

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, running through a school hallway. They are both wearing grey school sweaters with white collars. The boy on the left has his mouth wide open in a joyful shout, and the girl on the right is laughing with her mouth open. The background is a brightly lit hallway with warm-toned walls and ceiling lights.

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The magazine of the Ontario School Library Association

volume 12, number 3 ISSN 1188 679X

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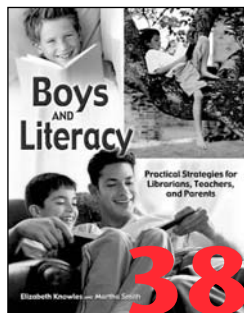
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volume 12, number 3 ISSN 1188 679X



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Lily Milanovich

Correction:

The Teaching Librarian, v. 12, no. 1 neglected to place a "reprinted with permission" note at the base of Curriculum Ideabook Supplements generously supplied by Peel District School Board and Toronto District School Board from their respective handbooks. Peel made two contributions: Selecting fiction and Selecting print non-fiction for ESL students. The TDSB also contributed two items: Collection mapping and Deselecting materials. *Teaching Librarian* was very pleased to receive these contributions and apologizes for the omission.

Thanks go to the contributors to *The Teaching Librarian*, volume 12, number 3



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TL mission

THE TEACHING LIBRARIAN

is the official magazine of the Ontario School Library Association. 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 program and curriculum development that further the objectives set out for students and teachers by the province, school boards, administrators, teachers and parents. It fosters effective partnering with teachers and administrators, and provides a forum where teacher-librarians can share experience and expertise.

TL subscriptions

The Teaching Librarian is a benefit of Ontario School Library Association membership. It is also available on subscription for \$36.00 per year, plus GST. To become a member or subscriber, contact:

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As we start a new school year, we can only hope that the excitement and momentum school libraries were gaining last spring continues. Talking with Premier Dalton McGuinty and Education Minister Gerard Kennedy at the end of August during their celebratory tour of schools, symbolically distributing to libraries the books purchased with the \$17,000,000 grant. How did we get here and what comes next?

ADVOCACY

We do have a story to tell. It started rather badly, with the state that school library programs have found themselves in after years of financial cutbacks and loss of understanding on the part of policy-makers of the crucial role that the school library program plays in curriculum and literacy. The story continues with a renewed optimism, fueled by the events of the past months.

The announcement from the Ministry of Education of the one-time grant of \$17 million for school library resources is the highlight of our developing story. Not only did this grant represent a welcome infusion of money for library resources, but the grant announcement itself was filled with promise for further positive developments.

The public announcement of the grant took place at St. Pius X Catholic School in Toronto on May 26, 2005. The Minister's

office invited the OLA and OSLA to participate in the announcement. Liz Kerr, a past president of OLA and of OSLA, made opening remarks about the importance of school library programs. Minister Kennedy followed with the announcement. In his comments, Mr. Kennedy stated, "Libraries play an essential role in stimulating students to improve their own achievement and foster a love of reading and learning. After years of cutbacks, updating our school libraries with current and relevant materials is a critical component in our strategy to ensure that every student has the learning environment they need to succeed." As president of OSLA, I was then invited to respond to Mr. Kennedy's announcement.

And what is OSLA's response? We are very encouraged by this grant, and see it as the first step in the renewal of Ontario's school library programs. The public announcement, and the memos sent to school boards about the grant, include some very positive language, the likes of which we have not seen for many years. Most significantly, the grant announcement recognizes that school libraries play a role in improving student achievement. There is recognition of the role of libraries in literacy and critical thinking. The Ministry memo Investment in School Libraries, K-12 states, "Libraries have a powerful influence in stimulating interest in



ONTARIO SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

President's Report

Anita Brooks Kirkland

reading and strengthening research and critical thinking skills.” It is our sincere hope that this recognition will lead to more positive news, particularly with regard to improvement in teacher-librarian staffing, and to the renewal of Ministry policy and program guidelines for school libraries in Ontario.

While the grant announcement gives us hope for future developments, it also gives a much-needed infusion of cash for library resources. Years of inadequate funding, combined with the per-student funding formula, have left most school libraries struggling to maintain vibrant collections. The grant announcement recognizes the disparity the funding formula has created between small and large schools. “Every school regardless of their size or geographic location will benefit from the investment. Until now boards funded libraries out of their per pupil revenue, which often disadvantaged small schools. School boards will receive funding based on their number of schools not the number of students – this will ensure that small schools benefit equally from the investment.” The reality of this grant is that, for a few schools, it has provided a welcome supplement. For many, the grant amount of \$3510.00 per school is the equivalent of several years of Schedule A budget

allocations.

