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Volume 32, Issue 3

THE

# Teaching Librarian

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ONTARIO SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

ISSN 1188679X



**Magic in the library**

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**Nurturing the next  
generation of changemakers**

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**Standing strong  
in the face of adversity**

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**heroes @ your library**

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# THE Teaching Librarian

VOLUME 32, ISSUE 3 MAY 2025 ISSN 1188679X

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heroes @ your  
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## TingL Mission

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

## TingL References

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

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## TingL Submission Guidelines

Please Note: Themes are subject to change.

September 2025 V. 33, Issue 1	Belonging @ Your Library Deadline: May 5, 2025
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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.

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# The Editor's Notebook



DANNY NEVILLE

**H**eroes. Those we look up to. Those who protect us. Those we try to emulate. They are legendary figures, mythological goddesses and comic book superheroes.

But not always.

As you read through this issue, dear reader, I challenge you to view the library as the apex hero of this story. School library spaces are more than one individual or one single moment in time. They are more than a collection of books, more than a room or a building. Your school library is an entity that (likely) existed before you first passed through its doors, and will (hopefully) exist long after you leave. They are a lasting legacy, woven together by each of us, a gift to future generations.

Are there library technicians who perform heroic deeds every day? Definitely. Do teacher-librarians go above and beyond the call of duty all the time? They sure do. Are valiant school administrators championing our cause everyday? Absolutely. Do our students regularly uphold the values of libraries, demanding justice and equity for all? Yes, yes, yes.

But it's not about one person, or an isolated experience, although these can certainly have lasting impressions on young readers and researchers. We are all a part of it. Patron. Administrator. Educator. Technician. Librarian. Reader. Whoever you are, you are part of your school library. Let's work together to create heroic spaces that advocate for our collective rights and provide sanctuary to those in need.

In this issue, we hear from and about some truly outstanding school library heroes. Check out Jen Aston's article about the teacher candidates from Western University who rose to the challenge of working in her school library. Or the incredible team of school library professionals in the Near North District School Board who have been advocating for their library people and spaces together for many years. You'll also learn about some individuals and organizations outside of our membership who support and promote robust school libraries on a regular basis, including Maria Martella from Tinlids, James Saunders from the Saunders Book Company, and Lana Button, president of CANSCAIP, the Canadian Society of Authors, Illustrators and Performers.

I hope you enjoy reflecting on the many heroes that make our school libraries truly outstanding. ■

*Danny*

Danny Neville  
Editor of *The Teaching Librarian Magazine*

# President's Report



WENDY BURCH JONES

**W**ho are the heroes in our school libraries? That's easy. You are, dear readers! Each and every one of you. Every chance that I get to spend time with school library professional colleagues from across the province I continue to be awed and amazed by the incredible work that you are doing in your school communities. The innovation, creativity and forward-thinking that is advancing learning, instruction, partnerships, collaborations and advocacy in your school communities is truly remarkable.

I am sure that some of you are sitting there thinking, "Nah, not me. I'm not doing anything special." Okay, don't believe me? Consider this:

You may spend hours pouring over lists and catalogues of new book releases, keeping wish lists, student requests, lists of professional resources colleagues have asked for, books that need to be replaced, new series you want to get, the hot new author everyone is talking about and books to reflect the diversity of your student population - all with a budget that keeps shrinking. This kind of collection development "jenga" is the work of heroes. Heroes, like you, who find the "just right books" for their students and find such joy in placing them in their hands.



Photo by eliottreyna on Unsplash

You could work tirelessly to create fun and interesting displays in your school library learning commons, carefully choosing titles and displaying items that will together create a visual impact that draws in readers, encourages conversations, prompts new book choices, draws attention to important issues or events or perhaps even helps a few tired titles find new life. This, too, is the work of heroes. See yourself yet?

You may have redesigned your space. Thinking about how it is used, by whom, and how the furniture and shelving needed to be situated in order to best serve members of your school community, including those who are differently abled. You have thought about

inclusivity, equity and anti-ableism. You have thought about truth and reconciliation. You have done the hard work of unlearning, learning and relearning to decolonize, centre student voice and integrate relevant and responsive resources. This is what being a hero looks like.

You may advocate - loudly or otherwise - for your students, your budget, your programming or your schedule. You may advocate for school library professionals across your board or district, region, the province or beyond. You may advocate for the freedom to read, for inclusive spaces, for equitable programs or simply on behalf of those who cannot yet advocate for themselves. This is what being a hero sounds like.

So whether it's in a book order, a curated display, finding a title or resource for a student or colleague or fighting for your budget—I hope you see the school library hero in yourselves and each other. I know our roles can be isolating and, often, frustrating (especially in the face of continuing cuts to budgets and allocations). But know that you are making a difference in your school communities. Somewhere out there is a child who thinks the world of you—because you placed a book in their hands that brought the world to them.

Yours in story,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy Burch Jones".

Wendy Burch Jones  
2024 & 2025 OSLA President

P.S. It will be my pleasure to continue to serve you as President for 2025, as well as bringing the voices, concerns and issues of school libraries to the OLA Board as I return to the OLA Board of Directors in the dual role of Past-President. For those of you who know me, you know that I am not silent. I will continue to advocate for you—each and every one of you—loudly, fiercely and proudly. Regardless of where you are in Ontario, what role you play in school libraries, or what the issue at hand is, know that I hear you, I see you and I will continue to fight on your behalf. **!**



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# CSL Column: Awards

## INAUGURAL DONALD HAMILTON SCHOOL LIBRARY ADVOCACY AWARD



From left to right: Doni Gratton, Sarah Broadland, Tammy Le, Lisa Seddon, Serena Mohammed, Joseph Jeffery, and Sarah Wethered.  
Not pictured: Keely Thornton, Devika Chudy, Nicole Hurtubise, April Hilland, Kristie Oxley, and Marilyn Carr.

## INAUGURAL DONALD HAMILTON SCHOOL LIBRARY ADVOCACY AWARD



Wendy Burch Jones.

## ANGELA THACKER MEMORIAL AWARD



Diana Maliszewski and Jenn Brown.

## CSL LEGACY AWARD



Carol Koechlin and Anita Brooks Kirkland.

# Who We Are: School Library Professionals from the Near North District School Board

## Magic in the Library

By Jessica Feick, Supervisor of Library Services Near North District School Board

As far back as I remember, the library was always the answer to many of my childhood questions. When I asked my mom how to make friendship bracelets, her response was to take a book from the library. When I asked my dad who Edgar Allen Poe was, his response was to take a book from the library. When I was bored and looking for something to do, we would go as a family to the library. But for some reason, the idea of the library being the answer to my childhood question of “what will I be when I grow up?” didn’t happen until I was in my mid-twenties.

Growing up in a small community just outside of North Bay, Ontario, I relished our weekly family outings to the local public library as well as library day with Mrs. Bucci, our school’s teacher-librarian. I loved books and getting lost in the written word and had dreams of instilling this love in others. So, in 2002, I enrolled at Nipissing University with the plan of being an English teacher. After graduating from the B.Ed. program in 2007, I worked as an occasional teacher and in contract positions before moving to a new city and taking a contract in a youth detention centre.

Connecting with these kids, who varied in age from 13-19, was hard. They had zero interest in reading, which was difficult in an English class. Since the centre had an unstaffed library on site, we went for a visit to get some reading materials so I could see what the students were interested in. The library was full of amazing classics, but nothing the kids wanted to read. According to the students, none of the books were about people like them. After work that day, I stopped by a bookstore and picked up a few titles to take with me to the centre. The change in the students’ attitude to reading was astonishing! Seeing a kid go from hating reading to devouring *Monster* by Walter Dean Myer and asking for more or a student giving up his movie night privilege so he could read *Imuyasha* by Rumiko Takahashi was like a lightbulb going off for me.

Shortly after this, I moved back to North Bay and switched my focus to library services in the Near North District School Board. I never looked back. I started in the library in an itinerant elementary position, travelling to four different schools, and then transitioned to a secondary school full time. Building a diverse library collection, where all students could see themselves reflected in the books, became a passion of mine. I will never get tired of watching students connect with a book for the first time. That exact moment when a kid turns into a lifelong reader is magical and I am so grateful I get to spend my career experiencing that magic.

## Our Prequel

By JoAnne Richards (retired Itinerant Elementary Library Professional) and Karen Upper (Itinerant Elementary Library Professional), original members of the Near North District School Board Library Services Team. With information from retired Board Teacher-Librarian Linda Langdon and Secondary Librarian Mary Anne Heinonen.

“Libraries must stay relevant, or they become obsolete. ~Jan Reynolds”



Looking around at the incredible library services currently available in the Near North District School Board, it’s hard to imagine the humble beginnings of the library department. But like all great stories, the success of the NNDSB Library Services Team is thanks to the dedication of a wonderful group of people

who weren’t afraid to overcome challenges for something they believed in.

In the late 90’s, the Near North District School Board was created when three distinct school boards, each with a different library model, were amalgamated. Linda Langdon, who had been recently transferred into the newly created Board Teacher-Librarian position, was given what seemed to be an insurmountable task in integrating the three library models she had inherited. Linda hired her first team members on February 2, 1999. These members were responsible for providing full-time services to the Board’s seven secondary schools, and part-time service to the smaller schools, with one team member recently celebrating her 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the role. Linda’s knowledge and experience made it possible for her and then current IT personnel to take the three school boards’ library programs and pull them together by building a full in-house Library System with modules for MARC cataloguing, circulation, inventory and [available from home or school] patron searches.

There were weekly training sessions so that new team members learned how to manage large secondary libraries, each of which contained pods of six to 24 computers in addition to thousands of books. Linda brought with her the Virtual Library 7 Step Model she had developed while at West Ferris Secondary School which was

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mounted on the Board server in order to be available to students in school and at home. The Model focused on teaching students across the Board to use quality materials -- Board-purchased subscriptions for reference works, magazines, newspapers and academic articles.

With the completion of the library circulation system and the hiring of the secondary team members, Linda turned to transferring the different collections to the new system. When she realized that only a small percentage of the collections had ever been entered into a computerized system in the past, she appealed for additional help from the NNDSB. In 2004, a ten-month contract position was created to catalogue the elementary collections with a focus on the West. The cataloguing happened simultaneously with a major weed that was 10 years overdue, with titles such as “You and Your Transistor Radio” being the first to go.

In 2005, after months of weeding and cataloguing the collection, Linda was given the go-ahead to create an Elementary Library Unit. The unit was to cover and provide library services to 36 elementary schools. Each librarian was to provide a full day of library services to each elementary school. Seven Itinerant Elementary School librarians were born that year.

Training began for the new team. It was an intense first year for the elementary unit. For the first few months there were weekly meetings to come up with a plan of action to continue weeding and cataloguing, as well as refreshing the neglected library spaces. School library spaces had, in some cases, become areas of storage, full of gym equipment, broken audio-visual equipment, old filing cabinets full of 30-year-old files and student artwork. It was agreed that many locations desperately needed sorting so that they were functional and welcoming. This was a huge task for the entire team.

Shortly after the formation of the elementary library unit, another teacher-librarian, Jan Reynolds, was hired to guide the elementary team while Linda was the lead for the secondary library team. Thus began the NNDSB’s current library model.

Many of the library spaces lacked updated resources and this led to an initiative to create libraries that all had similar materials, no matter the size of the school population. The goal was for every collection to house material that was engaging, relevant and accessible for all students and staff. This led to the introduction of the Forest of Reading program to the NNDSB school libraries, providing the library services team with another opportunity to create an even literary field across the school board, as all schools would be involved.



