

MSLA Forum: Summer 2007

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President's Message – July, 2007 – Sandy Kelly

This is such an exciting time to be writing to you as the new president of MSLA. I am proud to represent such a professional group with the enthusiasm and dedication that school library teachers bring to their jobs everyday that makes us a special breed. We are juggling while juggling at break neck speed and trying to maintain the calm at all times!!! When I read the comments and posts to our think tank of ideas and viewpoints; we are sharing, brainstorming and questioning, truly lifelong learners. In my humble opinion, we work as hard to remain cutting edge on so many fronts while struggling to keep our jobs vital and important in our schools. So we are running an uphill battle but it is our spirit, our persistence and collaborative nature, our collected wisdom and knowledge that will take us upward.

This issue of Media Forum has the theme of "professionalism." What does it really mean to be a school library professional today? We are curriculum programs, curriculum leaders, teachers and librarians. Many of us spend summer vacation taking or teaching courses, organizing ourselves with new ideas for the upcoming school year. We know that our jobs are more important than ever as we determine how to prepare our students for a global marketplace and a society awash in information. As you read the articles in this issue I hope they do to demonstrate "professionalism." Read on, get excited about the potential we have and please ask yourself how you the professional reach has equitable access to the best school library and school library teacher possible. And know this...change is in the air!

On June 8th, 2007, our new Governor, Deval Patrick announced that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been accepted as a member of the Skills Partnership. The Partnership, a national network of states backed by 30 leading businesses and organizations, is working to ensure that 21st century skills and competencies needed to be engaged and productive citizens and employees in an increasingly competitive global society. I was an assistant to Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria the newly appointed Education Secretary. They told us that they had received and read all of the information at transition team meetings across the state last spring! True professionalism was demonstrated by our attendance at these meetings and our work with them wherever needed to get the Governor's Early Literacy Initiative going and to assist with the implementation of P21. Please go to read through the P21 information on their website. Their mission is the same as ours, "To bring 21st Century Skills to every child through their [website](#) and share this information with your school administrators.

Let them know how you implement these skills in your library program and how you can help them make their school a true 21st century school by demonstrating your professionalism to the decision makers who determine what programs stay and who goes at budget time.

On June 26, 2007, six of our members stood proudly on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. Rhode Island Senator Jack Reed announced the Highly Qualified Librarians (SKILLS) Act. The SKILLS Act was introduced on both the House and Senate floors that same day and by all accounts was passed. A highly qualified school library, along with a highly qualified school library teacher, will be present in every school by 2010. According to Senator Reed, "The SKILLS Act will support school libraries by encouraging the hiring of highly-qualified school library media specialists in our nation's school libraries."

Being recognized as a highly qualified teacher adds not only to our professionalism but also to our credibility within our schools. From the students and their parents, to the teachers and administrators. A good school librarian knows all of the players and the rules and integrates information literacy skills into every possible project that we can. We are the only professional in our buildings that can meet the requirements of being highly qualified, encourage and mentor your colleagues in this effort to be prepared.

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Also know that the parents in your schools can be among your strongest advocates. MSLA often gets calls from parents who are worried about the school librarian or the potential for these programs to be cut. Last spring Kathy and I made a presentation at a parent organization where school libraries were about to be cut. This proactive group organized the cable televised event to help get an override passed to keep the school libraries. Send out newsletters and school library updates regularly in your school and keep parents informed about the value of what your tax dollars pay the bills. They can have a strong and positive voice.

And finally...please get involved...

Just a few people cannot take this ball and run alone. As the president of MSLA, I will look toward you, our members, to work together to make the Commonwealth of Massachusetts a vital and integral part of a 21st century skills education. I invite you to become participants in our effort. To succeed in our effort to have a good school library and qualified library teacher in every school, it is not an impossible dream.

Let us continue to brainstorm and take advantage of the thinkers we are! Jump on every opportunity to be heard, seen and involved. Make a small contribution of your time to the organization. Write to your legislators when asked, attend a PTO/PTA meeting to make your voice heard, to help at our conference, share your best practices at the Exploratorium, send out press releases to the newspaper about special events, recruit new members, join our legislative committee as a researcher, have your students participate in the annual bookmark contest and do your best. I am thinking now how you can help. And please be sure that every one of your colleagues is a member of MSLA, there is power in numbers.

I look forward to hearing from each and every one of you, brainstorm your ideas with me, share your thoughts and don't be shy.

"If you want, I could...."

The SKILLS Act, MSLA and You By Alma Ramos-McDermott, Simmons College

An open letter to all school librarians:

Please familiarize yourself with the following names: Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Representative Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Representative Eshelby (R-MI). These gentlemen stood up for school librarians on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, June 26th to introduce legislation to Congress (Strengthening Kids Interest in Learning and Libraries).

MSLA was at the SKILLS Act press conference and the photos below (taken by ALA photographers) show our great joy at being part of this important moment in school librarian history. We were front and center, signifying MSLA's desire to be front and center in the fight to help ensure that all school librarians in every school in the state of Massachusetts.



This legislation has several parts to it, and can be viewed in full at http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslissues/SKILLS_Act.cfm. Ensuring that school librarians be qualified and that these qualified school librarians be placed in every school by 2010 is of great significance.

