, then we go through all the information together and enjoy some snacks. Afterwards, I share the slide deck with them so they can learn more through interactive links. It's important that MLs, especially our newcomers, know that the library is a place for them to get information and support for their learning, but also a place for them to feel a sense of belonging and to feel connected to their new Ottawa community.

I also work in collaboration with an ESL teacher, Tina Royer, when she is working through a unit of study about Community. I put together a scavenger hunt for her students to use as a guide through all the wonderful resources Ottawa Public Library (OPL) has to offer. After students complete the scavenger hunt, I help them obtain an OPL card by going to our location branch with their application and working with the staff to get Library cards for our MLs. I do not want language to be a restriction for them, which is why I help them get a card. I want our MLs to feel connected to their community through a local branch and all the free resources a public library can provide.

*...continued on page 29*

...continued from page 28

On social media, I use reel posts and stories to share all activities taking place in the library for our students. To help them see how reading books can create a sense of community, I collaborate with my colleagues to have one teacher a week choose a library book they would like to recommend. I post their 'Staff Pick' every Monday and post the corresponding reading of the first page of that book for our "First Page Fridays." This helps students to see that the library is a place where everyone can share their love of reading, including book recommendation in both English and French. Students can also see their teachers read the first page of their recommended book on social media. Additionally, I try to tag the author, when possible, to engage them as part of our reading community. As a result of this initiative, students like and repost 'Staff Picks' and have even checked out some of the recommended books.



I also post book displays either as a reel or story for our students to see because these displays reflect a heritage month or day of significance. I showcase as many books as possible so students can see the range of books we have on our shelves and so they can see themselves represented in the literature they have access to in their school library.



These are just some of the ways I have worked to establish a community at my school library. I am always trying new and exciting ways to engage my students in their library space. By creating opportunities to interact with people both inside and outside our walls, I aim to create a connected school library community for everyone. ■

# Inviting Them In: A Plan to Include All Students in the Library Learning Commons Space

## Identifying a Need

When I first started in the role of a teacher-librarian at a high school in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board over three years ago, we were not able to welcome all students into the library learning commons as we did not have books or resources to meet their reading abilities, interests or preferences. Many of our students with lower reading levels, special education needs or English as a second language could not access many of our print resources because they were too advanced. What can you do when you realize all students are not being intentionally included in your library space? Read on to find out!

“  
*An equitable, inclusive education system is one in which all students are welcomed and respected, and every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning* (Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools, 2014)  
”

## Creating a Plan

As a library team, we began to create a plan to include all students in the school library community. As part of a multi-year department plan, we identified areas of need for the LLC space and sourced supports to meet those needs. Key elements included:

- all students in the school accessing the LLC space;
- all students represented in the texts within the LLC;
- student voice as a key element to guide our book purchases;
- relevant and engaging texts for all students, focused on including students who are English Language Learners, emerging readers and those receiving special education supports;
- implementing the guiding principles of *Together for Learning: School Libraries and the Emergence of the Learning Commons*, specifically, the principles surrounding Equitable Access and Learning Partnerships.



## Professional Learning:

Our team wanted to be methodical and intentional in our purchasing, roll out and implementation. We also wanted to consider ways we could measure our impact on the school

community so elements could be shared with other schools and within our library community.

Key areas of focus included:

- identifying how to collect student voice from those who may struggle with communication or be non-verbal;
- meeting with the Specialized Services team to discuss best practices for selecting titles and meeting the needs of students receiving special education supports in the LLC;
- learning with the public library team at a nearby branch that was offering special needs adult storytime so we could model our self-contained class visits after the public library (thanks to Mandy, the amazing librarian);
- learning more about the elementary library model by visiting an elementary school library (thanks to Jenn, the amazing teacher-librarian).



## Gathering Student Voice

We wanted to ensure that student voice and lived experiences informed the purchases in the LLC. While we also relied on book lists and our System Learning Commons Team for suggested book titles, we aimed to use student requests for many of our purchases.

Strategies for collecting student voice:

- students submitted book requests through a Microsoft Form linked to a QR code. They provided details about why they thought the book should be added to our collection.
- some students in our self-contained classes struggle with reading, so we created a visual Kahoot survey with pictures of the books and memes indicating yes/no/maybe/very excited and had the students vote on their favourite titles.
- we also created choice boards for non-verbal students in our self-contained classes. Students selected pictures to indicate their book preferences.



## Making the Purchases

Once we had the data we needed, we focused on purchasing:

- leveled reading texts (Saddleback Emergent Reader Libraries

...continued on page 31

...continued from page 30

- collection) for our English Language Learners;
- novels and non-fiction texts (estimated Grade 2 – Grade 6 reading levels) with more mature content;
- graphic novels at lower reading levels and lower complexity levels with more mature content;
- picture books at primary reading levels with topics to meet the needs of our students in self-contained special education classes (e.g. animals, food, humour while avoiding babies or small children);
- activities suitable for students in self-contained classes including music shakers, magnetic building blocks, a lacing/sewing activity, sensory activities and puzzles.



### Creating a Community for all students

Once we purchased the books, we also wanted to think about intentional and meaningful ways to welcome students into the LLC space who have not traditionally accessed the space. This included:

- inviting students from our ESL/ELL classes to the LLC for a book talk and to sign out books;
- inviting students from our self-contained classes to the LLC for a book talk and to sign out books;
- inviting students from our self-contained classes into the LLC for a storytime.

After visiting our local public library and taking part in their adult special needs storytime, we modelled the structure of the self-contained class visit after the public library session. First, we engaged students with some music. Students enjoyed participating with “Body Percussion” songs and we provided shakers and sound makers so all students could participate regardless of their ability level.

Next, we read students a story aloud. We intentionally created community by inviting staff members in as guest readers in addition to our library team. We used simple prompts to engage students during the story.

Finally, we finished by offering students an opportunity to engage in a variety of creative activities inspired by the reading. These

included an art project, magnetic building blocks, a lacing/sewing activity, sensory activities, puzzles, as well as different colouring pages, word searches and games.