While we all recognize that this grant represents very positive news for school libraries, there has been some concern that one-time funding, announced late in the school year, is unsustainable and has put undue pressures on schools and school boards to spend wisely. While these concerns are legitimate, they are, perhaps, mitigated by two factors. The press release about the grant posted on the Ministry website calls it, “first-time dedicated funding for school libraries”. With this statement comes the hint of adequate, sustainable funding. The short timeframe permitted for this grant led to unprecedented cooperation between the Ministry’s Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, The Association of Library Consultants and Coordinators of Ontario (TALCO), and the Ontario Library Association (OLA). The Secretariat consulted with TALCO about collection needs and supports for under-resourced schools and school boards. This led to OLA’s on-line database of recommended resources, compiled by OSLA past president and school library program expert, Cathi Gibson-Gates. The database was linked to quality, recognized library vendors, providing a very valuable tool for many boards. The database was well used, and Cathi’s expertise has been

most appreciated.

TELL US YOUR GRANT STORY

Has the money been well spent? Despite the short timelines, in most cases the answer is probably yes. However, in the last issue of *Access*, Larry Moore reported that there has been word of some school boards where the grant has not been used to directly support school library collections. Although this appears to be the exception rather than the norm, this news is disturbing.

For the majority of Ontario school libraries that have directly benefited this funding provides us with a great opportunity for continued dialogue with the Ministry. We want to know what this grant has done for your collection and for your library program. So, we are asking you to report to us on:

1. Grant-funded collection development projects. What was the focus of your grant spending? Did you focus on resources to engage reluctant readers, for example, or perhaps to improve boys’ literacy? Did you choose resources to support particular content curriculum, or did you concentrate on multicultural titles representing your school’s demographics? Perhaps you invested in graphic novels to support your board’s Think Literacy



OSLA President Anita Brooks Kirkland on one of many occasions being interviewed by reporters.

strategy, or perhaps you used this opportunity to purchase current First Nations resources.

2. How will you promote and use these resources, increasing the likelihood that they will make an impact on students and teachers in your school?

3. What evidence do you have that the Ministry funds have made a difference? Some of the evidence that you might look for includes:

- increased circulation
- success stories from students and teachers
- more teachers borrowing library resources to support classroom instruction
- collaborative discussions with teachers about the use of these resources
- more effective instructional units
- book clubs overflowing
- students and teachers asking for more
- thank you notes and stories

We encourage you to keep a record of what this project has allowed you to do for your school, and to submit your stories to our dedicated email address, **grantstories@accessola.com**.

We plan to compile and analyze these results, and to share the evidence of your success with the Ministry.

We know we make a difference to student achievement, and this fact is acknowledged in the grant announcement. It is now our responsibility to support this recognition with the evidence. We're looking forward to hearing your stories, and sharing in your success.

Anita Brooks Kirkland,
OSLA President,
Waterloo Region
District School Board. ■

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Investment in School Libraries K-12

The Ontario Library Association salutes the Government of Ontario under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat for their support of the \$17,000,000 initiative.

The Ontario Library Association salutes the 2,200 OSLA Members and th OSLA leadership who professionally and efficiently selected the materials and went above and beyond the call of duty to work with tight timelines to ensure the resources were available for students this September.

The Ontario Library Association salutes our members for supporting the OLA's Associate Members who work 7 day weeks for three months to make this work. OLA Members supporting OLA Members is very important.

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INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM @ your library®

Brenda Dillon



Welcome to our “issues issue” and our focus on intellectual freedom. Our writers include authors, teacher-librarians, and a student. They share their experiences, suggest resources, and make us think about an issue that is at the very centre of what it is libraries – and the people who work in them – are all about.

It’s easy to say we value intellectual freedom and abhor censorship, but it can be a challenge to live up to our statements when faced with public pressure or the pressure of our personal opinions and feelings. It’s absolutely vital that we understand the difference between censorship and selection, and understand child and adolescent development (and know our own students) well enough to understand which of the materials we’ve selected are best suited for use with particular students. It’s my hope, and the hope of the members of the Editorial Board, that the material presented in this issue of *The Teaching Librarian* will help you think about intellectual freedom and prepare for any challenges you might face.

This issue of *The Teaching Librarian* contains Diane Bédard’s final ICT article... after 25 articles, she’s decided it’s time to move on. Diane’s articles have always been a popular feature and she’s helped many of us learn about computers and think through technology issues. All of us on the Editorial Board wish to thank Diane for her contribution and extend our best wishes for whatever she plans to do next. ■

TL guidelines

- V. 13, no. 1 Student Success
Deadline: September 26, 2005
- V. 13, no. 2 Across the Curriculum
Deadline: December 12, 2005
- V. 13, no. 3 Library Renewal
Deadline: February 13, 2006