If you are reading this, that means you are a school librarian interested in keeping your job and your voice heard. Your help is needed to accomplish this task. Please write your senators and ask them to cosponsor H.R.2864. This legislation needs to be in place by the time Congress votes in August.

I end this open letter with a poem attributed to Charles Osgood, CBS news' "poet in residence." The play on words are similar to the "First?" skit, however, the important point for you to remember is not to be a Somebody, Anybody, Nobody or Everybody. Instead,

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senator and representative about the SKILLS Act. I will be proactive. I will make it happen. I will make a difference.”

Thank you for your willingness to get involved and help put this important piece of legislation onto the books. Contact your senators and representatives so that school librarians have a chance to be noticed by Congress. Give our students a future.

'Highly Qualified' Librarians Under NCLB? By Debra Lau Whelan -- School Library Journal, 6/1/2007

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Legislation is in the works to emphasize the importance of librarians in student achievement

If Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) and Representative Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) have their way, there would be a certified librarian in every classroom under the “highly qualified” category that’s given to classroom teachers under No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

The two lawmakers are in the process of drafting language that they hope will be included in the reauthorization of NCLB, expected to pass this fall.

“[The new bill] acknowledges, on the federal level, the direct contribution that school librarians and school libraries make in student achievement,” says Sheketoff, executive director of the American Library Association’s (ALA) Washington office. NCLB requires a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. Currently, school librarians, who currently don’t qualify as “highly qualified” teachers, school districts can replace them with less expensive paraprofessionals.

Although districts would have until 2010 to comply, the new law would take into account those schools that don’t have a librarian. Schools can apply for a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education, Sheketoff adds.

Having a media specialist in every elementary, middle, and high school in the nation is a very lofty goal, considering that librarians are being cut during a fiscal crisis.

In California for instance, school librarians in several districts are fighting for their jobs. The four schools in the Durham Unified School District community, said last month they were considering cutting athletics and libraries. And in Wisconsin, the Monroe School District is considering cutting librarian positions.

If librarians are granted “highly qualified” status, not only will their jobs be better protected, but they’ll also qualify for any professional development opportunities that educators who belong to that coveted group, Sheketoff says.

ALA has been pushing this subject with lawmakers on Capitol Hill for the last three years, and there appears to be bipartisan support for it—if NCLB passes,” says Sheketoff, adding that while there may not be objections to the librarian clause, there might be in the run-up to a presidential election.

During this year’s National Library Legislative Day in early May, the heads of ALA’s youth divisions—the Young Adult Library Services and the Children’s Library Services—will be meeting with lawmakers on Capitol Hill to discuss the importance of librarians in student achievement.

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School Librarians, and the Association of Library Service to Children—all gathered in Washington, DC, to meet with lawmakers says, hopefully, their efforts will pay off.

2007 ALA in DC by Ann Perham

Attending a national conference is a top-notch professional experience.

Massachusetts was well-represented in DC: Bob Roth attended as an "Emerging Leader"; Kathy Lowe and Sandy Kelly represented our MSLA board; Ann Perham, Geri Fegan and Linda Friel attended AASL Affiliate Assembly. Also seen in our travels were MSLA members MaryBeth Gallant, Shelly Glantz, Alma Ramos-McDermott, and Susannah Paterson.

The ALA press release, "Record breaking attendance at ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C." indicates the popularity of the event. [READ](#) the article on the ALA website; for complete details on the speakers and features of the conference [link removed] .

The MSLA blog says it all, as Kathy Lowe, Sandy Kelly, Linda Friel, Geri Fegan and Ann Perham shared their experiences. [link removed] There are articles about the press conference announcing the SKILLS amendment to NCLB, eating in THE library (Library of Congress), meeting Julie Andrews, and on and on....**exuberance** is the theme for the MSLA blog. To view the pictures from the conference, they are posted on [Flickr](#) .

Four years ago, MSLA gave Senator Reed (D-RI) the Legislative Award, and he continues to be a leader for changes in school libraries. The complete details of the SKILLS amendment, and talking points are now on the MSLA webpage .

For anyone who has said, "I've always wanted to go to one of those national conferences," just do it! The AASL national conference, which takes place every other year, is in Reno Nevada and registration is taking place right now. Further down the road, the next ALA national conference is in Anaheim, California.

Conference Envy By Bob Roth *Reprinted with permission* Originally appeared in *Knowledge Quest* May 20

Amelia saw Horace when he returned to Boston from ALA Midwinter in Seattle. "How'd it go?" She asked him.

"Good."

"No, really. I want the details."

"You're a glutton for boredom, Amelia," he said, "or you're looking to go for a drink."

Before one could say "Chardonnay," school was out and Horace and Amelia, joined by Parquet and Desmond, were ordering snacks and drinks at Doyle's Café. "I really blew it," said Amelia. "If I'd known, I'd be a librarian and romp to conferences while someone else tries to instill a sense of history in high school students."

"It's not all glamour," Horace said. "I walk more at conferences than on the Walk for Hunger. I pack different clothes for daytime and evening. And some librarians, I'm sure, change more often than that for different events or for comfort."

"Sounds glamorous to me. Bring on the wardrobe." Amelia said.

"Yes," added Parquet. "And far better than staying here to explain the use of a participle to an English language learner still struggling with adjectives and adverbs."