### Measuring our Impact:

- All students in our school can now be invited into the LLC and find a book suited to their learning needs, preferences and readiness as a student.
- Students in self-contained classes are excited to visit the LLC and are becoming familiar with the library staff, routines and are building relationships with other students in the LLC space.
- When a student that receives special education programming was asked what they enjoyed most about the visit to the library for storytime, they stated they were, “happy to be here, it’s a good time and I enjoy it.”
- One self-contained class teacher has stated that “this has allowed our students to meet other teachers and support staff in the Henderson Community and make connections with them in a positive environment.” Another has stated that “being included in the library learning commons space has been a positive experience for these students. From being able to sign out books about topics they are interested in, to exploring new spaces within their school, the inclusive environment that has been fostered within our LLC continues to positively impact our students with each visit.”

### Reflections:

With the support of our Administration and System Library Learning Commons Team, we have been successful in meeting the goals of our multi-year plan. We have intentionally created a space that will continue to establish itself as an essential community hub for all students and staff in the school. We hope to inspire and support other school libraries to create inclusive community spaces in their schools. ■



### References:

- Ministry of Education (2014). *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*.
- Ontario School Library Association. (2010). *Together for Learning: School Libraries and the Emergence of the Learning Commons*.

# Adult & Child Book Clubs: Watching Your Library Community Flourish

In 2017, I launched my first adult/child book club in the elementary school where I teach and it was clearly a defining moment in my career. I look back now and distinctly divide my teaching career into two eras: teaching before my book club debut and teaching after the establishment of my book club.

It is utterly fascinating to be in a room with a group of students and their adults (e.g., parent, grandparent). The discussions are heartfelt, yet when the adults share personal stories, I feel a momentous shift in how the children view the adults in the group. The adults' anecdotes are often emotional, and they elicit deep understanding from the children and other parents in the club. Many of the stories reveal something their children did not know about, leading to deeper connections and awareness. As a result, a sense of ease and empathy builds during our time together and we all look forward to gathering again for the next book club. This outcome is not what I would have predicted but I must say it is truly special when it happens.

At every book club, the children learn from the adults and the adults learn from the children. To be honest, when some adults confided in me after book club that this experience exceeded their expectations, I felt a sense of pride about what transpired. In essence, the book club levels the playing field between child and adult which is remarkable since it's designed for students in grades 4, 5 and 6.

I encourage you to launch a book club at your school. Believe me, you will not be disappointed. This club is powerful, rewarding and everyone will feel that they belong. It is a highlight of my programming and because it is delivered in the library, the adults have front row seats to what a school library looks like in the 21st century.

## Rationale for Starting a Book Club

1. *Everyone deserves to see themselves in books.* Reading and talking about books with various topics and characters is essential for all people. It allows readers to build their capacity to empathize with individuals and/or groups of people who face challenges, to question the author's story and to understand the powerful feelings that occur before, during and after reading. In very simple terms, seeing oneself in a book is validating and emotional, at any age.
2. *Breadth and depth of books available.* In Canada, the scope of literature available ensures that the material I curate for the book club enables participants to delve into the diversity of the human experience. It provides an entry point into situations or challenges in a safe and inclusive environment. I search for literature with topics such as friendship, medical issues,
3. *Literature with neurodivergent characters and stories.* Books with neurodiverse characters must be part of any school library collection and the number of books written with neurodiverse individuals and stories grows annually. Very few books with neurodiverse themes and characters existed 15 years ago. It is a gift to students and educators (and those in the mental health fields) that literature exists about children who have ADHD, OCD, Down syndrome and other learning differences. Including books with neurodiverse characters is of immense value because they allow children to understand what others experience and feel, and if the reader is neurodiverse, they might make a connection to the character or their challenges. Educators value these books because of the insight they provide about neurodiverse individuals. The visible and invisible challenges students with learning differences deal with are daunting, and often, the support these children receive is insufficient. It is incumbent on educators to be aware of and to understand what their students experience. These books provide everyone with tools to better support neurodiverse children. Conversations flow when teachers read books with neurodiverse characters aloud to their classes. Imagine what transpires when the adult/child book club reads a book with a neurodiverse character; it is transformative.
4. *Book bans.* Sadly, there is a frightening number of people keen to ban books in North America. When this occurs, librarians, teachers and school boards are questioned about materials students have access to. According to PEN America, "The bans are speeding up. There were over 4,000 instances of

environmental concerns and family matters that take place in different parts of the world and whose main characters are diverse and bring their lived experiences to life through the formidable written word. Each book is written for children between 9 - 12 years of age and the authors take tremendous care to choose their words wisely as they craft their story. In my opinion, these writers display talents beyond the extraordinary in the sense that they transport readers on journeys that require every author's writing to be finessed, tactful and empathetic. When Rudine Sims Bishop wrote: "Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror" she grasped something that was potent, and her words have been read by many. These thoughts could not be more timely than today. Inviting a group of people to come together to share thoughts, reactions and connections to literature in an intimate setting is mesmerizing for all ages.

...continued on page 33

...continued from page 32

book bans in the first half of this school year—more than all of last school year as a whole. This is a marked increase in comparison to the last spring semester, in which PEN America recorded 1,841 book bans.” As well, “PEN America recorded more school book bans during the first six months of the 2023-24 school year than in all of 2022-23.” Often, individuals and groups that try to ban books do not even read them, which is an utter shame. Implementing a book club at school introduces a variety of materials (written for readers in grades 4, 5 and 6) and ensures that adults have a better understanding of the care, empathy and ability to tell stories that support every child. Parents have a tremendous say in their child’s education and a book club provides an outstanding opportunity for parents to read books with tough topics and then discuss the story in an inviting, calm and safe environment.