Since the formation of the library services unit in 2005, the team has seen many ups and downs, but their dedication and passion for libraries has never faltered. This passion led to collaborations with other Board departments, gaining new co-workers with the merging of the department and two Classroom Support Centres, partnerships with local public libraries and the formation of the “Joy of Reading Celebration,” relevant and welcoming library spaces, fun programming, and most recently, winning the OSLA’s Ontario School Library Professional of the Year Award.

As original team member Karen Upper says, “Reading fantastic stories, helping to develop great reading and curriculum strategies, and watching the joy and enthusiasm that students now show for library has been a rewarding journey!”

Thank you to Karen Upper, JoAnne Richards, Mary Anne Heinonen and Linda Langdon for their words and keeping the story of NNDSB Library Services alive. ■

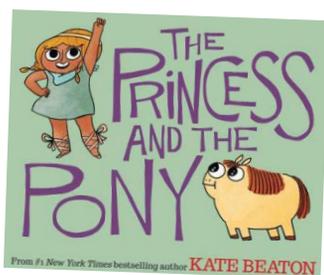


# Meet the Author: An Interview with Kate Beaton



**K**ate Beaton knows heroes. Born in Mabou, Cape Breton, Kate's career as a cartoonist began as a creative outlet at her university newspaper. Merging her education in history and anthropology with her artistic talents, Kate found her niche skewering and satirizing historical and literary figures with her own particular sense of humour. These comics, featuring traditional cultural

“heroes” depicted in irreverent and often hilariously suggestive ways, led to two published collections, *Hark! A Vagrant* and its successor, *Step Aside, Pops*. She became the hero of her own story when she published *Ducks*, her memoir of her years as a twenty-something, working in Alberta's oil fields. In 2023, *Ducks* was the first graphic memoir to win Canada Reads. Kate has written three picture books and the first, *The Princess and the Pony*, has been made into a children's show called “Pinecone and Pony.” In 2024 she was honoured with a Library and Archives Canada Scholar Award, an honour given to “remarkable Canadians who have made an outstanding contribution to the creation and promotion of our country's culture, literary heritage and historical knowledge.” A heroic accomplishment indeed.



**TingL:** Thanks for chatting with me today, Kate.

Kate: You are very welcome!

**I understand you've always been a huge proponent of libraries and museums, even before your education took you in that direction. Why do you feel these are so important, especially to small communities like the one in which you grew up?**

Well, we had no library where I grew up. Only the one in the school, which was a P-12 school. In that sense, it was interesting because when you were very little, you'd have library period and you could go in and you weren't limited to just little kid books. We had a marvelous school library, actually. I remember looking at books that were far more advanced than I was and thinking I still had the right to them, if that makes sense. I prided myself on punching above my weight in the book department. Even if that meant that I signed out *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* when I was in my early teens, reading it and having no real clue what I just read <grin>. But it was important for me to have access to that world of books. I'm sure that library was actually quite small but I remember it as being endless. My home village is so small and isolated. I know we have the internet now, but for me, books were the window into all the things that I yearned to understand and experience. It was how I figured out who I was, in terms of how I thought and what I enjoyed and what kind of creativity or scholarly work drove me.

**No wonder your school library was such a huge draw for you!**

We also had a thing called the Bookmobile that was run by the provincial library system, which would go from community to community, the ones with no libraries, like a small bus full of books. Talk about a magic school bus! The choices were always so limited in the bookmobile but I'd be so pumped on the days it came.

**Well, who doesn't want a magic school bus driving into their town? <laughing>**

I also worked in our local museum as a teenager. It's only open in the summertime, and for two summers, I was the student who manned it. It was a great job for me; I could read and research everything that was inside when I was on my own, and I could help visitors do research when they came.

I saw how much people's history meant to them, that I took for granted. People who traced their roots to the village, but had no family information. Whereas we knew all of our cultural history, going back 10 generations. It was interesting. Without museums, we have no guardianship of the past, and you really felt like that guardian when you worked at one, preserving something important.

**You've noted that there are far more people working in the arts in Canada who come from a background of wealth than those who do not. I had never considered that.**

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## MARTHA BRACK MARTIN

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Well, it's true that you will find a higher percentage of people in the Arts who come from generational wealth than others, namely, working class or poor backgrounds. It's easy to understand why that is. People with money to fall back on can take the chance to become an artist when art is so notoriously fickle and low paying. If you have money, you'll be ok; you can always get it from somewhere, from mom and dad or whoever. But if you don't have money, you'll just starve and be unable to afford a home and everything else. So poor people are less able to take that chance, and often they will opt for stability. God knows, that is what my parents wanted for me. A good government job with healthcare and a pension. But I went and became an artist anyway. And I am one of the lucky ones who makes a career out of it.

**Well, you're a great poster child for that success! You've spoken about why it's problematic if art only comes from the perspective of wealthy artists. Can you dive into that a bit?**

What is lost when we don't have many people in the Arts from poorer backgrounds is that in having less representation, they never get to wield their own image in our shared culture. If most of what we read or watch on TV and film is written from the perspective of someone who comes from wealth, the image of working class or poor people becomes whatever those wealthy people think it is. Inevitably, it's warped and stereotyped, which can only be damaging because in the long run, what we consume in the arts – books, magazines, tv, film, painting, everything – becomes what our culture is, what our understanding of ourselves is. This is true of race representation as well, and in all ways that human society is categorized. For example, right now, certain people are yearning for a construction of the past that never really existed – MAGA, right – but they think it did because mid-century American art had a lot of narrative that was clean, white, happy, prosperous. And false too, but competing images of poverty or racism or inequity inherent in those decades have much less power. But if we are talking about class, I think we are talking about one of the less recognized diversity signifiers. Class does not come up often when we talk about art. So that's a drum I like to beat.

**You come from a region of Canada we often associate with traditional arts, like rug hooking, painting, folk songs, and fiddle playing. How important was that artistic tradition for you, growing up?**

I think that art has always been important here and I have always benefited from it immensely. In the last question, I was talking about class and art. There was never any money over here, the whole island was always economically disadvantaged in my years growing

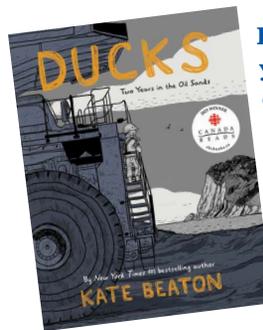
up and in the generations before. But every community was close-knit and had shared culture and whether you were from the Gaelic community like myself or from the Mi'kmaw communities or Acadian communities or Industrial Cape Breton, there was always powerful art and no one ever made money from it. It was art for joy, for cultural memory, for yourself and for each other. I have been wonderfully blessed by this. When I started making comics, I honestly thought no one would ever read them. But I made them anyway. The value of art has always been obvious at home. I think what surprised me when I left was more that this was not the case everywhere else.

**The arts have managed to flourish through times of funding cutbacks, historical upheaval and even the rise of technology. When the Covid Pandemic hit, the arts experienced another resurgence. I remember we were all making bread at home and crafting it up! <grin>. Did you find yourself especially inspired as well?**

Haha! I had an infant during the pandemic, and that is about all I was up to! It was actually the best position to be in during the pandemic I think, because when you are a first-time parent with a baby you're living like a weird crazed hermit anyway. I still wish I had time for more bread making and the like, but now I have two of them and they only want to eat hot dogs.

**I've been there! Never underestimate the value of a hot dog or Kraft Dinner!**

Amen.



**In *Ducks*, you show yourself creating your comics using a photocopier during your second year out west. How important were those early comics to your creative and mental health at that time?**

You will notice in the book that the first year I was there was a lot more troubled than the second year. And I do think I lost myself for a while. It was hard. I couldn't draw. What would I draw? But I was in a better position in the second year, and drawing was a way of reclaiming myself and who I was. It was a lifesaver. I would go to work and get harassed all day maybe, but I would go back to my room at night and post a comic and people online would respond in kind. It felt like a

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community I sorely needed. They saw me for who I really was. I needed that desperately.

**You're quite a renaissance woman, not just writing and drawing, but now even executive producing the show "Pinecone and Pony." You also have your young hotdog-loving children. How do you make it all work? Is it easier now that you've returned to your home community of Mabou?**

Nothing is easier with children! Lord, they are always home sick from school or it's a blizzard out or whatever and the next thing you know, you're trying to write emails with one of them on your lap. Impossible. But we try our best, don't we? A friend told me that I would be amazed at how much work I could get done in 4 hours that used to take 10 hours, and she was right. Those work hours are precious and it's really pedal to the metal then. But also all my email replies are a week late lol.

**In February 2025 you launched your third picture book, *Shark Girl*. What was your inspiration for this story?**

Many things I think. One, I was very impressionable when "The Little Mermaid" came out. It was the first thing I ever saw in theatres. I was completely dazzled. But also, I love to take tropes and put them on their head. So, there is a little bit of "The Little Mermaid" in this but it is a *Shark Girl* so her story is a lot more cheeky, inspired by the character herself. I was drawing this little character and thinking I need a story for her. She is so alive. I'm also a Maritimer, so a story set on a fishing boat makes sense to this person from a fishing village. And it deals with story things like over-fishing, bycatch, ethical fishing. If you grow up on the coast, you are well aware of the realities of these things day to day. I used to live in a house that looked over the ocean and I'd watch the fishing boats go back and forth. I live a bit more inland now, it's very windy by the water! But the inspiration came from all directions. It's a nice little story, it's funny and has something to say. I hope the kids like it.



**So what's next for you?**

I'm working on a middle grade comic book, two picture books and some adult graphic novel ideas. I'm a busy lady! I also paid someone over a year ago to make a new website for me but it is my fault that the website is not up because I never made the time to sit down with this website person and hash it out. I am the worst.

**No, you're just a renaissance woman who is trying to do it all. You really are a hero to many of us. Thanks for chatting with me today...and good luck with all those projects!**

Thanks!