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"A conference in Seattle isn't all glory," Horace said. "For one thing, the city is built on a hill, nearly a mountain. To go from one event to another, you need to be in shape for the Appalachian Trail."

"You get no sympathy here, Horace," Desmond chimed in. "I heard you mailed back three boxes of free books and other goodies from publishers. The exhibit hall must have been massive."

"Sure, it was great." Horace countered, "If walking through acres of sales reps and commercial displays is your idea of a good time."

"Sounds like shopping--with free samples all over the place," Amelia observed. "Like I said, I chose the wrong part of the teaching profession."

"There's responsibility, too." Horace said.

"As if you find that any kind of hardship." Amelia replied.

"The responsibility defense, forget it." Added Desmond.

"Give it up," said Parquet. "You had a great time, admit it."

"Did you enjoy college?" Horace asked.

"No concerns except learning, socializing and athletic training, a group of friends studying the same things I am, and the feeling that I can accomplish anything if I just go for it," Parquet responded. "Those were the best years of my life."

"I totally agree." Amelia agreed.

"All right, so you might like ALA conferences," Horace conceded. "But there are responsibilities for running the organization as well as continuing education workshops and lectures to attend."

"So you have to learn about the best new books for teens, poor baby!" Said Amelia who had looked through the conference program Horace left on his desk.

"And you get to work on teaching and learning committees or book award committees or with the latest legislative initiatives about copyright or library funding." Parquet, too, had seen Horace's conference program.

"Don't think you can get out of this by telling us to bring our classes to the library where you'll collaborate and share what you learned." Desmond cut off that defense. "The best thing you could do now is call the waitress over and buy us a second round."

"Audrey, one more round, this one on me." Then Horace turned to the three teachers and said, "You can still do it. This is Boston after all. You can get a library master degree in this town without missing a day in your classroom."

"With temptation like that," Parquet said, "You must be hiding your tail and your horns."

"The ironic thing," said Horace, "Is that you are classroom teachers and you see the value of library conferences. You would go if you could. Yet many library teachers who could attend blow it off completely. The AASL, the American Association of School Librarians, is one of the largest divisions of the ALA and yet it has a relatively small turnout at conferences -- and less than twenty five percent voter turnout in ALA elections."

"I told you I picked the wrong profession." Amelia said. "I could be a real leader among school librarians."

"We need everyone, leaders and followers. With more participation, school librarians would have a stronger voice in ALA. We need more involvement throughout our ranks." Horace said.

"Pick a city with fewer hills," said Desmond, "and you might get a better turnout."

"Anyway, come by the library tomorrow, Parquet. In Seattle a publisher gave me a complimentary copy of the Teacher's Edition of *Bridge to Terabithia*. It should be ready to go on the shelf tomorrow."

"English teachers get all the goodies." Said Amelia.

"How about books on the environment and alternative sources of energy that combine high school interest level with a lower reading level? This should be right for many of your students, Amelia."

"So everyone's going to the library tomorrow," Desmond said. "At least I don't have to give things away to have friends."

"I do not give away library books," Horace said. "I lend them. And now I suddenly understand why your books are so overdue."

Parquet put her arm around Desmond's shoulders. "That's okay, Desmond. Return your books and for your fine buy the first round at our next gathering."

"It's good to be back," Horace said.

"Sure," said Amelia. "But I bet you already know when the next conference will be."

"June 22nd to June 26th the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC."

Everyone laughed. "From the Seattle hills to Capitol Hill." Parquet said.

"Say 'Hi' to Ted Kennedy for me." Desmond said.

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"I just might. I'll be lobbying Congress with the ALA on the twenty-sixth. The odds that I talk to our Senior Senator are better than the odds I hit the jackpot in Reno."

"I'm afraid to ask," said Parquet. "But here goes, how does Reno come into this?"

"The AASL biannual conference will be in Reno for five days this October. It is different from the ALA conferences. AASL has no meetings, nothing about running the organization. We take care of that at ALA. AASL is all school library programs, school library exhibits and school librarian parties – ahh, that is, events. Many children's book and young adult book authors attend and join in."

Parquet glared. Amelia's mouth flew open. Desmond started banging his head on the table in a graphic display of the 'physicalization of meaning' concept that he taught to his acting class students.

"Reno has 300 sunny days each year," Horace continued. Desmond stopped his assault on the table and looked up. "Kayaking on the Truckee River right through the middle of town. Enough shows . . ."

Desmond started attacking the table again with his forehead.

"You break this table, Desmond, and you own it." Parquet said. "Then you can take it home and start a collection of Doyle's furniture in your den. Call it torment motif. It's sure to be a twenty-first century classic."

"I'm okay," Desmond said lifting his head from the table. "In October I'll be enjoying my annual new theatre season weekend in New York -- three Broadway shows in two days."

"That's great." Said Amelia, "But all of us can do that. Can you skip school for Reno like Horace?"

"Heading the table didn't help," added Parquet. "There's no way you can hide the envy in your eyes."

"There might be one way," Amelia amended. "What do you think, Desmond -- can I help with your library school application?"

A Reflection on the MSLA Presidency Kathy Lowe, June 2007



I have seen MSLA transform since I became President-Elect in June 2004. I spent the year before I became President working closely with then-President Ann Perham, learning the ropes and becoming more involved in the inner workings of the association. During that year under Ann's leadership, the Executive Board completed MSLA's three-year Strategic Plan and crafted the Vision and Mission Statements that still guide our organization today. All committee chairs and Area Directors now submit yearly Action Plans based on these documents and report their progress in their Year-End Reports.