5. *Highlights the significance of having a qualified librarian in every school.* This book club demonstrates just one of many capabilities that teacher-librarians possess. A librarian develops a collection that is culturally relevant and responsible, makes sure the school community knows what is available and seeks material the children and teachers want to read. A school board that develops staffing models for every school that includes a librarian position demonstrates their commitment to ensure children develop critical thinking skills, feel validated and are prepared for the next stage of their life. It ensures students have access to valid and current resources that can easily be located. Without devoting resources to staffing a library appropriately, children and teachers are at a huge loss. When I became a teacher-librarian in 2011, my position was full time, allowing me to deliver a robust library program. In 2023, my position was allocated to less than half-time. It is important that parents are aware of the staffing struggles that affect our school libraries. Many school boards in Ontario do not have librarians, and many that do often mandate their librarians teach other subjects. Parents have a tremendous ability to support their schools and their communities. An adult/child book club provides parents with a glimpse into the library, and they can observe how it has evolved since their childhood. This vantage point equips parents to attest to the importance of a school library program to school board superintendents, trustees and the Ontario Ministry of Education. Parents can be powerful advocates for school programs and resources.
6. *Character education.* It is critical that educators choose materials for their classes that embrace the diversity of the human experience so that children see and learn about themselves, their friends and their community. The topics are varied and each book in the club lends itself to ensuing conversations that often centre around character traits such as honesty, perseverance, teamwork, responsibility and leadership.

Unpacking challenging topics can be difficult but doing so is necessary to support children as they develop emotionally, socially, intellectually and physically.

7. *Not all kids want to join a sports team.* So many students search for activities other than sports at school. An adult/child book club would be an appreciated offering at any school. It is a luxury to spend an hour in the library learning commons away from technology and life’s demands to partake in talking about books. Students beam when their adult arrives in the library. In fact, at my school, the book club’s picture makes it into the yearbook so its memory will live forever. Days before our club meets, the children are brimming with excitement about what is happening in the story. Since every child and every adult reads the book at times convenient for them, the kids share parts of the stories that they like best or find most intriguing. This love and enthusiasm for reading spreads quickly through the community.
8. *Easy to plan.* I promote the book club in my principal’s weekly update, send information home with students and post details via online teaching platforms. It is also helpful to pop into the classes to remind students about the book club and to see if there are children that need the book. My club meets about 6 times during the year and there are around 4 - 6 weeks between meetings. Also, the days of the week that the club meets vary because so many students have obligations after school. Perhaps there is another teacher at your school who would like to co-plan with you. At my school, the music teacher participated in several book clubs, and I was honoured that she participated.
9. *Curating Books.* I decided to choose books written only by Canadians to highlight the tremendous talent found from coast-to-coast, and to support local authors, illustrators and publishers. Some of the books are in verse, and recently, I chose a biography and a graphic novel. It is important to include a variety of genres and formats when compiling a list. I found that once children and parents were introduced to Canadian authors, they began to look for more.
10. *This book club is fun, rewarding, exciting, energetic and inclusive. It invites the children and their adults into the library for a magically rewarding experience. Please try it.*

#### **Call to Action!**

I hope this article will encourage my fellow teacher-librarians to start an adult/child book club at their schools. If you like, start off with one meeting per term to see what unravels. The book club at my school was cherished and the books I curated were chosen very carefully. ■



## Angie Wurster

...continued from page 34

We usually have 8 stations for them to visit. After a welcome and introduction of staff and each station, families rotate through the stations for an hour. Stations that we have had in the past include word family pom pom toss, create a bookmark, reading books, write the room, giant scrabble, syllable families, snowman or caterpillar names, memory game and sentence or poetry creation. Once the hour is up, we gather again in the gym for closing remarks and to draw passports for door prizes of books. Students often have created things at the stations they can take with them and many of the stations are activities that families can recreate at home to continue to support literacy with their child(ren). This also attributes to the feeling of community as they now have fun, educational activities they can do with their child.



Community can be defined as a feeling of fellowship with others because of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals. Our Family Literacy Night meets all the criteria of that definition. The feeling of fellowship is evident as students and families interact at the various stations with positive attitudes about the activity, interest in what their child(ren) and staff are doing and the goal of reinforcing or learning a new literacy skill. Family Literacy Night is an opportunity to come together in a fun way to build on the feeling of community while reinforcing the importance of literacy and libraries in our schools. ■



# Building a (Far-Reaching) Community of Colleagues

As much as we work to foster connection with students through our programs and initiatives, we personally and professionally benefit from fostering connections with colleagues, including colleagues beyond our campuses. In many schools, library staff work solo or in small teams, so reaching out to others in similar positions at similar schools can be very beneficial.

In my independent school world, there are two specific organizations that have been a huge source of support and professional growth: the Conference of Independent Schools of Ontario Librarians' Network (CISO-Lib) and the Association of Independent Schools (AISL). CISO-Lib is made up of 97 members from 27 school libraries, mostly in Ontario but including a few from east and west of us. It is one of the longest-standing networks in the organization. AISL is larger; established in 1987, it pulls together over 700 school librarians from more than 500 independent schools across North America.

There are similarities as well as unique differences between these groups, but I've noted two particular ways that belonging to these organizations is so beneficial to independent school librarians.

## Regular connection in person

CISO-Lib has recently gotten back on track with spring and fall meetings that were interrupted due to the pandemic. Schools take turns hosting, which is a highlight of the day. Visiting other schools and school libraries, seeing displays and browsing collections is informative and inspiring. Take a look at an excerpt from the agenda from our most recent meeting:

9:00 AM	Welcome, refreshments & book-themed mixer	
9:45 AM	Poetry Month Activity / Generative AI roundtable	
11:00 AM	Divisional book talks	Those booktalking 9-12 move to Senior School
12:00 PM	Lunch in Osler Hall (transition to Senior School)	
1:00 PM	Business meeting	
1:30 PM	PD Carousel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CISO online community</li> <li>• Genfying collections</li> <li>• Weeding</li> </ul>	
2:30 pm	Wrap up	Optional review of TCS Accessit

AISL hosts annual conferences, sometimes virtual but often in person; I'm sharing some images from our most recent in-person conference in Santa Fe in March 2023. These conferences accomplish many of the same goals as CISO-Lib meetings but on a bigger scale (over 100 participants rather than 20-30) and over 3 days. It similarly leans on the expertise and experience of group members. In Santa Fe, members offered workshops such as creating a reading culture, running a student library volunteer program, how to booktalk comics and developing scope and sequence in addition to presentations by authors Nina LaCour and E. Lockhart.