***Ducks* is out in paperback in May 2025. You can find it at your local independent bookstore along with Kate's other books. |**

To learn more about Kate, check out these resources:



**['We had to leave home for a better future': Kate Beaton on the brutal, drug-filled reality of life in an oil camp](#)** (The Guardian)



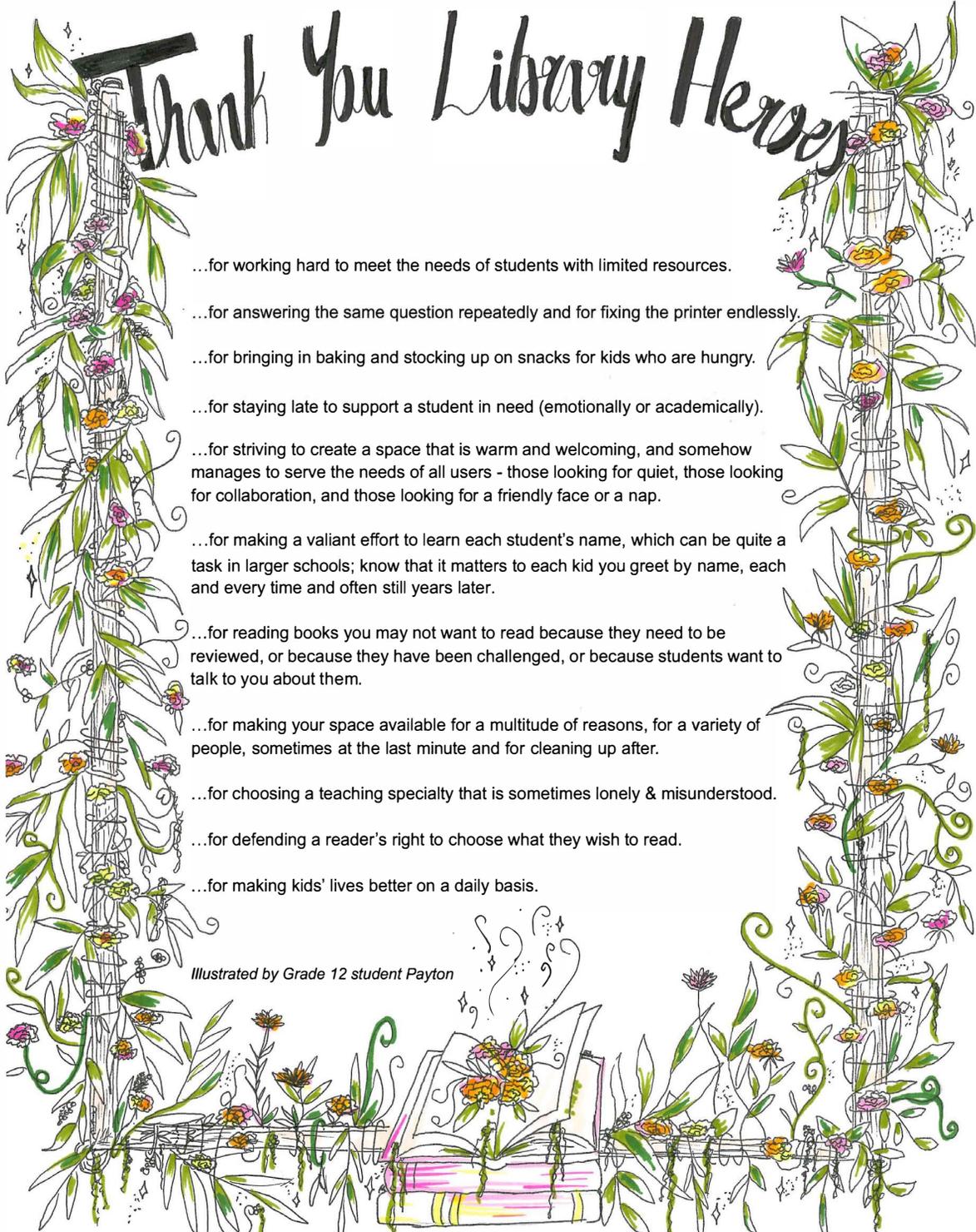
**[Canada Reads Champion Kate Beaton Wins Jan Michalski Prize for Literature](#)** (CBC)



**[Kate Beaton, Library and Archives Canada Scholar Awards 2024 Recipient](#)** (Library and Archives Canada)

# Connections

SHELAGH STRAUGHAN



## Thank You Library Heroes

- ...for working hard to meet the needs of students with limited resources.
- ...for answering the same question repeatedly and for fixing the printer endlessly.
- ...for bringing in baking and stocking up on snacks for kids who are hungry.
- ...for staying late to support a student in need (emotionally or academically).
- ...for striving to create a space that is warm and welcoming, and somehow manages to serve the needs of all users - those looking for quiet, those looking for collaboration, and those looking for a friendly face or a nap.
- ...for making a valiant effort to learn each student's name, which can be quite a task in larger schools; know that it matters to each kid you greet by name, each and every time and often still years later.
- ...for reading books you may not want to read because they need to be reviewed, or because they have been challenged, or because students want to talk to you about them.
- ...for making your space available for a multitude of reasons, for a variety of people, sometimes at the last minute and for cleaning up after.
- ...for choosing a teaching specialty that is sometimes lonely & misunderstood.
- ...for defending a reader's right to choose what they wish to read.
- ...for making kids' lives better on a daily basis.

*Illustrated by Grade 12 student Payton*

# Shelf Awareness: Heroes in the Library

I'm going to admit that the topic for this issue gave me pause. Heroes are incredibly subjective, and I didn't want this column to just be about the heroes of my bookshelves. So, I decided to reach out to some of my own library heroes and ask them about theirs. I hope that their lists and the similarities and differences between them will spark your own thinking. Here goes!

**Sarah Wheatley, teacher-librarian (secondary panel), York Region District School Board**

When I asked Sarah to tell me about her YA heroes (which could be interpreted in any way), she wanted to go to work, and look at her shelves, first. Here's the list she came up with:

Vivian Carter from *Moxie* by Jennifer Mathieu  
Alex Mortiz from *Labyrinth Lost* by Zoraida Córdoba  
Mona from *The Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking* by T. Kingfisher  
Virgil Second from *Motorcycles and Sweetgrass* by Drew Hayden Taylor  
Maggie Hoskie from *Trail of Lightning* by Rebecca Roanhorse  
Starr Carter from *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas

I then prompted Sarah to give me some detail on why she chose those characters.

"I think for all of them, they are reluctant, but accept that no one else can or will step up. Some, like Maggie Hoskie, have supernatural powers, but others, like Virgil Second, just realize no one else will do it. I really like the idea that you can be the hero by being willing to step up and not because you are the chosen one."

I think that many of us have students for whom that last sentence will resonate hugely.

**Melissa Bogaert, teacher-librarian (elementary panel), currently Grade 4/5 classroom teacher, Thames Valley District School Board**

"For my hero, Thea from the book *Why We Play with Fire*, written by Giselle Vriesen. After reading this book last year, Thea's voice, decision making abilities and more still stick with me. Throughout the book, Thea is finding more about herself, her abilities, and trying to understand what is going on around her. The more she finds out, she adjusts her next steps to use her new information. Knowledge gained is not seen as a misstep, but as part of learning. Thea's a hero to me for her perseverance, her determination and her ability to bounce back. The powerful voice that Giselle was able to create with Thea is beyond impressive! For all of these reasons, Thea would be my YA hero 😊"

I added this one to my TBR based on Melissa's recommendation. That line about "knowledge gained" hooked me.

**Emily Tufts, University Librarian, Trent University Library and Archives**

Part of the joy of this exercise for me was that no respondent answered the question in the same way. Emily went non-fiction:

"If I think about contemporary YA heroes, my thoughts turn to Greta Thunberg and Autumn Peltier for their environmental activism. These young women are driving change nationally and globally and inspiring other young people to take action for a better future. They embody courage as they advocate for environmental justice in the face of global economic and political forces that are resistant to change"

If you are looking for ways to put these heroes into your collection, Carole Lindstrom and illustrator Bridget George have created a picture book about Autumn, *Autumn Peltier, Water Warrior*, Roaring Book Press, 2023, with a foreword by Autumn herself.

Greta Thunberg has written or contributed to many books. The best known is probably *No One is Too Small To Make A Difference*, Penguin, 2019, which collates a number of her speeches.

**Alanna King, teacher-librarian, secondary panel (currently teaching English virtually), Upper Grand District School Board, Angela Thacker award winner**

"One of my heroes from recent reads is the secondary character Racer in Carrie Mac's *Zombie Apocalypse Running Club*.

Racer is the founder and head coach of the Zombie Apocalypse Running Club (ZARC). Racer is a Special Olympics triathlon champion with Down Syndrome. Racer appears early on in the novel as he reunites with main characters, Eire and Soren, queer twins who have left their survivalist parents. Racer is appalled by the slowness of the twins' running speed and starts them on a cardio and strength regimen. Racer and his brother Eddie have made t-shirts for every member of the growing ZARC club. As these teens move each day towards safety in a distant compound, each new person they encounter is invited to join the club and given a t-shirt when they accept. Racer is concerned about their own survival through body conditioning and it makes a difference in their zombie encounters. Their regimen gives the group goals, and feelings of security and community as the chaos grows around them."

Alanna's recommendation and the title of the book put that one right onto the "add to my collection NOW list."

**Lisa Shamchuk, Assistant Professor, Library and Information Technology Program, MacEwan University.**

Some of my favorite YA heroes come from Alice Oseman's beloved books! Her incredible cast of characters reminds us that there's space for every kind

...continued on page 17

...continued from page 16

of love and identity in our world. Not all heroes wear capes—some simply show us that we're not alone, and thanks to Oseman, we learn that just by being ourselves, we are all worthy of love.

Lisa was not the only person who put Heartstopper on her list!

**Jen Giffen, teacher-librarian, secondary panel, York Region District School Board**

“This was a tough one for me. Quinn & Rahad from Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely’s *All American Boys* came to mind, Arthur from T.J. Klune’s *Cerulean Chronicles* series, Nick and Charlie from Alice Oseman’s *Heartstopper* series, and so many more...but I will go with the first who popped into my mind, Professor Minerva McGonagall (I assume no introduction is necessary).

I love the portrayal of this independent, strong willed, no nonsense woman. She always speaks her truth - regardless of the opposition she may face. She is a fierce protector of children and education. From her unwavering integrity to her dry sense of humour to her unwavering loyalty, she stands out. A true hero to me has deep-rooted good character, and Prof. McGonagall is the epitome of this.”

**Kathryn Bahun, teacher-librarian, elementary panel, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board**

Like many of my respondents, Kathryn let me know that this was a challenge to narrow down! Like me and the other librarians here, she reads from a wide range of genres and age groups, and had to filter through a lot of data to get to her choices!

“Tiffany Aching, introduced in *The Wee Free Men* by Terry Pratchett. I love Tiffany because she has the adventure that I dreamed about when I was younger - living a regular life, with nothing very exciting happening, and then thrust into a magical quest (that last part never happened to me). Tiffany is almost a witch, realizing she knows more than she thought about magic. She is clever and brave, and she is determined to save her brother and stop the evil Queen. Terry Pratchett does an excellent job creating all his characters, and Tiffany is no exception. She is a strong female character! Side note - I think this is a great introduction to start reading all of Pratchett’s Discworld books!”

“Scott Pilgrim of *Scott Pilgrim* by Bryan Lee O’Malley. Oh Scott. So flawed. So immature. I do love him though, he’s just trying to figure out his life and he sees Ramona and he must talk to her! Defeating her seven evil exes all of a sudden becomes his quest, and he does it! It’s a good thing he has real-life fighting and video game experience because he is kind of lost and bewildered throughout much of the series, and let’s be honest, we’ve all had a lot of lost moments where we don’t know what’s going on in our lives (but hopefully not because of an alliance of evil exes). He deals with powerful foes and still manages to play in his band. While he does have some missteps in his relationships, he ultimately is a good guy. Bonus points for excellent hair and wardrobe.” (I do love the movie and the new TV series but obviously the books are better. - Lisa’s note, obviously!)

“Jo, April, Mal, Molly, and Ripley in *The Lumberjanes* created by Shannon Watters, Grace Ellis, Gus Allen, and ND Stevenson. I can’t pick just one hero from the series, since they are pretty much always together! I love that they are super strong female characters, each with their own personalities and strengths. They rely on each other when dealing with supernatural foes and support each other unconditionally. They are the kind of friends everyone should have. Plus, so many quick references to strong, important, historical

women used as interjections in the stories!”

“Last one - Nick from *Heartstopper* by Alice Oseman. I feel like this should be a popular choice for a hero. Nick is such a good, kind, thoughtful, caring person! It really warmed my heart to read this series and see an emotionally healthy young man. He has issues he must deal with and he faces them with maturity. He is supportive of Charlie and his friends. When I was reading the series I was half holding my breath because I thought their tender, caring relationship would have major drama and things would end poorly but every time there was an issue, Nick and Charlie dealt with it with open communication and love. I chose Nick as a hero and not Charlie because Nick is a hero for Charlie. Nick is strong and helps Charlie, never worrying about what others think about him and putting Charlie first. (Side note - I think the tv series is great, but I love the books more).”