We held our first Legislative Day at the State House during Ann's term and ran our first Bookmark Contest for School Library Month. Both of these events have grown and become more successful and popular each year. Now they are combined, with the Bookmark Awards Ceremony held the State House. This has raised Legislators' awareness of MSLA and ensured their participation in the event.

We have learned how to make technology work for us. Ann introduced virtual meetings and we now hold two meetings a year in a chat room on the Chatzy website. We have a Board-Only web page where reports and documents for our Executive Board meetings are posted and archived. Our former newsletter, Media Forum, has been revitalized in its online incarnation as MFO, now supplemented each fall by MFO Plus, an expanded yearly print edition that includes the Executive Board's Annual Reports and is distributed at our conference.

In order to bring in new faces with fresh ideas, the size of the Executive Board was nearly double with the addition of co-chairs for each committee and co-directors for each region. We added two Special Interest Groups (SIGs) – one for GSLIS students and another for retirees. Area Directors' roles and responsibilities were expanded to include the recruitment and retention of members and collaboration on professional development opportunities with their regional YSS representatives. These efforts have raised MSLA's profile and breathed new life into our organization.

Advocacy is now a major focus of our organization. To that end, we have become more visible and involved with other professional organizations and committees in the state. I serve as MSLA's liaison to the MLA Executive Board

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and Legislative Committee. My presence on both of these committees has increased our collegiality, mutual support and understanding. This year we completed a third joint statement with MLA's Youth Services Section on school and public collaboration. MSLA became a Leadership Partner with MLA, giving us a seat on the Government Relations Advisory Committee that works with a lobbyist to promote the value of all types of libraries. MBLC invited me to be the school library representative on its Public Relations Advisory Committee which is overseeing the development of a statewide marketing campaign for all types of libraries – and school libraries will definitely be a part of the campaign. We have deepened our relationship with NEEMA, participating regularly in their board meetings and helping to plan the annual Leadership Conference. We have forged a new relationship with MassCUE, with whom we have developed a joint statement on the similarities and differences in the roles of library teachers and technology integration specialists and plan to work more closely in the future.

We have also reached out beyond our profession to engage parents as advocates and promote the cause of school libraries to the Governor, the DOE, Legislature, and local officials, lobbying at the State House, speaking at parent meetings, and issuing Advocacy Packets containing MSLA's Position Statement on School Libraries and documents that highlight the crucial role school libraries and librarians play in student achievement. We published *Massachusetts Power: A Parents Guide to School Libraries* with the assistance of consultant Connie Champlin and David Loertscher's High Willow Research and, with NMRLS sponsored our first Parent Power workshop. Our PR co-chairs designed a professional looking and informative new membership brochure. Our Professional Standards and Curriculum committees developed PreK-Grade 12 Information Fluency Standards and we met with the DOE to discuss how these standards can be promoted and incorporated into existing curriculum frameworks. We met with a representative from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and as a result were invited by the office of the Governor's Special Advisor on Education to contribute to the State's successful application to become a Leadership State in the Partnership.

We expanded our horizons by sending Executive Board members to national ALA and AASL conferences. MSLA board members have become AASL Affiliate Assembly representatives, members of the ALA Legislation Committee and School Library Task Force, participated in ALA Legislation Day in Washington, D.C. and the AASL Vision Summit in Chicago. One board member has become an ALA Emerging Leader. Several board members attended past School Library Journal Leadership Summits in New York City and Chicago and anticipate attending the next one in Phoenix. The ideas, relationships, and broader vision and understanding of our profession that we have gained from participating on a national level have resulted in a bigger and better annual MSLA conference, with the addition of the Exploratorium display of members' best practices, the Author Fest, WaldenMedia previews, vendor sponsorships, high-caliber speakers, and cutting-edge presentations.

The most significant change that occurred during my tenure was the renaming and "rebranding" of our organization. With the name change came a new, more up-to-date look, with a new logo and website design to reflect our 21st century image. This change was invigorating and has pumped new life into our association.

Looking back over the past three years, I am proud and amazed at what has been accomplished. I look forward to my continued association with MSLA under the leadership of Sandy Kelly. Many thanks to all who have served on the Executive Board during this time and to the many MSLA members who have contributed the energy and ideas that makes this such a vital, professional, and forward-thinking organization.

Massachusetts Book Awards 2007 Winners By Pat Keogh

Recently the Massachusetts Center for the Book announced the winners of the Massachusetts Book Awards for 2007. This award is granted each year "to recognize significant achievements in Commonwealth fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and children's literature." I had the great pleasure of being one of the judges in the Children's Literature category. Chris Rose, teacher and bookseller at the Andover Bookstore, and Jennifer Whitehead, Head of Children's Services at the Clapp Memorial Library in Belchertown were the other judges.