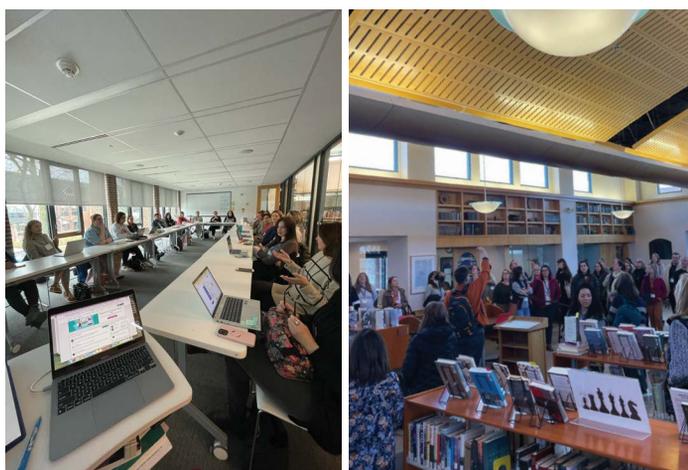
We visited a variety of school libraries (all divisions included) and participated in amazing cultural outings to learn about the unique part of the world that is New Mexico. AISL conferences offer wonderful PD opportunities to lead workshops, host book talks and be part of conference planning.

Wonderful connections made in person often foster long-term relationships based on interests (e.g., technology) or school-focus (e.g., single-gender, day vs boarding). Knowing who to contact with specific questions is enormously helpful over the course of the school year.

...continued on page 37

...continued from page 36

Note that participating in these gatherings works best when we get out of our own way! I have been involved with both organizations for most of the 20 years that I've been at my school. I remember the early days when I found meetings a bit overwhelming; everyone seemed to know each other and up to date on details that eluded me. Oddly, because it was for work purposes rather than personal, I was able to summon more courage than usual and jumped into the fray. At CISO-Lib meetings, I sit with someone new at lunch, and at AISL conferences, I choose a seat on the bus beside someone that I don't know. I'm now at the stage of my career when I can be a mentor to others, paying the bounty I've received forward.



### Virtual connection

Unlike colleagues at our schools who are just down the hall, keeping in touch with those at a distance requires intentionality. This is facilitated by digital tools that allow for questions and discussions.

#### *Questions & concerns*

- Like all communities within CISO, CISO-Lib has its own discussion board where members can post questions and replies. Preferences can be set to have postings pushed to email, and/or collected into a weekly digest. Recent posts included notices about the Forest of Reading and an upcoming Indigenous book fair, an offer for slatwall accessories that were looking for a new home and a query about Newsela.

- Similarly, AISL maintains a very busy listserv, with emails sent out by inquiring members; recently, people have been looking for a good barcode scanner recommendation, help managing loaner laptops, intricacies of in-text citations and queries about library staffing.

#### *Discussion on topics of interest*

- AISL hosts a blog (“Independent Ideas”) that offers a glimpse into subjects such as writing a year-end report, running a successful book fair and hosting an author visit. Blog posts are personal, compelling and loaded with great resources.
- It is not uncommon for a member of AISL to create a Zoom opportunity for those interested in doing a deep dive into a current topic. Throughout last fall and winter, Faith created a book club focused on *Embracing culturally responsive practice in school libraries* (Kennedy); participants read in chunks and then connected to discuss over the course of 3 months. Last week, Erinn hosted a Zoom meeting that became a Reading Culture Working Group because of the plethora of awesome ideas shared.

Many of us in Ontario appreciate partnering with local public schools and attending OLA, but not all opportunities available to teacher-librarians who work with boards are available to us, so organizations such as CISO-Lib and AISL are a critical part of our community. ■

# Stronger & Better Together: The Creation of a Teacher-Librarian Network

Jonelle St. Aubyn

Starting in a school library as a teacher-librarian, no matter if you are elementary or secondary, can be very isolating and lonely. The majority of secondary schools have one or two teacher-librarians and elementary schools only have one, and that librarian may not even be full-time. That leaves each librarian to find their way on their own, solving issues that are unique to their teaching area alone. School colleagues may not have a deep understanding of their role and the challenges that come with it. In the Peel District School Board, we used to have teacher-run library organizations such as PETLA (Peel Elementary Teacher Librarian Association) and PSSTL (Peel Secondary School Teacher Librarians). These organizations relied on teacher-librarians planning meetings in various locations throughout the school board, primarily on their own time after school. It was always challenging to get people to attend and to build a sense of community but after the pandemic hit, these groups folded completely.

Being a secondary school teacher-librarian in Peel, I am fortunate enough to have a part-time teacher-librarian working with me, as well as a library technician. Although our team is small but mighty (we refer to ourselves as Team Awesome), we still felt like we were an island on our own in a very big ocean. There had to be a better way. With the help of my principal at the time, Sharron Kuhl, I started reaching out to the teacher-librarians within our Family of Schools. In Peel, a Family of Schools are the elementary, middle and secondary schools that students will attend throughout their school careers. I thought it would be great to get together with that group of librarians since we would all be sharing the same students eventually. Learning from each other and sharing best practices would go a long way in helping our students transition from one school to the next. It would also help us grow as school library professionals and to not feel as isolated and alone. Sharron was willing to provide release time and a luncheon for a meeting, so we started reaching out.