The people I asked to tell me about their YA heroes had some things in common. They have all, in some way, inspired me as a reader and teacher-librarian (and now, educator of future educators). They all wear an amazing number of hats - some are parents, some volunteer in their community, some run remarkable side projects (I’m looking at you, @keetarella (Kathryn)), some are involved in provincial and national library associations and programs (hello, Forest of Reading), some show up on Tuesday night for virtual craft night and all are advocates for libraries and the students who use them.

For my own heroes, I am feeling the need to shout out some organizations doing remarkable work in the current climate in the United States. I was lucky enough to hear Emily Drabinski, past-president of the American Library Association, speak at last year’s Ontario Library Association Super Conference, and she immediately became one of my heroes for the work she and the ALA continue to do to support librarians under siege. Whether it’s book bans or fighting to hold Drag Storytime, these people are doing the work for all of us. Please consider following the ALA’s social media presence and potentially making a donation to their work.

We Need Diverse Books (@weneeddiversebooks on Instagram) is a non-profit organization in the United States whose goal is “Putting more books featuring diverse characters into the hands of all readers.” If you need book suggestions to diversify your collection, resources and research around why it’s important for readers to see themselves in the books they encounter, or just some fabulous swag that shouts out diversity (and helps fund the program), this is a great place to start. I regularly find new titles on their social feed.

Finally, I need to say thank you to the librarians who started me along my reading path. First, my mom’s friend, Joanne, who was my first childhood librarian (aged 2-5) at the Fred Landon Branch in London, Ontario. We would walk the 4 blocks to the library on a lot of days - my mom could visit with Joanne and I got book time! I ended up working as a page at that library through high school, so it stayed an important place in my world. I was lucky enough to have Ruth Hay as my librarian at Tecumseh Public School in London from K - 8, and she created safe space for me, as I helped shelve books and read and wrote voraciously. Public librarians in Tallahassee, Florida, Sauble Beach, Midland, Haliburton, Elora, Hastings and of course, Peterborough/Nogojwanong, where I now live, have all made a difference to me as a reader and eventually as a parent of readers. There really are not enough words for my gratitude.

I’m hoping that the suggestions here (of books, organizations and people) lead you to some fun reflections and conversations around your own heroes in the library. ■

# Treasure Mountain 8

JEN GIFFEN

Sketchnoting is a creative process for recording thoughts using a mixture of illustrations, symbols and text. In this example, Jen Giffen shares her sketchnotes from the Treasure Mountain Canada 8 research symposium and think tank. She uses Procreate (an illustration, sketching and painting app) to help make her sketchnotes. |

Sketchnote by: @VIRTUALGIFFEN 

## Treasure Mountain 8

Canadian School Libraries 

### AI in the LLC

- How do we support - Ask a? → Prove it Wrong
- ConvoS BTWN Ts & Ss
- Media Mondays 
- No AI w/ Indigenous Resources
- Day of AI Humy AI Hey Gen CURIPOD 

### CYBERSECURITY

- Cyberlegends
- Keep kids out of trouble → Harness the Good. 

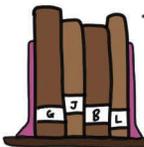
### HOW TO ADVOCATE

- Connect to LG. School Program + initiatives 
- Craft Narratives
- Social Media to Engage
- Advocacy Plan 
- Connect w/ Cath. Ts 

### IMPROVING Disability Rep

- Disability is Socially Constructed Medically Supported
- Is Terry Fox the ONLY Model of a Person w/ a Disability?   
- Supercrip Trope 
- Move Beyond Medical Model
- IBBy Selection

### Dismantling Dewey

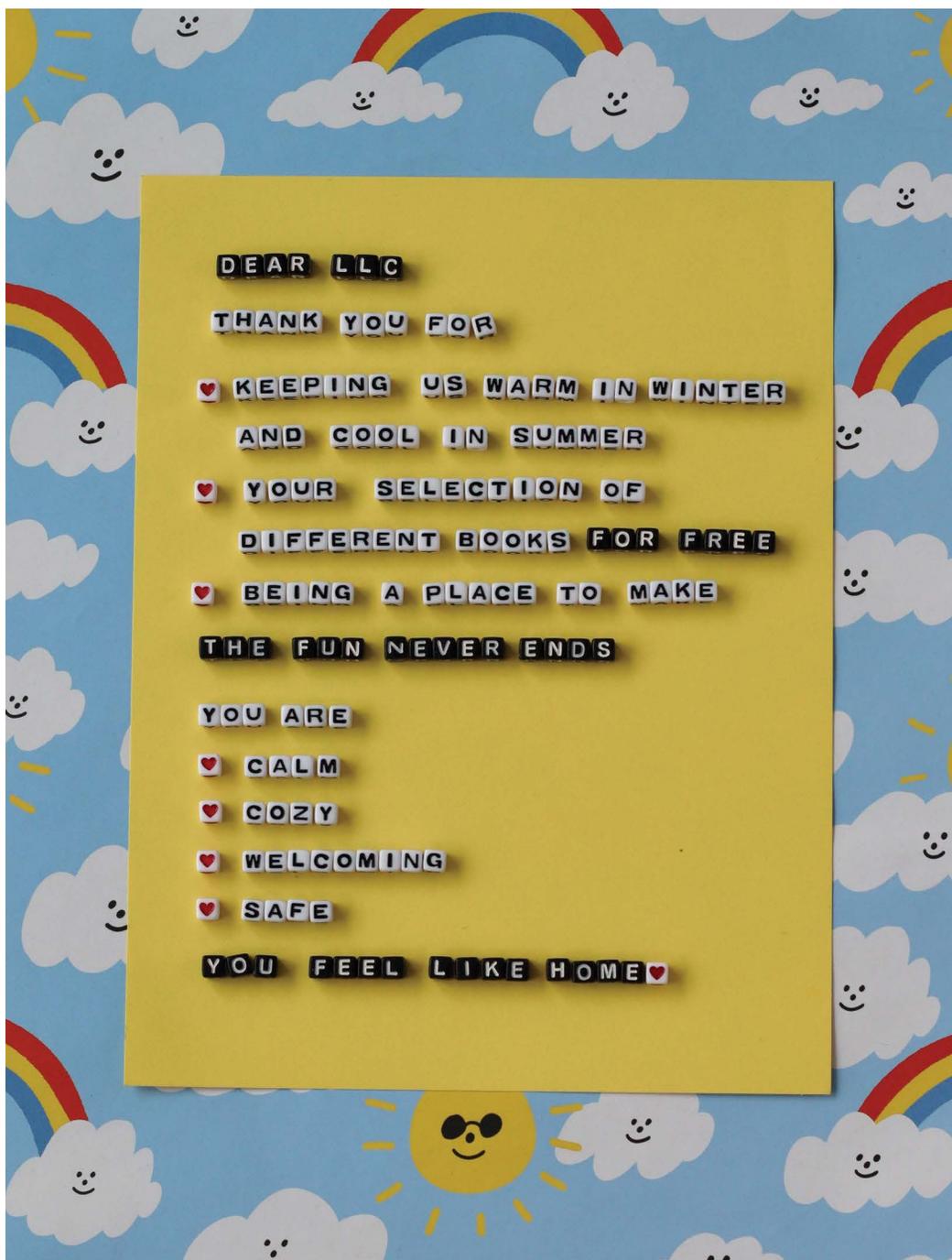
- Dewey = Total A-Hole   
- Why Uphold This?
- Move to Brian Deer Classifict'n
- Roote in Territory
- Alphabet Based, v. Flexible
- Active Act of Reconciliation   
↳ Which is hard. 

### SCHOOL LIBRARY DESIGN

- Began BC of Earthquakes
- Need to involve all Stakeholders 
- uDL, Student Voice, Survey for Needs

# Visual Essay

TINA ZITA



The letter above is a curated collection of ideas from friends at Aylesbury P.S. when they were posed with the prompt to write a ♥ letter to the Library Learning Commons, often a Hero in our School Communities.

**We would love to hear what your learners say! Share your responses with @tingl\_osla.**

# Drawn to the Form: Card Catalogue Crusaders - Superheroes in your Library

DIANA AND MARY MALISZEWSKI



Photo by Dev on Unsplash

Comics and superheroes would appear to go hand-in-hand. For many people unfamiliar with the medium, the two are synonymous. If you grow your exposure to texts that use panels, gutters and visuals intertwined with words, you'll realize that comics and graphic novels are much more than the superhero genre. This is why a long-running review site, established in 2002 by Robin Brenner is called "No Flying, No Tights." In her words:

**“The title of the site comes from a quote from the producers of the television show, *Smallville*. In order to revamp the Superman mythology for the new show, the producers and writers came up with one unbreakable rule: no flying, no tights. I've adopted that as a kind of motto. Though it's not strictly true that there is no flying or tights in the graphic novels I review, I am going at it with the idea that graphic novels can be a whole lot more than what a regular joe might expect from them.**”

We couldn't resist leaning in to the theme of this issue of *The Teaching Librarian* with gusto, and so we decided to feature superheroes from comics who are also librarians.

Of all the librarians in comics, Batgirl is by far the most famous. Introduced in 1961, Batgirl was created to be the female counterpart (and sidekick) to Batman. Like her crime-fighting partner, Batgirl is an ace detective and expert in hand-to-hand combat. Unlike the Dark Knight, whose alter ego is none other than millionaire Bruce Wayne, Batgirl's secret identity is a lot less glamorous: she works at the Gotham Public Library as Barbara Gordon, daughter of police commissioner James Gordon. Despite being an action hero first and foremost, Barbara's library background is frequently a plot point in stories that center on her. One issue of *Batman '66* even pits her against the Bookworm, a supervillain whose schemes are inspired by famous works of literature.

Rex Libris is a lesser known hero who takes the library theme one step further. In addition to being a librarian in his civilian identity,

the aptly named hero, who headlined his own comic from 2005 to 2008, works on behalf of the Ordo Bibliotheca, a secret international society of librarians, to collect late book fees and fight the powers of ignorance and darkness. Though Rex's adventures, penned by Canadian comic book artist James Turner for Slave Labour Graphics, are slightly more comedic than Barbara's, they nevertheless emphasize the importance of reading and learning.

How might you be a superhero in your own library, at least as it relates to comics and graphic novels?