We read from late fall through mid-March and were delighted to honor: *Incantation* by Alice Hoffman as the winner. This first-person narrative told by 16-year-old Estrella provides a fascinating look at the life of secrecy shrouding the village of Encaleflora during the Spanish Inquisition. It is a riveting tale that readers won't forget. The two honor books are *Clementine* by Sara Pennypacker and *Counting on Grace* by Elizabeth Winthrop. *Clementine* provides lots of laughs to early chapter book readers. This feisty character slides from one disaster to another in one week. Marla Frazee generously illustrates the spirited book. *Grace*, another unforgettable character, takes the reader into the North Pownal, Cotton Mill in 1910 Vermont. In a wrenching story of child labor readers feel the vibrations of the machines, the exhaustion of the worker, and the futility of factory life. Enter Lewis Hine, reformer with a camera. Excellent endnotes give further information and a bibliography.

Pat's Picks for Summer By Pat Keogh

Recently I have been reading a number of 2007 titles of interest to elementary librarians.

- *Joe on the Go* by Peggy Anderson (Houghton) recounts every child's fear-no one has time for him. A reassuring ending makes this a great early reader.
- For children who prefer true stories, *Vinnie and Abraham* by Dawn Fitzgerald (Charlesbridge) shows that fairy tales can come true. Young Vinnie Ream's dreams of becoming a sculptor are realized and she, at a very early age and without formal training, is selected to create the sculpture of President Lincoln for the Capitol rotunda. Author's note and list of resources thoughtfully appended.
- For an enthusiastic romp through the barnyard from the title page to the end, try Janice Harrington's *The Chicken-Chasing Queen of Lamar County* (FSG). Glorious collages leap from the pages and complement the text beautifully.
- Children will recognize the elements of the Red Riding Hood story as Niki Daly unfolds his dramatic *Pretty Salma* (Clarion). This imaginative retelling hooks readers from the endpapers and introduces stunning cultural details.
- The best cover of the spring goes to Jerry Spinelli's *Eggs* (Little,Brown). This story of two lost (emotionally not physically) kids will grip readers. Deep feelings spill from the pages as these two try to figure out who they are.
- On my night table at the moment is the much-heralded *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick.

Lunch with an Author: Barbara Larmon Failing

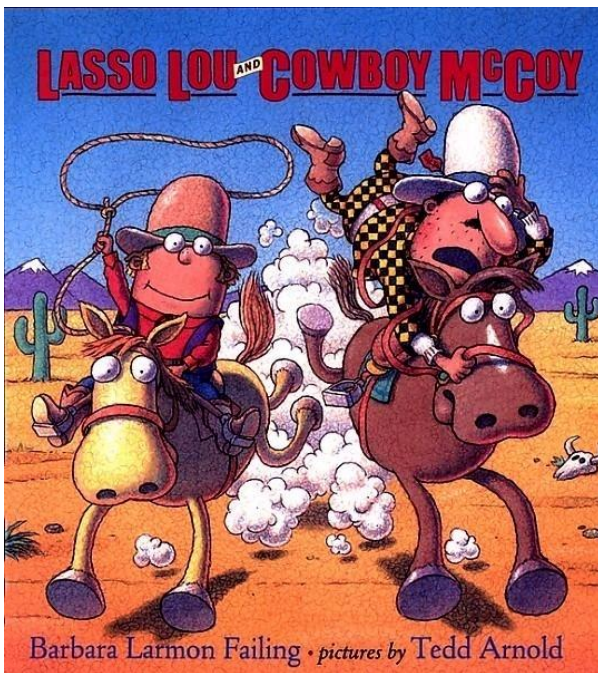
By Kathy Donovan and Linda Redding

We found a great way to promote reading was to host a *Ya-hoo-a-roo for Reading* family author night featuring Barbara Larmon Failing. The evening included cowboy themed reading activities for children and a presentation for parents offering advice on raising readers. All participants were dressed in their finest western attire.

Picture at right: Ya-Ho-A-Roo for Reading Barbara Failing (sitting on right) with the library teachers in the Silver Lake Regional School District during Family Author Night featuring a cowboy theme. Back row: Deborah Dallaire, Denise Raynard, Vicki Wright Front row: Linda Redding, Barbara Failing



Barbara Larmon Failing spent over twenty years as a classroom teacher before becoming a successful children's author. Here is what she had to say about her career as an author.



Lasso Lou and Cowboy McCoy is a book that is so much fun to share with children. Lasso Lou and McCoy get a lot of giggles. What inspired you to write this story?

I decided to write a book featuring characters that children would really enjoy. Right away, I thought of cowboys. Then I thought of two silly cowboys. Next, the name Cowboy McCoy popped into my head. I had a little trouble with the second cowboy's name. I thought of Lasso Larry, then Lasso Luke. Finally, I decided on Lasso Lou. Interestingly, some people have told me that they thought Lasso Lou would be a girl. But I never pictured the character that way. He was always a boy!

Your presentation Raising Readers was very well received with parents and teachers. One veteran teacher felt it was the best parent presentation she ever attended. You were able to speak from the parent perspective, as well as from the perspective of a teacher. What is it that you hope to convey to parents in your Raising Readers presentation?

Raising Readers is about encouraging children to read and be readers. I am worried about the effect of television and electronics on children's lives. It's not that I'm against TV or computers, but I feel strongly that they need to be monitored, particularly with young children. This monitoring should begin at a young age. It's very easy to fall into the before breakfast, after school or Saturday morning cartoon trap. But if you're careful about turning on the television just for a show or two and not having it blaring all day long, I think it's a much better environment for children. When television or electronics aren't an automatic option, children grow up finding other things to do. And one of the best things they can do is read - to you, with you or by themselves!