Initially, there was some hesitation and a few challenges in getting release time for everyone to meet on the same day. Undeterred, Sharron went above and beyond and offered our feeder schools assistance in providing coverage to release their teacher-librarians. She called and spoke to their administrative teams to stress the importance of releasing their library staff for this meeting and her persistence paid off with our first in-person meeting! It was great to connect and to hear about the innovative things that each of us was doing in our schools. It was also helpful to hear that others shared the same issues and concerns that we were experiencing as well. We hoped to make plans to continue to meet in person, even if only twice a year.

Despite the best laid plans in life, there are just some things you cannot predict. The pandemic was definitely one of them. The pandemic put the brakes on our initial plans of maintaining regular in-person contact but I didn't want to lose our burgeoning sense of community. It took us a little while to adjust to our new reality and times were tough, but I invited the group to meet for an hour online once a month after school. The meetings would not be mandatory, and I wasn't sure how much buy-in I would get. Things were already pretty stressful, and I didn't want to add to the burden that people were experiencing. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that almost every teacher-librarian in our family

of schools was willing to meet! I kept a strict one-hour timeline for the meetings and gave away a \$10 gift card to Tim Horton's in a monthly draw as a thank-you for attending. We always had an agenda of things we needed to discuss or problems that needed to be solved (and with the pandemic, there were a lot of problems that needed solving). Our sense of community and camaraderie began to grow.

We met online after school for over a year, supporting each other and working together to best meet the needs of our students. This had become a valuable and meaningful experience for all of us but meeting after school was challenging given our busy lives and commitments outside of school. So, we decided to put together a proposal to our administrative team that I would present on our behalf to champion for monthly in-person meetings to be hosted at each of our school libraries. We were granted time to speak at the Family of Schools administrative team meeting and I had the opportunity to speak of the benefits that this network had on each of us and the positive impact that it was having on our school libraries. We requested a monthly three-hour meeting to continue this networking and with the strong support of our superintendent, Neerja Punjabi, our request was granted!

Each teacher-librarian signed up to host a monthly meeting and we created a format for the agenda. Each meeting begins with the host teacher-librarian giving us a tour of their facilities so that we can learn about the amazing things that they are doing. The next part of the agenda focuses on supporting school goals and working together on initiatives that are beneficial for our school community. The agenda always includes time for raising issues and problem solving as a collective. We also added an in-house training component where one of the teacher-librarians teaches a skill to the others. This year we've learned how to code with micro:bits, create videos using Adobe Creative Cloud Express, cover books to ensure their longevity and more. We also have a monthly story time in which each of us reads a story online in the evening to celebrate our faith and heritage month with our families in our community. We also have a WhatsApp group chat if we need a quick answer to a question.

Thanks to this network, we no longer feel isolated and alone. We have a collective of sixteen teacher-librarians who all work in the same community and support the same students. We have grown exponentially as school library professionals thanks to the sharing of resources, best practices and skills within the network. Our colleagues, students and school communities are benefitting from our increased skill level and knowledge. We have gained confidence in our roles as teacher-librarians but best of all, we are friends as well as colleagues. We plan social events and connect even when it's not related to work. We truly are a team, and we would love to see this model expand to other Families of Schools and to other school boards. We are stronger and better together thanks to this library network and I can't wait to see what we will accomplish next! Feel free to reach out if you have any questions about getting a similar group started in your area. My social media handle for Twitter and Instagram is @Ms\_St\_Aubyn.

*This article is written in memory of Kelli Ardilla, our friend and colleague from Stanley Mills PS who passed away suddenly in July of 2023. ■*

# InstaCommunity: Making Connections and Swapping Recommendations 2200 Characters at a Time

Tara Truscott

I started an Instagram account in the summer of 2021 to review books and visually keep track of what I was reading.

What I expected: Take a photo, write a caption, post and get a few likes and comments.

What happened: I became part of the Bookstagram community

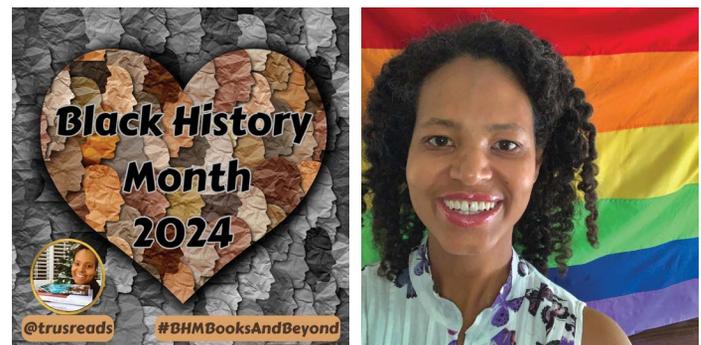


Which meant:

- People reached out with tips and advice when they noticed my posts, like how to avoid spam comments or how to get advance reader copies (ARCs);
- There was a huge increase in my knowledge of new books. So many more new releases have hit my radar since I started posting and interacting with others which helps me support staff and students;
- A lot more reading;
- Constant opportunities for connections with other school library professionals - teacher-librarians, library technicians, school librarians, public librarians, parents and volunteers. It's great to be able to reach out to a large group for help with titles that fit a certain reader or that match a lesson or community need;
- Access to so many different ideas and recommendations, often

with links for posters, displays and slide decks;

- Read-a-thons and reading challenges to join (or recommend to students);
- Book prizes for the school library (and sometimes adult books for myself);
- Connections with parents who follow the account and reach out about book requests for their children;
- My new identity as an audiobook aficionado - online friends recommended increasing the speed and taking time to develop the skill of listening to audiobooks and now I access lots of books this way;



Some other highlights of my experience include:

- Joining a group of adult middle-grade readers and participating in 2 group chat buddy-reads each month (I'm now a co-host);
- Taking part in an in-person book club made up of local bookstagram friends;
- Being recommended for online and print review opportunities as well as writing guest blog posts;
- Learning about NetGalley and Edelweiss (for requesting eARCs) and Spark Book Fairs (online remainder vendor which raises money for schools or charities with each sale).