- Uncover your hidden biases: Do you secretly consider graphic novels to just be “a gateway to REAL reading?” Do you explain how to read manga to someone by saying “you read backwards?” Do you cringe or celebrate when students take out a stack of “only” comics? We all have our opinions but we must ensure that these do not negatively impact the readers who come to our school libraries.
- Do not “put your comics on vacation.” I have actually heard of school library professionals who proudly admit to others that they hide some of their comics in order to force their students to borrow other items. There are other methods of encouraging students to read from different media and genres; deliberately preventing readers from accessing books is not an acceptable one. Making books unavailable is a strategy used by some organizations to reduce or limit 2SLGBTQIA+ literature, so think twice.
- Treat your comic and graphic novel collection with the same level of respect and rigor as you do the other areas of your collection:
  - Allocate a decent percentage of your budget to purchasing comics and graphic novels.
  - Devote adequate shelf space and signage to the texts.
  - Select / deselect using set criteria and standards.
- Ask your students for their opinions. Readers love to recommend their favourite titles or series to you. Double-check to ensure that the titles are suitable for your general student body (e.g. it's safe to say that *The Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons and John Higgins is definitely not appropriate for a K-6 school library collection).
- Adopt some of the goals of the Ordo Bibliotheca - don't worry about late book fees, but try to fight the powers of ignorance and darkness. ■



Photo by Collin Wigger on Unsplash

# The Buzz: Empowering Tomorrow's Heroes: Helping Students Strengthen Their Changemaking Muscles with the 'Time for Change' Program

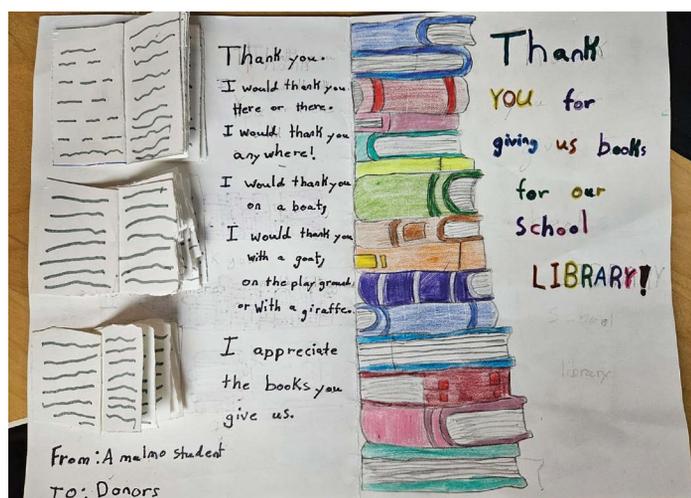
JOANNE SALLAY

In this issue of Heroes @ Your Library, we explore how educators and school library professionals can nurture the next generation of changemakers. As lovers of literature, we all have our favourite protagonists—characters who spark inspiration in different ways for each of us. A personal favourite growing up was Anne Shirley from the classic *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery, whose imagination, creativity and spirit made her unforgettable, long past reading the series. Many of today's middle-grade readers and young adults find inspiration in Percy Jackson, the demigod hero from Rick Riordan's best selling *Percy Jackson & The Olympians* series, whose courage, loyalty and commitment to helping others resonate with young readers. These beloved protagonists have not only captivated readers of all ages but have also inspired TV shows, movies and even musical adaptations, further cementing their influence across generations. While our heroes may differ, what unites them is their ability to inspire us to be our best selves, to see a bit of ourselves reflected in their journeys and to find the bravery to create positive and lasting change in the real world.

School libraries are more than rooms that house shelves filled with books—they are hubs for learning, leadership and community engagement. By incorporating changemaking education into library programs and curricula, school library professionals can empower students with the tools and confidence to tackle real-world issues and see themselves as active participants in shaping a better future.

take meaningful action in their communities. This initiative is further strengthened by the support of Swiss Haute Horlogerie manufacturer Audemars Piguet, which has joined forces with First Book Canada and Ashoka Canada to equip a generation of educators and young people with the skills needed to drive sustainable change—both within Canada and around the world.

For those new to First Book Canada, it is a nonprofit dedicated to supporting educators and program leaders who serve children in need. Through its Marketplace and First Book Canada Accelerator, the organization provides high-quality books and resources for children in low-income communities—ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has access to the tools they need to learn, grow and lead. They have partnered with Ashoka Canada to further their shared commitment to cultivating a community of change leaders.



Through *Time for Change: Dream, Act, Change Our World*, a new collaboration between First Book Canada and Ashoka Canada, educators have access to free, ready-to-use resources designed to help students develop their changemaking muscles and

In the interview that follows, Charmaine Lyn from Ashoka Canada shares how the *Time for Change* program—featuring Time Savers, resources paired with thoughtfully selected books from First Book Canada on themes of empathy, leadership, teamwork and action—is designed to provide an actionable roadmap for educators to support young changemakers in their classrooms, libraries and beyond. Read on to learn more about their initiative!

**Changemaking in Action: A Conversation with Charmaine Lyn, Strategic Advisor at Ashoka Canada**

**Joanne Sallay: Kindly share with our readers the story of Ashoka Canada and how it aligns with empowering young changemakers?**

Charmaine Lyn: Ashoka was founded in 1980 and started out as a network to support and accelerate the work of high-impact

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social entrepreneurs: people who developed and implemented social innovations (new ways of doing things) that were effectively shifting long-held behaviours and mindsets (changing policies and processes). It's telling that the first Fellow, elected in 1981, was Gloria De Souza, an educator who wanted to radically transform the learning experience for students in India; she worked to translate the government-mandated curriculum into an experiential learning system that supported the internalization of concepts, skill development for applied learning, sensitive growth in attitudes and values that support children in becoming conscientious conservers of their community and the environment. Today, over 3,800 Fellows have been named in 93+ countries.

Ashoka is convinced of the power and potential of recognizing and amplifying the ways in which Ashoka Fellows achieve profound system change in their communities. These people's insights, ways of working and ways of seeing and being in the world contribute to their ability to "make a difference" and "be the change." This is why Ashoka holds the vision of a world in which everyone is a changemaker. A changemaker is someone who imagines a new reality, takes action and collaborates with others to bring that new reality into being for the good of others.

### **What inspired the Time for Change: Dream, Act, Change Our World project? How did the collaboration between Ashoka Canada and First Book Canada come about?**

Our world of rapid and unpredictable change requires everyone, regardless of geography, race or socio-economic background to adapt to and create change for the common good. First Book Canada is part of the largest online community of educators serving kids in poverty and Ashoka Canada is part of the largest global network of leading social entrepreneurs. Together, we launched *Time for Change: Dream, Act, Change Our World* to address the opportunity and resource gap that limits many young people from low-income and historically excluded communities in Canada from solving the problems they care about, building from their unique perspectives and lived experiences. This work is made possible by our partnership with fine watchmaking manufacturer, Swiss Haute Horlogerie manufacturer Audemars Piguet.

### **The initiative focuses on helping students become real-life heroes in their communities. How do you define a "real-life hero," and what role do empathy, teamwork and leadership play in creating one?**

We are actually hoping to support students to be changemakers, not necessarily "heroes." We're not talking about the archetypal hero: an individual leaping into action to 'save the day' and taking on a problem by themselves. Rather, changemaking starts with the premise that diverse views - especially the lived experiences of the people closest to the 'problem' or challenge - are fundamentally important to understanding a problem, which one needs to do in order to imagine solutions that might actually be adopted long-term.

Changemaking is the idea that every person, in collaboration with others, can imagine, develop and apply creative solutions to address

problems in their communities. To work together with others for a shared and ambitious goal, changemakers need:

- empathy (to care about and appreciate the complexity of the challenge for those who experience it),
- teamwork (to surface diverse possible solutions and work through processes to design and refine the best solutions), and
- leadership (to see the big picture and keep moving toward the vision).



### **How do you envision educators using the Time for Change resources to inspire their students? Are there any standout examples of success stories you've seen so far?**

We've heard from educators that students are hungry for opportunities to develop their changemaking 'muscles.' Students at different ages and stages of development want to feel a sense of empowerment or agency to speak up, and ultimately they are seeking ways to be a part of the world, which is increasingly complex and challenging for families and communities of all stripes - and especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Educators, for their part, are on the front line of confronting those challenges alongside their learners and communities. Against this backdrop, we hope that the Introductory Resources for educators will serve as a solid foundation in the concept of changemaking and a compelling case for its relevance for educators, especially as it relates to social and emotional learning outcomes. And we hope that the Time Savers (short, fully designed activities that can be rolled out with minimal preparation) will provide engaging ways for educators to bring changemaking to life with students in their classrooms and programs.

### **What are some practical strategies educators can use to incorporate changemaking into their classrooms or library programs? How can these approaches impact students' confidence and leadership skills?**

Educators might use some of the activities set out in the Time Savers to get students talking about things that are already emerging

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in the classroom as important topics: interpersonal relationships in the classroom (such as inclusivity and belonging), broader school-wide challenges (such as mental health) or more generally in their community (such as food insecurity) or the world (such as climate change).

Engaging the students in conversations on subjects that are priorities for THEM, and supporting them in seeking to understand the problem in ways that allow for the emergence of possible solutions is changemaker education par excellence. The impacts are multiple: students feel seen and heard when their perspectives are part of the analysis AND the development of alternative pathways. Moreover, students experience the power of thinking and working together with others.

**Time for Change resources are offered in multiple languages, including English, French Inuktitut, Plains Cree and Anishinaabemowin. How does this initiative aim to reach underserved communities and support Indigenous students?**

In addition to offering the suite of resources in English and French - the two official languages of Canada, First Book Canada and Ashoka Canada wanted to offer Time Savers in at least three Indigenous languages as part of our shared commitment to respond to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We are excited to be able to offer these resources to complement the wonderful collection of books and stories on changemaking - also in these three Indigenous languages - that are already very popular with educators who are accessing titles on the First Book Canada Marketplace.

**What are your hopes for the long-term impact of Time for Change on students, educators and their communities? How do you envision it evolving over its three-year timeline?**

We hope that we can continue to find ways to make it easier and easier for educators to bring these resources into their libraries, classrooms and communities. Our hope is that as the work begins to take hold, teachers and students will share their stories of changemaking with others - and we intend to amplify those stories as powerfully as we can - with the goal of inspiring others to pick up the resources and put them into action. We're hoping to see many small ripples of change eventually build toward a larger wave of transformation.

**What advice do you have for educators who want to inspire changemaking in their students but may feel overwhelmed or unsure of where to start?**

We know that educators have enormous demands on their time and energy, AND that they are committed to supporting young people to be equipped to thrive and flourish now and in the future. So, we would encourage educators to think of these resources as helpers - things that are there to support the transformational work that is at the heart of what they are already doing, day in and day

out. Teachers and students alike are experts in change and growth - whether they are supporting and guiding it, or living it.



**If you could give one key message to educators and school library professionals who want to help their students become real-life heroes, what would it be?**

Every small step toward change is important. With every effort that is made in support of building up our - and our children's - ability to center empathy, to feel a sense of confidence and agency to speak up and take action and to experience the powerful impact of working with others in a way that benefits the collective, we can change our world.

**More about Time for Change:**

Resources are now available in English, French, Inuktitut, Plains Cree and Anishinaabemowin (Eastern Ojibwe). More resources and languages will be available throughout 2025-2026 at <https://www.fbmpcanada.org/time-for-change-ca>  
Book Suggestions from First Book Canada Marketplace: <https://www.fbmpcanada.org/see-all-books/books-featured?cat=1931>

The *Time for Change* program is a three-year initiative running from 2024 to 2026, offering free resources for educators to integrate changemaking education into their classrooms and libraries. All materials are available for download, with printed copies provided upon request. Educators using these resources may also be eligible for funding opportunities, including First Book Canada Marketplace Credits, honorariums, classroom books to support lessons and books for students to take home.

For more details on resource packages, funding opportunities and webinar opportunities for staff, educators can contact [timeforchangecanada@firstbook.org](mailto:timeforchangecanada@firstbook.org).

# Tech Bytes with Lisa: Wakelet

Like many of our students, when we are in search of resources our first stop is Google. From tools to support our math teachers as they struggle to teach the new math curriculum, to new ideas that engage students in our libraries, our online searches lead us to an extensive list of links to websites, videos, images, articles, PDFs and so much more.

Although our Google drives allow us to create, save, and organize various files, have you ever wondered how you can save those valuable web links that contain the perfect teaching resources and ideas so you can access them later?