In addition to parent presentations and author presentations, you also have a program on writing. Tell us a little bit about that program and other programs you may offer.

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Along with Raising Readers, I offer a school assembly called Ya-hoo-a-roo for Reading! It describes a writer's life and explains the publishing process using slides, props and audience participation.

My presentation for kindergarten through third grade is called "Lasso Lou and Cowboy McCoy". It includes story time and a discussion of the publishing process using props and audience participation.

My presentation for third through sixth grade is called "Ya-hoo-a-roo for Writing!" It focuses on writing/editing and how a manuscript becomes a book using slides, props and audience participation.

Another program I offer is "Story Time with Lasso Lou and Cowboy McCoy", Raising Readers. It includes story time with a cowboy craft and song. I love visiting schools and libraries and sharing my love of reading and writing.

You offer advice to writers on your website. Joining a writers' group is one of your tips. How important has it been for you to be part of a group?

I think joining a writers' group is one of the best things any writer can do. Writing is very solitary. When you have a supportive group you can turn to, it really makes all the difference. Other writers will notice details about your project that you may have overlooked completely. Plus, I enjoy getting together with other people who are striving for the same goals I'm working on.

Can you tell us about what you are up to now?

The exciting news is that I just got an agent. She is based in NYC and is fun to work with. Earlier this year, I finished a middle grade novel which is almost ready to be submitted to editors. In May, I attended the New England SCBWI Conference where I was so inspired that I came home and wrote a new picture book. After about 50 edits, it was done! My present project is a middle grade super-hero novel. I've never written anything so fantastical before. I love working on it because I'm constantly inventing new powers for my main character. I hope to finish it this fall. Other than that, I'm enjoying summer on Cape Cod – going to the beach, riding bikes, and eating lobster! In August, I'll travel to Chautauqua, NY for our annual family vacation. This year I'll present Raising Readers twice at Chautauqua's School of Education.

For more information on Barbara Larmon Failing, please visit
<http://www.barbaralarmonfailing.com/>

Barbara at the 2005 MSLA Conference Author Fest:



What is Professionalism?

By Kathy Lowe

A professional is a proactive leader. Proactive leaders stay up to date on developments in their fields. They seek out trends and find out what's happening on the cutting edge so that they are prepared, and can help their colleagues prepare, for change. In our profession, this is a real challenge because change has become a constant. It's important to keep up by joining state, regional and national professional organizations, attending their conferences, reading their journals, visiting their web sites regularly, and these days, reading some of the many library blogs that abound on the Web. But most important is to become actively involved in some way. Every organization offers its members a variety of participation options. Right now AASL is begging its members to run for ALA Council and there are a multitude of AASL and ALA committees, requiring varying levels of commitment, from which to choose. MSLA is always looking for members to submit articles to MSLA Forum, participate in planning our conference, serve on committees, lobby at the State House, and to contribute displays for our Legislation Day or the Exploratorium at our conference. So many of us are inclined to wait for someone else to respond, to step-up, to speak out. Or we hang back and wait to be asked, complaining about "cliques" and "in-groups". The reality is that everyone is needed and welcome to be proactively involved in promoting and advocating for our programs and us. If you wait for someone else to do it for you, it might never get done. If you see a need, don't ask "Why aren't 'they' doing something about this?" or "Why haven't 'they' invited me to join?" Instead, decide what YOU CAN DO to affect change, put yourself out there, and then - JUST DO IT!

MassONE: Get On Board! by Kathy Dubrovsky



Recently, I sent an email to all MSLA members encouraging you to take advantage of this summer's MassCUE's free professional development opportunities. "As a partner with the Massachusetts Department of Education, MassCue is offering to support MassONE workshops around the state that will train teachers in the use of MassONE for communications, collaboration, productivity and instruction."

If you are not sure what MassONE is, it is a set of web-based applications, resources, and tools for students, teachers and administrators. There are a few reasons that I am recommending that you take these workshops besides the obvious earning necessary PDPs reason. As an avid MassONE user, I have seen MassONE improve in the last few years and usage has really increased. "MassONE had more than 14,000 log-ins per week in May-an increase of 3000% since 2003" Teachers are using MassONE because the online tools have improved and better innovations have been added. Now, all teachers must have a MassONE account to participate in any DOE Content Institute. Once you start using MassONE, you won't want to stop.

The collection of tools that educators can use to enrich classroom learning, provide online instruction, and enhance their ability to collaborate with other teachers include: the announcements tool; calendar tool; discussion forums; virtual hard drive; teaching and learning resources; survey tool and technology self-assessment tool. The tool that I use the most is the Virtual Hard Drive. By saving this article on my MassONE Virtual Hard Drive, I could work on it on my laptop or my desktop at home, my desktop in my office or any other computer at school or anywhere else. It is pretty convenient.

This summer, I have registered for the Webquests and MassONE Workshop offered by MassCUE on August 27 in Hanover Middle School. During this workshop, I will learn how to utilize MassONE's "teaching and learning" resources

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in support of the curriculum, integrate discussion forums into classrooms and save and share files using the Virtual Hard Disk (VHD) and Workgroups.



I have used MassONE's suite of curriculum tools to create standards-based lesson plans that are posted on MassONE. These tools include a template where you can enter information such as key concepts, activities, and assessment strategies. I made these lesson plans public and have shared them with all other teachers who are MassONE users.