These benefits were only possible because of the community I've connected with in this cozy corner of the internet. ■

# Visual Essay



Diana and Mary Maliszewski

# Drawn to the Form: Creating Comic Book Communities



There are many different groups within the larger comic book community: so many, in fact, that newcomers are often overwhelmed. When I first got involved in comic book fandom, I felt pressure to participate in as much of it as I possibly could. I attended conventions, commented on Youtube videos and even posted to fan forums.

Before long, I was struggling to keep up with the demands of these different groups and in some cases, found that I wasn't even enjoying the experience.

It quickly became clear that something wasn't working. That "something" turned out to be my attitude: I was trying to commit myself to a community that wasn't committed to me. I don't say this for purely selfish reasons. I say this because I think it's important that members of a community feel a sense of belonging. In a large group, it can be difficult to find people who truly understand your perspective. In a smaller group, it's easier to connect with like-minded individuals.

Take the *Delicious in Dungeon* fandom, for example. I've been a fan of Ryoko Kui's fantasy manga since it was first translated into English, way back in 2018. When the series was released, its readership was small but dedicated. Fast forward to 2024 and the fandom has ballooned in size. Instead of trying to engage with every aspect of the community, I've decided to stick to my own circle. My friends and I will occasionally share art and memes from outside the group, but for the most part, we keep to ourselves.



So, what does this look like in an educational context? At my JK-8 elementary school library this year, I re-established our dormant Comic

Club. The Comic Clubs I ran in the past were for older students to talk about our favourite graphic novels, to help me preview and purchase new manga and to determine school age range recommendations (this iteration of the club was written about back in 2011 by a reporter and you can still read the article at <https://this.org/2011/08/02/comic-books-graphic-novels-literacy/>). Our intermediate division students in Comic Club also



had a blast visiting their high school equivalent from Sir Robert Borden B.T.I. and I learned a lot about providing students with agency. My reflection from that time can be found at <https://mondymollymusings.blogspot.com/2011/06/comic-clubs-and-whos-boss.html>.

Our "new division, new focus" Comic Club began in the 2018-19 school year and was geared toward students in Grade 1-3. It was quite a success, and the students were enthusiastic in pushing their particular agenda: creating their own comics. COVID interrupted this continuation of the club, and this school year was the first time it returned. As Mary described at the beginning of this article, having a smaller group of like-minded individuals helped to build this comic community. I had hoped that part of the 2023-24 Comic Club mandate would be to keep the comic and graphic novel area of the library neater, but no such luck! The students relished their time collaboratively designing and writing/illustrating their own comics. The fascinating thing is that about half of the Comic Club participants struggled with reading and writing, yet they showed no reluctance to write when they made their own comics as part of the club. They were surrounded by fellow comic enthusiasts who shared their love of Kuroshi or Pokemon. The club atmosphere made these projects extra special, as they were not linked to grades or assessment.

Communities can form easily around particular comics or comics in general; making your community inclusive and supported will help keep them strong. When I asked this iteration of the Comic Club when they wanted our weekly lunch meetings to end, they replied, "In ten years!"



# Collaborating in Kingston to Develop Young Scientific Minds



**C**ommunity can mean different things to different people. It can be people who live, study or work near to one another. Community can also be people who share similar interests. Queen's University Library prioritizes connecting the university with the Kingston community. What better way to do this than by contributing to and hosting community events?

Library staff took the recent opportunities presented by the total solar eclipse of April 8, 2024, and Science Rendezvous Kingston, an annual event that was held on May 11, 2024, as opportunities to connect with our community and contribute to local STEM initiatives.

Read about 3 ways we connected with community for the total solar eclipse and Science Rendezvous.

## 1. Partnering with Experts

Total Solar Eclipse:

Working with representatives from the Department of Physics, Engineering Physics & Astronomy, a member of the Queen's Education Library team volunteered and trained to be an eclipse ambassador. Like many public libraries, we distributed certified eclipse glasses. We set up a table together with a Queen's University Physics professor and his students in advance of the eclipse. The professor made pinhole cameras with students and their families. On the day of the eclipse, ambassadors guided everyone, from Queen's and beyond, through the experience, explaining the phenomena and answering questions.

Science Rendezvous:

We interacted with 5200 visitors at Science Rendezvous Kingston. The event, open to all, brought together researchers, experts, community organizations and groups. One of the teacher kits we had on display was *The Pleistocene: Using Ice Age Mammals to Explore Climate, Habitat, and Extinction*, a junior level paleontology teaching kit with fossil replicas of ice age mammals that was created by Queen's professor Dr. Lynda Colgan with a team of contributors including the Teacher Guide author Lindsey E. Carmichael.

## 2. Creating Engaging Activities

Total Solar Eclipse:

The total solar eclipse generated curiosity and interest, bringing people together to observe a rare celestial event. In the week leading up to the solar eclipse, we provided materials and guidance for students and their families to make bracelets (with UV-sensitive beads that change color in the sun) and pinhole cameras (to safely view the solar eclipse).

Science Rendezvous:

We transported several carloads of resources to Science Rendezvous. Ozobot robots were very popular with the young scientists, as were the palaeontology teaching kits and magnifying glasses. Using the markers and paper we supplied, people wrote their names and drew lines and patterns for the Ozobots to follow. Some copied the colour sequences provided to program the robots to spin or change speed, etc., and others simply experimented on their own. Two teacher kits provided additional opportunities for hands-on exploration. The kits included fossil casts of bones, giant beaver and dire wolf skulls, as well as mastodon and mammoth teeth from millions of years ago.



## 3. Connecting to Your Library

Total Solar Eclipse:

The media generated a lot of interest in the total solar eclipse. Leading up to the event, we purchased telescopes for the library. At the same tables where people made bracelets and pinhole cameras, we displayed printed books, articles and QR codes for eBooks. We also played a streaming video about the solar eclipse.