The internet and various social media platforms have led to an explosion of educational content creation and sharing of resources online among educators everywhere. For this, social bookmarking is an essential skill for school librarians and educators alike. Social bookmarking is a means of saving, organizing and sharing valuable online resources like websites, videos and articles. One educational app that is a perfect social bookmarking tool is [Wakelet](#).

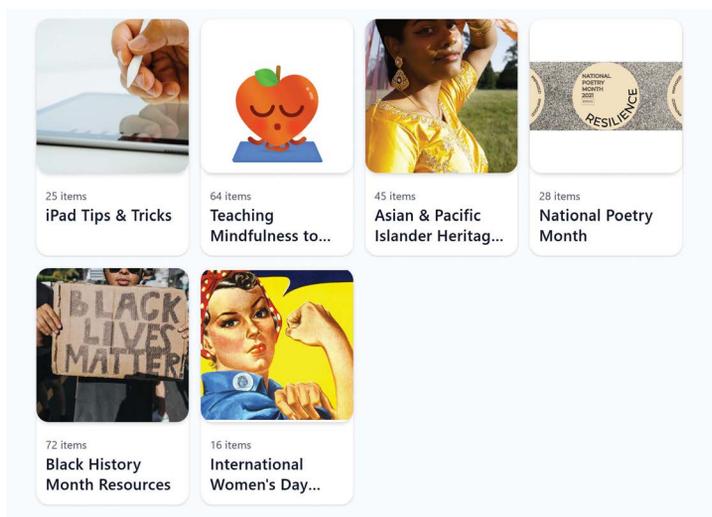
## What is the Purpose of this Tool?

Wakelet was created in 2015 and is a versatile tool that allows its users to “bookmark, organize, collaborate and present...all under one roof,” as its login page states. This multifaceted, free tool allows for the curation of digital content for various educational purposes and serves as a collaboration platform for team teaching with classroom teachers. In comparison to other similar tools, Wakelet is ideal for creating visually appealing collections and sharing resources with a focus on collaboration.

## What features and capabilities does this tool offer?

Wakelet is a simple and user-friendly tool with an interface that is easy for anyone to learn. Here is a list of its many features and capabilities:

- **Ease of Use:** Wakelet offers a ‘drag and drop’ interface that makes it easy to organize and rearrange content within collections. As well, collections can be shared with a unique URL, via social media, or embedded within your library websites.
- **Content Integration:** Its interface offers integration with other popular apps, such as Canva, Google Classroom, Google Drive, OneDrive, Microsoft Teams, YouTube, and more.
- **Visual Enhancements:** Your collections can be more visually appealing by customizing their layouts, such as using a media view, compact view, grid view, mood board or column views. Collections can also be visually enhanced with a cover image or background image.
- **Group Collaboration:** Multiple users can contribute to a collection of resources in real-time, making it a great platform for group projects and teamwork.
- **Searchable Curated Collections:** Users can search and explore millions of collections organized by other educators. When using this feature, search the word ‘library’ or ‘school library’ and explore the many curated collections of resources available at your disposal.
- **User Engagement:** The Immersive Reader feature can read aloud text in collections, adjust text size and highlight parts of speech for increased accessibility. Users can also react to and comment on collections, fostering engagement and interaction within the community.
- **Collection Spaces:** Wakelet allows for the creation of spaces with multiple collections with a particular focus. For example, a school librarian could use a Wakelet space to provide book reviews.



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### What privacy and security features are included in this digital tool?

Wakelet prioritizes privacy and safety for all its users. This digital tool complies with the following international and national standards to ensure the secure and responsible management of data: the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union, the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in the U.S., the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), and the Consumer Safety Products Commission (CSPC).

Overall, Wakelet ensures that all aspects of its interface and user interaction are safe and meet the highest standards of data protection. For more information about Wakelet’s privacy policy, please visit <https://wakelet.com/privacy>.

### What are best practices for using Wakelet in the school library?

There are endless best practices for using Wakelet in our school libraries both with our staff and students:

- Create collections by theme, subject or project to make it easier for staff and students to locate resources. Try creating a Black History month collection you can embed on your school library website or have teachers share via their Google Classrooms.
- Collaborate with teachers by creating collections of resources to support curricula and classroom activities.
- Encourage students to create their own collections to organize projects, gather research or to create their own digital portfolios.
- Teach digital literacy by showing students how to evaluate sources, curate information and present it effectively.
- Create engaging library newsletters to share updates, newsworthy items, announcements and events with your school community.
- Write book reviews for new books added to your library collections and share with staff and students.
- Create themed reading lists to encourage students to read and explore your library books.
- Create collections of virtual field trips that allow students to explore various new places from the classroom or from the library.
- Create a collection of professional development resources to share with staff on the latest educational hot topic, such as AI.



For more ways to integrate Wakelet into your school library and classroom, check out Alice Keeler’s blog post on “[11 Ways Teachers can use Wakelet](#)” and Matt Miller’s blog post from Ditch the Textbook, “[20 ways to use Wakelet in the Classroom.](#)”

By integrating Wakelet into your school library and classroom practices, you not only enhance and empower student learning but also foster a culture of collaboration among students and staff. Whether through themed collections, digital portfolios or professional development resources, Wakelet offers endless possibilities to enrich learning and engagement.

Feel free to follow me on Wakelet and explore my published collections at [wakelet.com/@LisaLoffredi](https://wakelet.com/@LisaLoffredi)

# Maria Martella: School Library Hero

The first time I had the pleasure of meeting Maria Martella was at a conference in Toronto a few years ago. I can't recall if it was Reading for the Love of It or the OLA Super Conference, but in all likelihood, it was both. After taking part in one book talk with Maria, I will never attend another conference without first checking to see if she's on the schedule.

If you want to know what's coming down the pipeline of Canadian books for kids and teens, Maria is the person you need in your life. Not only does she seem to know **every** book that's coming out, she speaks about them all with passion and genuine interest. She is a knowledgeable, kind, well-read lover of libraries, and as school library professionals, she's one of our very best friends.

Maria is also a small business owner. If you're unfamiliar with Tinlids, you can check out their website or drop in for a visit at their north Toronto location. I was fortunate to visit this space - part showroom, part warehouse, part bookstore - the first time I read for the Blue Spruce selection committee in the spring of 2019. I spent one entire (glorious) day at Tinlids reading dozens of picture books. I also got a tour of the warehouse, a well-oiled machine filled with bookshelves, boxes, and friendly faces running around completing orders and chatting with customers.

When I asked Maria about her passion for school libraries, here's what she said.

***"I believe strongly in school libraries as the safest and most important place to nurture a love of reading. Unfortunately, not every family is able to purchase books, or even go to a public library regularly. With working parents and the many challenges that some families face economically or otherwise, it's not always possible. Most kids will learn to read, but that doesn't mean they will be readers for life. I believe children who are exposed to books on a regular basis and have many choices will have a better chance at becoming true readers. If a school has a well-funded and professionally staffed school library/learning commons, this reinforces the importance of literacy."***

She was instrumental in igniting the [Save School Libraries Coalition](#), a collection of school library stakeholders committed to ensuring Ontario students have access to school libraries and trained library staff as a foundational part of their education (Canadian School Libraries, 2021).

***"When Covid happened, and some school libraries were closed, it really hit home that many kids would simply not have access to books. Families with the financial means were setting up learning pods and they were able to find ways to provide the necessary tools for learning. Other families were not as fortunate. It definitely seemed like an equity issue, so I called a few publishers and other associations in our book world to see if we could band together to fight for school libraries. The past few decades had already done enough damage, but things seemed so much worse. Everyone was willing to meet and we called our group the Save School Libraries Coalition. We sent letters to the Ministry. OSLA created a cheat sheet postcard for parents with questions they could ask their school administrators. It's important for all sectors to come together because the health of school libraries affects us all."***

If that weren't enough, Maria and her team also act as the official wholesaler of books for OLA's Forest of Reading. After speaking with Maria, it's obvious that this role is so much more than simply selling books.

***"We are very proud to be the official wholesaler for Canada's largest recreational reading program – the Forest of Reading. Our job is to co-ordinate all of the submissions from publishers, support the committees and provide speedy delivery of Forest orders to schools and libraries. We also promote the Forest through ads, book talks, attending vendor fairs, social media, Forest festival book tents and the OLA marketplace store at the Super Conference. We celebrate the volunteers and everyone involved in the Forest by hosting a huge (invitation only) breakfast"***

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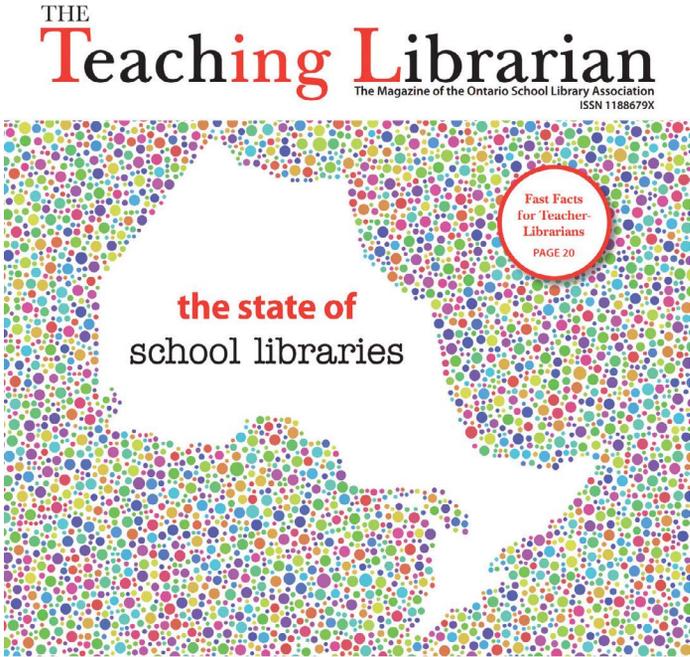
*at the OLA Super Conference. This is a great in-person event that brings the community together and enables us to share our love of the program and thank everyone who makes it happen. We provide financial support for all of these events and we profit-share with the OLA to ensure the program can continue.”*  
~ Maria Martella

*“Tinlids has been the official wholesaler for the Forest programs now since 2015 and with each passing year they deliver excellence in what they do. They champion Canadian books day in and day out, celebrate their creators across the country to thousands of educators, but most importantly they are fierce advocates for access to books for young people. There is no one that cares more about books, the industry and the people within it more than Maria Martella and her team.”*  
~ Meredith Tutching, Director, Forest of Reading



For more information about Maria and her school library stories, check out our interview with her from [The Teaching Librarian Volume 27 Issue 1](#), September 2019.

September 2019 Volume 27, Issue 1 SPECIAL EDITION



**School Libraries by the Numbers**  
See how school libraries are run and staffed in each region of Ontario  
PAGE 22

**Why School Libraries?** **Read more about**  
Authors and booksellers give their take **how school library funding and OLA research**  
PAGES 12 AND 38

As you can see, Maria is one of those people who lives and breathes books, which, in her case, very much includes school libraries. Whether you're looking for one specific title, or a collection of books to support a unit or school initiative, she is the perfect library hero to contact.

And, remember, if you ever see Maria's name on a list of conference presenters, make sure you're the first in line for a front row seat. You'll be glad you did. █

**tinlids**  
best books for schools and libraries

# CANSCAIP: School Library Heroes

**T**he Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers (CANSCAIP) is a not-for-profit national arts service organization founded in 1977. It offers professional development, promotion and support to many children and teen authors, illustrators and performers. It consists of over 400 traditionally published members and over 600 associate friends, which include self-published writers and illustrators, educators, librarians, publishers and journalists.