Right now, you can search the Academic Frameworks as shown in the screen below. It is my belief that if enough library teachers submit lesson plans, we could have a better chance of getting the Department of Education to adopt the Information Literacy Standards that we have presented for approval. Our argument could be that we need the Information Literacy Standards approved because of the number of lesson plans that are being submitted by library teachers need to be classified and be searched under an Information Literacy Academic Framework. I hope that you will consider investigating MassONE. If your school is not a member of MassONE, I can register you on MassONE as a MSLA member.

MSLA-SIG Mini-Conference By Alison Cody

The Simmons Student Interest Group of the Massachusetts School Library Association aims to provide support to students with an interest in school libraries and to serve as a liaison between future librarians and the MSLA. This year, the MSLA-SIG fulfilled this mission with a bang. On March 24, 2007, they held their first-ever conference, a day-long affair aimed at connecting students and new professionals. Co-chairs Anna Schneider and Susanna Paterson (both MLS '07) were behind most of the development and planning of the conference. Here, they explain how the conference developed and share tips on planning this sort of event.

From small beginnings

Originally, the two planned to keep the conference small and aimed squarely at GSLIS students. They brought the idea up at a board meeting, and it was met with more enthusiasm than they expected.

"The board suggested that we open the conference to young professionals, because they often feel isolated and lost during their first few years," Schneider said. "That's where the theme—Get Connected—came from: getting connected to make the transition from student to professional more comfortable."

Paterson and Schneider adopted several other ideas posed by the board and also took advantage of their expertise as school library teachers—more than half of the speakers were members of the MSLA board, and most of the rest were MSLA members. The board also offered administrative support for issues such as collecting payments and offering continuing education credits.

Rounding up speakers

Eleven speakers presented nine different sessions, excluding the lunchtime panel. Sessions ranged from using storytelling and bookmaking in the school library to presentations on collaborating with teachers and principals.

"I have to say that we were thrilled to get all the responses that we received," Paterson said. "There was such enthusiasm coming from the speakers that it made me feel more confident that it would all work out. I was especially excited to see new professionals presenting their practical advice and knowledge."

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I was impressed with the expertise that they were able to convey after only a few years in the field, as well as their ability to remember what it was like to be a student and connect with students at the conference.”

The devil is in the details

Paterson and Schneider both agree that organizing an entire conference is a task not undertaken lightly — and not by just two people! “If next year’s officers decide to host another conference — and we hope they do — I would recommend implementing a conference committee,” Schneider said.

“The money was difficult to deal with, though,” Paterson said. “We were using our group budget funds for some expenses and spending our own money on others. It was important to us to keep the registration fees to a minimum. Conferences are expensive, and officers that want to put one on should make sure they request enough money for their budget.”

Their most important piece of advice? Don’t wait until the last minute. “There were definitely some things that we forgot to do, because we tried to do too much at the last minute,” Paterson said.

Moving forward

“From the evaluation forms that speakers and attendees completed, we’ve already gotten some great ideas and suggestions for the future,” Paterson said. “Everyone who returned an evaluation said that they would be interested in coming to another conference next year, so I consider that a success!”

The conference has boosted the presence of the MSLA Student SIG in the region and presented GSLIS students with an easy, convenient way to learn more about what it’s like out in school libraries. Schneider and Paterson were able to attend sessions and soak up the experience of those currently working in school libraries. But they also benefited from the planning itself.

“It was an exciting, creative and scary process,” Paterson noted. “I think the thrill in creating something from scratch was apparent. I think the whole process has made me a more focused and confident person.”

“To be quite honest, I enjoyed the adrenaline rush of planning this,” Schneider said. “I learned a lot.”

How to get involved

If you want more information about the MSLA Student SIG, check out their wiki at http://gslis.simmons.edu/mw/msla_sig. There you’ll find posts about upcoming meetings and links to the MSLA parent organization, awards, and other useful information for school library teachers. Also, keep an eye on your e-mail! Soon it will be time to elect new officers to follow in the footsteps of this year’s ambitious leaders.

Our Professional Image with Parents by Patsy Divver

The following is an email reply from one of our members, and presents another view of our professional behavior:

“Faculty and students may see your professional side, but do parents? Show parents the value of a professional librarian on staff by offering an afternoon and/or evening session to highlight library resources. I call the sessions I give “Homework Helpers” as a way to help parents direct their student to quality resources. The library homepage is highlighted as the portal for everything beside Google. Hands-on use of the library catalog and online databases are much appreciated by the parents who do attend. Those same committed parents are more likely to direct their

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students to the library resources when the woes of a research project are causing tantrums at home. I have found that scheduling an afternoon or evening when there is a sports game has been successful in drawing parents who are already at the school. By showcasing your resources and library, parents get to see and appreciate a true professional--you!"

Submitted by Leslie Schoenherr, at the Lexington Christian Academy

This suggestion connects to a number of situations where we may overlook the value of parents as 'library promoters'. Whereas we have numbers of volunteers in elementary school, the middle/high school involvement for parents tends to dwindle. Leslie's suggestion of inviting parents to review library resources is excellent. If you have Open House events in the fall, offer the library as a meeting place to showcase your products, as well. Although our high school open houses used the 'library' slot as a breathing/coffee spot, we had our webpage up on the computers, students available to demonstrate programs, and displays of all curriculum-connected library projects. Don't forget a sign-in sheet for potential volunteers.