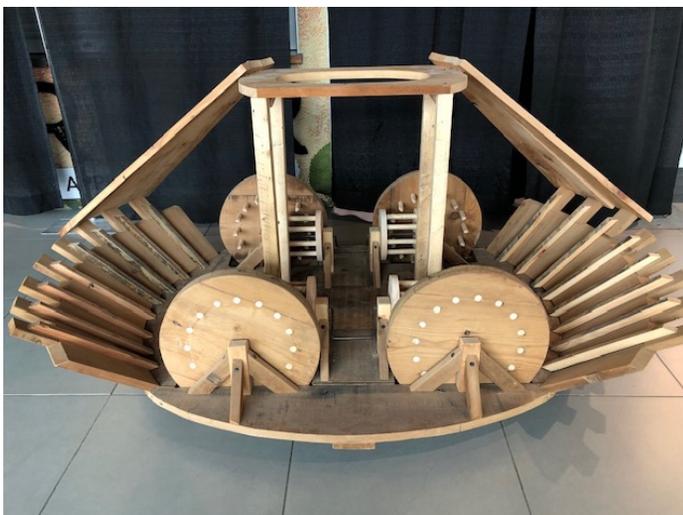
Science Rendezvous:

The theme of Science Rendezvous 2024 was innovation. This included topics ranging from climate change to wildlife conservation and robotics. We selected books and kits that aligned with these

...continued on page 43

...continued from page 42

themes. Our table was across from flying machines like the Aerial Screw, created by a local model maker, Tim Soper, using drawings of Leonardo DaVinci. Building on this, we selected picture books, pop-up books, a poster and videos about Leonardo DaVinci's designs.



In the main hall, there was a model of a Killer Whale (Orcinus Orca). For this theme, we displayed books about killer whales as well as picture books and a whale puppet by Indigenous authors and creators. The specimens in the paleontology teacher kits that we set up were produced by Research Casting International, the same company that prepared the Orcinus Orca skeleton replica.

Boston Dynamics robot dogs were a highlight of Science

Rendezvous. Young children danced with and patted their heads, and parents contemplated potential applications of these robots. How will they be deployed in the future? Our Ozobots fit with the robot theme and they also drew a crowd.

### Making an Impact

It was very rewarding to hear young children say they love science and want to be scientists and engineers. Since hosting a total solar eclipse viewing and participating in Science Rendezvous, we have had people from Kingston and other regions of Ontario, including parents and teachers, contact us to get library cards and borrow materials.

Connecting people with relevant resources and supporting and inspiring learning is what we do. Teaming up with experts, presenting engaging activities and highlighting library resources helped us to make connections with Queen's and Kingston communities. Thanks to all my colleagues and collaborators. I look forward to more partnerships in support of meaningful, connected and engaging programming.

### Resources

Cross-curricular and Integrated Learning: STEM Education  
<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/program-planning/cross-curricular-and-integrated-learning/stem-education>

STREAM: Adding Rigor to STEAM  
<https://www.otffeo.on.ca/en/learning/tlc/report/stream-adding-rigour-to-steam/>

Experimenting with UV-sensitive Beads  
<https://solar-center.stanford.edu/activities/UVBeads/UV-Bead-Instructions.pdf>

How to Make a Pinhole Camera  
<https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/edu/learn/project/how-to-make-a-pinhole-camera/>

Science Rendezvous  
<https://www.queensu.ca/science-rendezvous/>

The Pleistocene : Using ice age mammals to explore climate, habitat, and extinction, junior level paleontology teaching kit.  
[https://ocul-qu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL\\_QU/r9dor2/alma9952655901905158](https://ocul-qu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_QU/r9dor2/alma9952655901905158)

Junior and senior kits available ■

# Professional Resources

Kasey Whalley

**M**any of us can confirm that the libraries in our schools, and the libraries of our loves, are places where we can build community. A fundamental principle of libraries is that they are open to all members of a community to build understanding, knowledge and togetherness. With this idea in mind, the professional resources for this issue were curated to exemplify and inspire ways that we can build community and togetherness through and in our school library spaces.

## ***Calls to ban books are on the rise in Canada. So is the opposition to any bans***

Jessica Wong

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/freedomtoreadweek-schools-1.7106913>

When building and fostering community connections, it's important to ensure that our school libraries are safe spaces that allow our students to see themselves in the collections, art and programs. This recent article was published during the 2024 Freedom to Read week and focuses on the book bans and challenges that appear to be on the rise in our school libraries.

The article touches on the shadow banning of an LGBTQ+ title by Syrian Canadian author Danny Ramadan and examines the landscape of book challenges that are happening across Canada. Commentary from author David A. Robertson, teacher-librarian and OSLA President Wendy Burch Jones, and coordinator of UBC's teacher-librarian program Richard Beaudry offers insights from a variety of stakeholders.

Throughout the article, videos are provided for context and a fuller understanding of the complexities of book selection and challenges. Much of the content in this article inspires actions and approaches a school library can take to ensure students can access the right book for them.

A particularly nuanced part of the article deals with the responses the interviewees give about book bans. While each defends a child's right to read and have access to a variety of books, the overwhelming consensus was that book bans and challenges need to be taken seriously and need to be understood. This doesn't mean that we remove every book from the shelf that's been challenged, but if we're to create open, accepting, community-building spaces, we need to understand where challenges are coming from, and how we can address them in a way that allows our community to be stronger.

One of the most inspiring parts of this article was the variety of people that stand against unilateral book banning; knowing that there are other community members a school library can connect with and rely on can really help us feel less alone in our fight against censorship.

*School Libraries 2021: Fostering Relationships Between Students and Community Members*  
Kara Yorio

<https://www.slj.com/story/school-libraries-2021-fostering-relationships-between-students-and-community-members>

Don't let the American focus of this article about the power of community partnerships in school libraries dissuade you from reading it! Although the

article focuses on a particular American school and school librarian, the work that Julie Malek has accomplished for McAuliffe Manual Middle School and Manual High School in Denver is incredibly inspiring and important. The article chronicles her work as a school librarian through the COVID 19 pandemic and explores some of the innovative and community-driven programs she has run.