CANSCAIP offers school and library visits with its author and illustrator members. We all know that stories come to life when students meet the authors and illustrators of the books they've read or have had read to them. Therefore, developing a connection with CANSCAIP is an invaluable opportunity for every school librarian.

I have had the privilege and honour to interview Lana Button, the president of CANSCAIP's executive board committee. Lana is the author of several children's books and has received awards for her work. She visits schools and libraries where her literary presentations encourage students to dream, write and edit stories.



Photo by Karen Crossing

## **How can hosting local author events benefit our students and library programs?**

Students are inspired to read and inspired to write after experiencing author presentations. Libraries can expect an increased excitement in reading after an author visit. Reading becomes more enticing after students spend time with a writer, learning 'the personal side' of a story that began as a creative spark and is now a book in the author's hands. Like seeing a movie preview and then planning to watch the full feature, students reach for the author's book and perhaps try out a new genre after experiencing author presentations.

Students also gain confidence in writing stories after spending time with a writer. Through author presentations, students learn about story development, character development and editing. They can learn about research techniques, storytelling techniques and the process of publishing books. Bringing an author to students brings stories to life and brings writing within the student's reach.

## **Are there ways to subsidize the cost of author visits in schools?**

The Writers Union of Canada has a Writers in Schools program, and you can find information on their programs at <https://www.writersunion.ca/>. This grant program opens twice a year, and authors who are members of the Writers Union of Canada can apply for a subsidized presentation on behalf of a school.

These grants cover the cost of an author visit. They are very popular, and the number of grant applications is typically greater than the number of successful applicants. But if you are approaching an author about a school visit, it is worth asking if the author is a member of the writer's union and if they have a spot open in their Writer's in Schools grant applications.

## **How does one go about hosting a local author from CANSCAIP at their school? Is there a list of authors to choose from?**

[CANSCAIP.org](http://CANSCAIP.org) has a member directory that provides each author's contact information. Authors welcome you to reach out! They will happily send presentation details, including availability and fees.

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### **Can author visits be tailored towards different age groups and/or grade levels?**

Each author has their own unique presentation style, and they are excited to speak to the audience they write for. In addition, many authors offer more than one presentation, can speak to younger and older grades and can speak on a variety of topics. Check out the author's website for details on their various presentations. And reach out if you would like to discuss a tailored visit.

### **Generally, how long are author visits and what exactly do they entail (i.e. readings, workshops, etc.)?**

Author presentations are generally 45 minutes to an hour in length. Each author has their own unique presentation, and specific details can be found on each author's website. But a school can expect to learn about the writer's process, their techniques and their inspiration with regard to their published books.

### **Do authors and/or CANSCAIP have any affiliation with the Forest of Reading program? Other children's reading programs?**

Although CANSCAIP is not affiliated with The Forest of Reading Program or other children's reading programs, each year many CANSCAIP creators appear on these lists and are excited to visit schools participating in these programs.

### **How does CANSCAIP support school libraries?**

CANSCAIP members wholeheartedly support school libraries and have been active in participating in the OSLA's Save Our School Libraries Campaign. During monthly member meetings, we have informed members of the Save Our School Libraries campaign, directing them to the petition and encouraging them to share with others. A Save Our School Libraries petition signing table was also included at our Packaging Your Imagination Conference.

Many CANSCAIP members include statements of library support in their presentations, in their public statements and on their social media. CANSCAIP's social media team also makes an effort to promote school libraries on CANSCAIP's platforms.



Photo by Karen Crossing

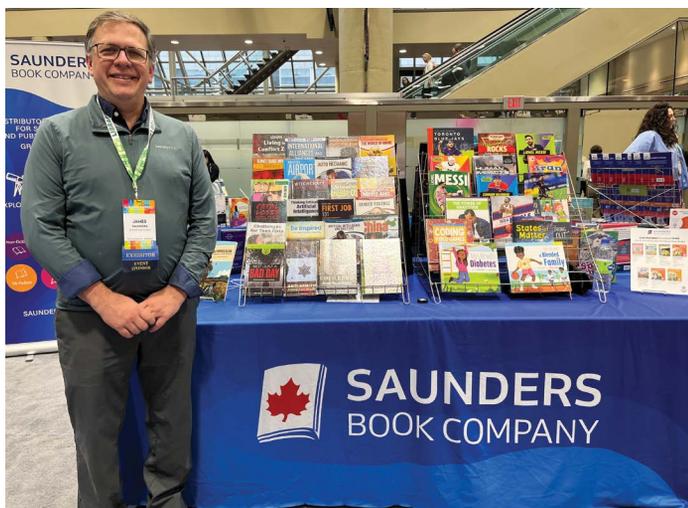
### **Why do you feel it's important to maintain the relationship and collaboration between authors and school libraries?**

Authors understand that it is through school libraries that students, our readers, not only have access to books but also gain confidence and a lifelong love of reading.

Thank you, Lana Button, for chatting with us about the amazing library heroes at CANSCAIP! To connect with CANSCAIP and its members, please visit their website or follow them on social media. ■

# James Saunders: School Library Hero

**A**fter many years of hearing about James Saunders, I finally had the pleasure of meeting him in person at this year's OLA Super Conference. If you ask anyone in School Library Land who their library heroes are, James' name will certainly come up. He is a huge supporter of what we do, and a passionate advocate for fully funded and staffed school libraries.



## **TingL: What was it like growing up in the book business?**

James Saunders: As with all family businesses it was great, challenging, fun and interesting all wrapped up into one. I was always doing something business related. My Dad, Dave Saunders, had an office supply and furniture store when I was a teenager. I've worked in the family business since the age of 14, but truthfully I probably began even earlier. My Uncle, John Saunders, had Saunders Book Company at the time and he started giving me some books to sell in front of our store on Hurontario St. in Collingwood. I was hooked! I started in publishing even earlier. Around Grade 4 I was creating a hand drawn magazine of sorts for the kids in my class. I sold photocopies of it for 25 cents a copy. My art and my handwriting are atrocious, so it was so much better when we started to use desktop publishing programs to create an anniversary history book for Collingwood Collegiate Institute when I was in Grade 12. While my family and my co-workers are very artistic, I am not!

Today our company has 90 employees and is owned by me, my cousin Sean Pearson and Ian Kerr. Sean and I have grown up in the business since we were kids and Ian has been working with us

for many years as well. We have Saunders Book Company, Beech Street Books and in the U.S. we own Red Brick Resources. Many of our employees have been with us for 20+ years!

## **You're a big supporter of school libraries. Tell us about how you support and advocate for school libraries and school library professionals?**

Our whole company is a big supporter of school libraries and professional staffing of school libraries. We believe that there should always be strong support at the school board level as well to help provide a structure and voice for school libraries.

Carol Koechlin, Anita Brooks Kirkland, Liz Kerr and I go way back. When I was a young sales rep my very first appointment was with Carol Koechlin and Sandi Zwaan. I guess you could say that is where my training in the school library work began. Carol would host evening events at the library resource centre in Scarborough. I would set up a book display, she would send me off with the food that was left, and I would learn about learning commons, inquiry based learning and critical thinking. This knowledge I like to think we try to incorporate into every Beech Street Books title today. From that point on I have always seen what we do and what you do as teacher-librarians as vital and we continue to try and support you in your role. After all, the ultimate goal is to provide the best education possible to students. Cheesy, I know, but true! The ideas for each book we publish and what we look to carry come from educators. We are always listening and adjusting to serve everyone the best way we can.

So, I would say as a company we advocate through our support of Treasure Mountain, OSLA, Canadian School Libraries and really anything we are asked to do! Anita has pulled me into a lot of different things, and she always knows that I will say yes. I have been pleased to be asked to speak on podcasts, write articles and appear before trustees in order to provide a little more insight into what educational publishers and distributors do. I hope that little contribution assists in the fight against censorship and other issues as they come up.

I am also the current President of the Ontario Book Publishers Organization and I sit on a number of committees with the Association of Canadian Publishers. With OBPO we host our Ontario Book Day each year at Queen's Park where we meet with the Ministry of Education as well as with a number of other Ministers and Ministries. Our biggest request at the OBPO is to get the government to provide stable funding for schools so that they can support our great Canadian publishers and authors.

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**Saunders Book Company has a long history of providing resources to school libraries in Canada. Are there any stories or events that stick out for you over the years?**

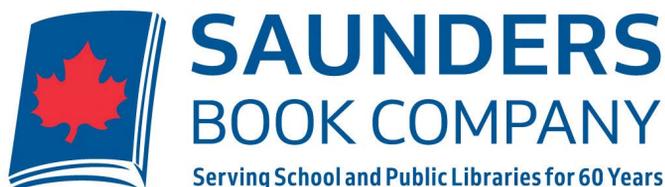
There are definitely some stories! Some of which I can't tell of course, but most of which have to do with travel.

Not long after coming back to Collingwood after university, we bought a bookmobile from Kitchener Public Library. It was a full tractor trailer with furnace, electricity, everything! We took the bookmobile to a number of places doing book displays. These were the days before we started our large vendor fair book displays that Adam Cichon now runs. For one display, our driver was on his way to Sault Ste. Marie and I was about an hour behind him in my vehicle. He blew two tires and ended up in a snowbank on the side of Highway 11. We were lucky that we had a small trailer at the time and another truck that was driven by one of our long term sales reps, Glenn Crandlemire. Without even a thought, he backed that truck and trailer up to the bookmobile and loaded all of the books inside, in no time flat, in a snowbank, on the side of the highway. Glenn then got a taxi to a small hotel outside of Parry Sound and stayed through the night until the tire service came the next morning. Glenn saved us more than a few times!

I guess that's what it's all about though, the people. Whether it is connecting with everyone I have known for a while or meeting new people at book displays, meetings, dinners or conferences or having long term employees, the industry has always been like a family for all of us here at Saunders and Beech Street.

**How can people connect with you?**

They can call me anytime 800-461-9120 ext. 3050, e-mail [james@saundersbook.ca](mailto:james@saundersbook.ca) or interact with me on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn. **I**



**"I was introduced to James Saunders through the J. Appleseed catalogue that landed on my library desk in 2003. Wonderful selections awaited our parched library rooms, and the colourful and affordable titles made it an easy choice for us in the NNDSB.**

**When the Ontario Government gave school libraries a 'money bomb', \$61 million for new textbooks and library books, plus new funding for the student success program providing for additional librarians in high schools (Government of Ontario, 2005), Saunders reached out to us and provided transportation to and from the warehouse, allowing us to choose and fill our library shelves.**

**A few years later, a flood in Nobel Public School completely destroyed all the new gains we had made, and once again, Saunders came to the rescue by beginning the donating drive to restock the school shelves so the students would not be without.**

**James Saunders has always been very generous, kind and fair with all the NNDSB library team over the years and has been a HUGE supporter of school libraries, following in the tradition begun by 'Saunders' in the 1960's." ~Karen Upper, NNDSB**



# The Alternate Field Experience: A Transformative Opportunity for Teacher Candidates

JENNIFER ASTON

**“** *The school librarian is a hero in the school community, doing far more than organizing books and managing book exchanges. They create a space where students of all backgrounds, ages and abilities see themselves reflected in stories and thrive in their literacy journey. ~Alexa Parkinson* **”**

The Alternate Field Experience (AFE) offers Teacher Candidates in Ontario (TCs) a unique chance to gain practical experience in diverse educational settings, such as non-profit organizations, tutoring agencies, private schools, post-secondary institutions, summer camps and... in different library settings!