With supportive parents, you will get that additional voice at school and town committee meetings. In addition, you may find support in places you never thought to look. One of my strongest volunteers was a Parent Rep for us at Legislative Day. She was so impressed with everything that she invited me to the Democratic Committee meeting, so I could explain the school library to the members. (Keep in mind that some folks still recall days of Nancy Pearl's action figure librarian!) Once again, it's a matter of keeping everyone up to date on your library – and you!

Adventures in my School Library By Maria P. D'Orsi

Welcome, summer!! I know it's here because the air conditioning is now off in my school building. It is assumed that staff and faculty, along with all the students, have gone home to enjoy a much-needed vacation and that the custodians and secretaries who are here all summer do not sweat. Bah, humbug! I'm still here!! Why? Because I get very little done when school is in session...other than teaching, that is. I love the quiet library of vacation weeks and summer break almost as much as I love the busy, multifunctional, frenetic pace of school days. I envy the school librarians who are paid to work for several extra weeks after school lets out. It pains me to stop all circulation while school is very much in session in order to be done on the last day. Well, despite my best effort, I was not done. So here I am...sweating!

I am amused when non-teaching friends who call me to go out and have some of this "summer fun" are surprised when they hear that I am still working. Granted, I did not arrive this morning until I finished the ENTIRE pot of coffee. And, I cannot stay beyond 3:00 PM because summer hours are now in place. But it reminds me once again that only another dedicated school library teacher/media specialist/librarian will understand what I'm doing here... and why.

My community built beautiful new school libraries when we qualified for new construction grant money. Since there wasn't an elementary or middle school library program in place (only the one in our high school, which had to be there for the high school to be credentialed) not only were the buildings new but so also were all new school library staff. As a result, we six librarians (who all work alone – no surprise there) have not only been busy building our collections but also our programs. As we finish year four we are in pretty good shape I would say, but the student bodies of more than 600 students in each building require a lot of work!

In my library the last few weeks have been a flurry of activity, and I am as proud as I am relieved that all the hard work and collaborating ad nauseum is paying off - this library is functioning more and more like the hub of the

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school. The teachers have discovered what you all know, that we are not trying to make more work for them but rather be their teaching partners. The more some teachers have "used me" the more others jump on board. During the last month students were busy signing in and out to use computers, do research, complete and display final projects, and it was exhilarating to behold. Even my ever-supportive principal was thrilled. This year was an exciting ride as we watched the program blossom.

Finally we came down to the last few days. The projects are finished and it's two days left- then one more day. After sending many notices and stopping teachers in the corridors in an effort to track down missing paraphernalia there's still plenty of A.V. equipment unaccounted for, plus closing technology support (who knew backing up personal files cause so much consternation!), and those late/lost books that we all deal with at the end. You know.

As I sit at my computer right now (five days after school closed) I am looking at a sea of equipment, some returned and some retrieved...overheads, listening centers, cassette and CD players, TV/VCR/DVD players, video cameras, book binding machines, etc. Many teachers do not understand why I ask for it to be sent back to the library... there're only going to sign it out in September again anyway. I feel like responding much like my Dad would have when asked an irritating question..."because I said so!" But instead I model the picture of patience and tell everyone that I make sure the equipment is cleaned (I know they don't have time, but the dust!!), checked for missing pieces, cords and burned out bulbs, and restored as near as possible to its original condition. Then I order what I need to get started in the fall, record that the items still exist, and hunt down what did not get sent back. This is where all the good will I built up with the custodial staff pays off...they will wash down the equipment, although it is not technically part of their job, because I feed them and give them gifts. "Shameless self-promotion" as Kathy Lowe would say. I do whatever I can to build library goodwill. Joe Angelo, former President of both the MSLMA and Cambridge College's Library Teacher program, would agree. He truly believes in the power of food!

The next project for the (unpaid) summer is to redo my filing system. I think this is sort of like redoing picture albums...a project that desperately needs to be done but remains on the to-do list in perpetuity. I still haven't decided if it is better to keep lesson plans in binders or in files. As a result I have both. Please, if you have an opinion on this let me know. I like the files because I can easily add student work without having to punch holes. Binders are easier to work with and can be moved around with out spilling out the contents or other dangers associated with loose pages. Binders or files...binders or files...

If there's time I'd like to move my state and country books sets. If there's time I'd like to relocate the laptop cart and dedicated printer. If there's time I'd like to move a couple of freestanding cases and expand the series section. If there's time I'd like to see if my desk is made of wood or if my memory fails me, because it's been so long since my desk has been cleared off.

I love my job and I hope you love yours too. It keeps me working even when I'm not being paid, thinking about the library even when I'm not in the building. At the end of year four I can honestly say that I am right where I belong and considering that I am not a youngster, but a seasoned second career library teacher with a huge school loan (which will be paid 5 years after I retire as I said in a previous article), it's a relief that this is not just a job but more a labor of love.

Little Gem: You all know how stories can lead to interesting discussion. One story got my first graders talking about their parents' ancestry. One child said her mom was Haitian, another said her entire family was Italian. One little boy said his father was half and half...half Irish and half human.