Malek's thoughtfulness to community building is highlighted throughout the article. One of the very intentional connections she makes is to connect with Black volunteers for projects and program support to show students "what can be possible for them." This intentionality expands into programs; specifically highlighted in the article is the Reading Partners program where adults from the community volunteer at the school to read with and to students. This program allows students to connect with a trusted adult that isn't their family or teacher, fostering feelings of support, understanding and community connections. The program is very successful and students and adults both find it fun and meaningful.

The article is inspiring in its breadth of ideas – some more elaborate than others. However, there's a wealth of ideas that can be adapted or reimaged for a particular school environment. Understanding the community context can help develop programs and collections that reflect our students, allowing them to make meaningful connections both inside and outside of the school space.

## Quick Reference Section

Quick reference material provides inspiration or context through broader media touching on our theme.



*Check out David A. Robertson's Picks to Diversify Your Children Collections from the Edmonton Public Library*



*School and Public Library Collaboration: Opportunities for Sharing and Community Connections*

Deniese Moreland and Jenna Kammer

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1272606.pdf>



*Beyond the School Walls: Connecting to Community Supports*

People for Education

<https://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Beyond-school-walls.pdf>



*How to design a Library that Makes Kids Want to Read*

Michael Bierut | TED

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsAJTeHJ6A>



*Is this the End of the Library? | The Agenda*  
TVO Today

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvFOSkO1h9I>



# Choosing the Right Books: A Guide to the Selection and Deselection of School Library Resources

Danny Neville

**A**s school library professionals, we purposefully design our collections to support the communities we serve, providing resources targeted at our school populations and our students' specific learning needs. Our shelves, both physical and virtual, are filled with resources for everyone to use, but our spaces are finite. We simply can't keep everything. Just like our closets at home, when new things come in, other items must go. But how do we choose what to purchase in the first place? There are plenty of resources to choose from, and selecting the right materials for our unique communities can be a challenge. On the other side of that coin, once resources have been catalogued and placed on our shelves, how do we decide if or when to remove them? After all, someone must have purchased them for a reason, right?

This was part of the motivation behind creating the OSLA's *A Guide to the Selection and Deselection of School Library Resources*. It was also designed to help schools and boards navigate the issues associated with concerns and challenges related to school library materials, including the rise of book bans across the continent.

The 22-page document is filled with information, guidelines and procedures designed to support school library professionals, schools, educators, staff, administrators, school boards, students and families in their understanding of how resources are curated for a School Library Learning Commons (p. 4). The Ontario School Library Association proudly released this document in 2023, based on countless hours of input from school library professionals from across the province. It provides us with a common language and foundation from which we can begin informed, sometimes challenging, conversations with our stakeholders.

The document is laid out into four main sections.

- 1) Set up
  - Here you'll find the reason for creating this document, the scope of the project, and a few definitions that are helpful when dealing with collection development matters like purchasing books, weeding and addressing book challenges.
- 2) Collection development and maintenance
  - This section helps us understand and communicate the essence of a school library. How is it different from a public library? What is a library learning commons? What do school library professionals do? How do they manage the collection? What criteria can be used to select or

deselect resources? What is the difference between a book challenge and a book ban? You'll find the answers to these and many other questions in this section of the tool.

- 3) Creating policies and procedures for your school library
  - The tool provides a common definition and format for policies and procedures. What do I need to consider when creating school library policies? What do I need to know about library procedures? The document also provides a sample format for designing your own policies and procedures.
- 4) Appendices
  - This part is filled with examples of policies and procedures, sample forms, ministry guidelines, government legislation, and other helpful resources.

So, why does a library policy document matter? Policies and procedures guide everything we do in our school libraries. We need to choose resources based on established criteria and ensure that outdated, inappropriate, deteriorating materials are regularly removed from our shelves. Strong selection criteria ensure that school library collections include:

- a robust and representative range of materials;
- resources that support curriculum and school culture;
- inclusive materials representing various learning styles, needs and formats;
- a variety of perspectives, voices and issues;
- engaging materials for all readers who access your library space.

Whether you're new to your library role or a seasoned professional, the OSLA's *A Guide to the Selection and Deselection of School Library Resources* is a foundational document for every school library across the province.

[https://accessola.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/FINAL-2023-09-OSLA-A-Guide-to-the-Selection-and-Deselection-of-School-Library-Resources\\_EN.pdf](https://accessola.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/FINAL-2023-09-OSLA-A-Guide-to-the-Selection-and-Deselection-of-School-Library-Resources_EN.pdf)



# Inspiring Infographics from School Libraries

Infographic created by Wendy Burch Jones

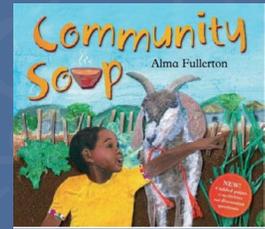
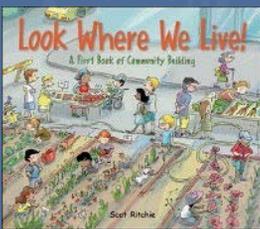
How do you share what's happening in your school library? We'd love to publish some examples of infographics from school libraries across the province. Do you create end-of-year reports? How about checkout data? Or event announcements? Send your infographics to [theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com](mailto:theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com) for a chance to appear in our next edition!



# Back Cover *Bookshelf*



## Resources Related to Community @ Your Library



/ o s l a

:: ontario school library association

## *The Teaching Librarian Submissions*

Are you interested in writing for *The Teaching Librarian*? The theme for our January 2025 edition is *Mystery @ Your Library* and the submission deadline is October 11, 2024. We are also seeking recurring feature articles related to technology in the school library, podcast recommendations, and library infographics. Email [theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com](mailto:theteachinglibrarian@outlook.com) for visit <https://accessola.com/media/the-teaching-librarian/> for more information.

Follow us on X: @TingL\_OSLA, Instagram: @tingl\_olsa, and Blue Sky: [tingl.bsky.social](https://tingl.bsky.social)