This past year, I had the privilege of hosting three TCs from Western University for this type of placement. Although primarily a volunteer position with no teaching responsibilities, the experience includes a report consisting of a checklist and a brief comment.

Despite the minimal requirements, my students consistently exceeded expectations, applying lessons learned in their education faculties to real-world scenarios. For instance, after a visit from the London Public Library about a letter-writing campaign on Human Rights, the Teacher Candidates were inspired to share a lesson they had seen at Western. They had our students create a world map out of string. They then used shoes, coins and pasta pieces to estimate and verify the distribution of wealth, food and population globally. It was a serendipitous and authentic experience that really resonated with students.

**“** *I thought the library was just a place for us bookworms, but I was wrong. The library is a place for students to expand on their learning using tools and resources that may not be available to them in the classroom. I witnessed students using Minecraft to showcase their research on ancient civilizations, students creating their own audiobooks and students taking initiative to learn about and critically discuss global issues. The LLC has opportunities for every kind of learner to engage meaningfully and apply what they have learned in a broader context. ~Sarah Collins* **”**



These TCs were truly heroes in our library learning commons. They helped shelf books, created engaging displays and prepared book talks for announcements. They listened to students read, managed the circulation desk and allowed me to assist students in finding the perfect book. Their consistent support enabled deeper partnerships with teachers and the expansion of clubs and learning opportunities during breaks. They were invaluable to our community.

These Teaching Candidates left with a greater appreciation and understanding of how the library learning commons supports learning and contributes significantly to the school's culture.

Word of mouth about this program has spread, and I am excited to welcome a new student from Queen's University in March! I highly recommend reaching out to faculties and promoting this as an excellent learning opportunity. ■

# The Teacher-Librarian is a Superhero

JONELLE ST. AUBYN

This year, at the end of January, I attended the OLA Super Conference and Treasure Mountain Canada 8, two events I always look forward to. Every time, I leave feeling energized, motivated and brimming with new ideas I can incorporate into my everyday practice as a teacher-librarian. What I love most is that they call it the *Super Conference* because, in many ways, it's where teacher-librarian superheroes are made. I know it might be hard for some to imagine a teacher-librarian as a superhero, but that's exactly what they are. Without them stepping into so many heroic roles—providing safe, inclusive and equitable environments for students to grow and thrive—students and staff could not achieve the level of success they do.



Photo by exxteban on Unsplash

And make no mistake, our schools and school libraries are under attack on multiple fronts. It's crucial for teacher-librarians to stand strong and be brave in the face of adversity, just like our favorite comic book heroes.

## Teacher-Librarians Defend the Freedom to Read

With the increasing push to ban books from libraries, teacher-librarians are often the ones fighting for our students' right to read. A recent study of over 1,000 book challenges by *The Washington Post* found that most challenges were directed at books dealing with race, sex and gender, particularly those that feature LGBTQ characters or themes. In fact, LGBTQ2S+ books made up 43% of the challenged titles, and while many books were eventually returned to shelves, LGBTQ2S+ books were more likely to be permanently removed or restricted in access (Lanthier, 2024).

Our collections need to reflect the diversity of the student populations we serve. As Rudine Sims Bishop said, books are both *windows*—offering views of worlds, real or imagined—and *sliding glass doors* that allow readers to walk into different worlds and mirrors in which students can see themselves reflected (2015). Thankfully, resources like [www.freedomtoread.ca](http://www.freedomtoread.ca) empower teacher-librarians to stand up to those trying to take away our students' right to read.

## Teacher-Librarians Break Down Barriers

"Libraries are for everyone" is a common slogan among teacher-librarians. We want all students to know they are welcome and strive to create accessible, inclusive spaces where they can find the tools they need to succeed, free from barriers and obstacles. From removing fines for overdue books to providing free access to technology, we work to ensure every student has what they need to thrive. We also teach them the essential skills to use these resources effectively. Every day, teacher-librarians are working to uphold human rights and maintain spaces where students can grow and learn. We're ready to *Hulk smash* any barriers that stand in the way of students reaching their full potential!

## Teacher-Librarians Provide Access to Knowledge

In an age of misinformation and "fake news," teacher-librarians have the skills to help students critically evaluate information and determine what is credible. This is crucial for improving literacy within our school communities. According to the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation, "Literacy is

more than just reading and writing. It's the foundation upon which we learn and grow. Building literacy skills in children is one of the most effective ways to ensure they can achieve their full potential in school and throughout life. Literacy opens doors to understanding, empathy, critical thinking and the capacity for lifelong learning" (2025). Teacher-librarians are key in providing access to the books and resources students need to become literate and reap all the benefits that come with it.

## Teacher-Librarians Are Problem Solvers

One thing teacher-librarians excel at is solving problems. Even if we don't have an immediate solution, we know how to find one. We are great collaborators and co-creators of lessons and activities that students can enjoy. Like superheroes who always find a way to resolve even the most dire of situations, teacher-librarians use their creativity and resourcefulness to solve problems. Whether helping a student navigate a difficult research project or supporting a colleague with a student who needs extra help, a teacher-librarian will never give up on finding a solution.

## Teacher-Librarians Are Guardians of the Galaxy (A. K. A. the School Community)

Teacher-librarians are the glue that holds the school community together. Even when we aren't directly leading or running an event, we're often called upon to offer support in some way. Clubs, activities and meetings are frequently held in the library learning commons, and teacher-librarians take an interest in all aspects of the school. We work to connect with all departments and areas where our support can make a difference. The library learning commons is the heart of the school, and the teacher-librarian ensures the system runs smoothly.

## A Call to Action

These are challenging times for education, both in Ontario and around the world. Teacher-librarians need to recognize the power they hold and take up the mantle of their superhero role. Put on your cape and join the fight to not only save school libraries but also defend the quality of education every student deserves. It can be daunting, uncomfortable and comes with risks. There may be pushback or misunderstanding about the work we do. But superheroes always fight for what is right and never give up. They lean on allies and other superheroes when the going gets tough—even *the Avengers have to assemble!*

So, unite with a team, and press forward with the important work that lies ahead. Our students are depending on us. **I**

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# OSLA Award Winners



## OSLA Teacher-Librarian Of the Year Award

Johanna Gibson-Lawler

This award is given to honour a teacher-librarian who has demonstrated leadership in the implementation of school library programs through collaboration and inquiry-based learning. This year's award recipient was Johanna Gibson-Lawler from the Greater Essex District School Board. Joanna has been a steadfast supporter of school libraries for many years, including her dedication to the Ontario School Library Association as a Regional Councilor, Treasurer, President and most recently, as its Past-President. She does not shy away from speaking about the absolutely critical importance of funding for school libraries, and has fought hard for the inclusion of all school library professionals in our association. She is a loud advocate for libraries that have lost staffing, especially those in the North. Joanna's strong voice, unwavering commitment and steadfast determination

are what makes her a teacher-librarian very much worthy of this accolade. Congratulations, Johanna!

## OSLA Administrator Of The Year Award

Rosemary Caruso

The OSLA Administrator of the Year Award honours a school administrator who has brought their influence to bear on the development of effective school libraries and of school library programs both in a school board and among their peers. This year's recipient was Rosemary Caruso, a principal from the Halton District School Board. She has shown a dedication to her school library that is evident by all who use it. Brandy Spencer, who submitted the nomination, had this to say about Rosemary: "Mrs. Caruso's dedication to the library is truly inspiring. Her efforts not only enhance the learning environment, they also foster a love of reading among students. By investing in inclusive signage, shelving improvements and mobile seating, she's creating a welcoming and adaptable space where all students can thrive. Students adore going to the library because of all the love that is poured into it. It's wonderful to see someone so passionate about making a difference in their school community." Congratulations, Rosemary!



## OSLA School Library Professional Of The Year Award

Jessica Feick, Elisa MacFarlane, Karen Upper, Wendy Burch Jones

This award was designed to highlight the important work that school library professionals do in a school library. It is given to honour a School Library Technician who has demonstrated leadership in the facilitation and management of a school library collection. This year this award goes to a team of school library technicians at the Near North District School Board who have been working collaboratively to enhance and expand library services across the board. Jessica Feick, who submitted the nomination, shared the following about the group. "Members of the Near North District School Board Library Services team have been working collaboratively to enhance and expand library services board-wide. Their dedication and commitment to the school library has seen many members travel through snow storms because they didn't want students to

miss out on library day. Our school populations vary, from 26 students to over 1000, but each school is treated equally by library staff with the same level of programming and care. The team continues to offer an incredible level of service to each of their schools because they believe in the importance of school libraries and the difference it can make in the lives of students." Congratulations to the Library Services Team of Near North District School Board.

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## OSLA Award for Special Achievement

Lynn Goodwin

This award is presented to individuals or organizations outside individual schools or school boards who have provided significant support to teacher-librarians and school library information centre development in Ontario through exceptional projects and activities. It recognizes achievements in advocacy campaigns, local leadership initiatives, professional development for school library staff, literacy program development and the promotion of literature programs. This year the OSLA Award for Special Achievement was awarded to Lynn Goodwin from Halton District School Board. In December 2024, Lynn retired from her role at Halton District School Board. Throughout her career, she advocated for school libraries and the students who used them and was a dedicated mentor to those around her. Linda Murray, the Manager of Library Services in Halton Catholic District School Board shared that, “Lynn’s contributions to school libraries are commendable. Her unwavering advocacy stems from a genuine belief in the essential role of school libraries.” Kate Johnson-McGregor, a teacher-librarian from the Grand Erie School Board and Lynn’s Co-Chair at TALCO said, “Lynn embodies all the best things about libraries; she is highly organized, passionate about learning, an excellent communicator, eager to learn and always happy to include everyone!” Congratulations, Lynn!

“**Library....a physical space - a cart or a person  
Eagerness greets and a quiet descends  
Behaviours and shyness all melt like snow  
Eyes bright as a harvest moon and full of anticipation  
Await  
As the story begins  
For the first words of magic  
Doors open like buds in spring  
Thoughts journey along ... into the past, the future or another plane  
Where imagination is captured in a world of impossibilities and possibilities, laughter and smiles  
A sense of inclusion while being a part of wonder. ~Karen Upper, NNDSB**”



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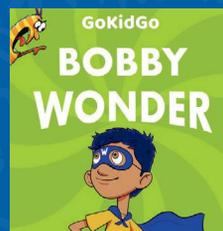
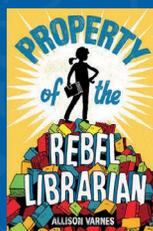
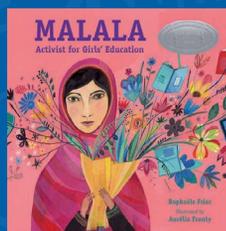


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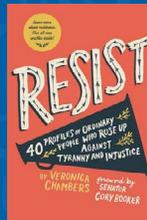
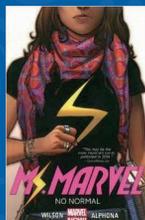
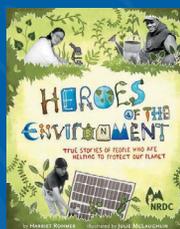
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## YA ADULT AND ADULT BOOKS



## The Teaching Librarian Submissions

Are you interested in writing for *The Teaching Librarian*? The theme for our September 2025 edition is Belonging @ Your Library and the submission deadline is May 5, 2025.

We are also seeking recurring feature articles related to technology in the school library, podcast recommendations, and library infographics. Email [theteachinglibrarian@accessola.com](mailto:theteachinglibrarian@accessola.com) for visit <https://accessola.com/media/the-teaching-librarian/> for more information.

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