Articles of 1000-1300 words in length are welcome. Articles, when approved, should be accompanied by good quality illustrations and/or pictures. Text must be sent electronically. Pictures can be printed or digital (minimum size and quality are 4"x4" and 300 dpi). With photos which contain a recognized individual, please secure the individual’s permission in writing for 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 and style. OSLA reserves the right to use pictures in other OSLA publications unless permission is limited or denied at the time of publishing. Any questions about submissions should be directed to the Editor of *The Teaching Librarian*:
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The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books 1990-2000



“It’s not just the books under fire now that worry me. It is the books that will never be written. The books that will never be read. And all due to the fear of censorship. As always, young readers will be the real losers.”
— Judy Blume

1. *Scary Stories* (Series) by Alvin Schwartz
2. *Daddy’s Roommate* by Michael Willhoite
3. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
by Maya Angelou
4. *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier
5. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
by Mark Twain
6. *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
7. Harry Potter (Series) by J.K. Rowling
8. *Forever* by Judy Blume
9. *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson
10. *Alice* (Series) by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
11. *Heather Has Two Mommies*
by Leslea Newman
12. *My Brother Sam is Dead*
by James Lincoln Collier
and Christopher Collier
13. *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger
14. *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
15. *It’s Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris
16. *Goosebumps* (Series) by R.L. Stine
17. *A Day No Pigs Would Die*
by Robert Newton Peck
18. *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker
19. *Sex* by Madonna
20. *Earth’s Children* (Series) by Jean M. Auel
21. *The Great Gilly Hopkins*
by Katherine Paterson
22. *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L’Engle
23. *Go Ask Alice* by Anonymous
24. *Fallen Angels* by Walter Dean Myers
25. *In the Night Kitchen* by Maurice Sendak
26. *The Stupids* (Series) by Harry Allard
27. *The Witches* by Roald Dahl
28. *The New Joy of Gay Sex*
by Charles Silverstein
29. *Anastasia Krupnik* (Series) by Lois Lowry
30. *The Goats* by Brock Cole
31. *Kaffir Boy* by Mark Mathabane
32. *Blubber* by Judy Blume
33. *Killing Mr. Griffin* by Lois Duncan
34. *Halloween ABC* by Eve Merriam
35. *We All Fall Down* by Robert Cormier
36. *Final Exit* by Derek Humphry
37. *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood
38. *Julie of the Wolves*
by Jean Craighead George
39. *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
40. *What’s Happening to my Body?*
Book for Girls: A Growing-Up Guide for Parents & Daughters
by Lynda Madaras
41. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
42. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
43. *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton
44. *The Pigman* by Paul Zindel
45. *Bumps in the Night* by Harry Allard

Continued on page 13

Intellectual Freedom

This issue of *The Teaching Librarian* is devoted to the idea of intellectual freedom. I use the word idea deliberately because this is one of those issues where there is a definite gray area between theory and application, particularly in school libraries.

By definition, the idea of intellectual freedom speaks to the heart of our profession. Of course we believe in the free exploration of ideas and of course we believe in free access and expression. We obviously believe in constructive dissent. The Ontario Library Association details these beliefs in its statement on the intellectual rights of the individual (p. 27) which can also be accessed at www.accessola.com/ Click on Intellectual Freedom under Issues on the home page.

Our dilemma surfaces when we consider how teacher-librarians can balance these rights against our professional obligation to protect our students, who are minors, from information they are not developmentally ready to receive. The OLA's statement says, "that the provision of library service to the public is based upon the right of the citizen, under the protection of the law, to judge individually on questions of politics, religion and morality." However, as teacher-librarians, we have a clientele not yet equipped to judge some material and our

role as caretakers, "in loco parentis," requires that we exercise judgement on behalf of our students. The British Columbia Library Association recognizes this inherent dilemma on its Intellectual Freedom page.

The duality of our roles as teachers and librarians can create personal dilemmas. If we are not careful, we could stumble into the arena of censorship. It is a fine line that teacher-librarians walk when selecting materials.

Freedom to Read

Freedom to read is a committee which monitors censorship issues in Canada, organizes the annual Freedom to Read Week, and produces an information kit each year on issues of intellectual freedom.

www.freedomtoread.ca/default.asp

The site has a variety of materials, particularly on censorship, including a section called Darts and Laurels. This is the committee's report card that awards darts to those who threaten and laurels to those who defend intellectual freedom in Canada.

Recently, Freedom to Read targeted many Canadian school boards with darts for "installing Internet filtering software on their school computer systems without consulting teachers or

students. Although some Web sites do convey unpleasant and pornographic themes, Internet filters invariably block out innocent sites that provide vital information on subjects that students have a right to know about."

The ethics of utilizing filtering software is a very hot topic of discussion. It is the same dilemma of balancing rights to information with our caretaking role as educators. We are all aware of the dangerous material available on the Internet and its potential to harm children. At first glance, filtering seems to be a logical way of allowing our charges to use this valuable information tool while safeguarding their sensibilities. There is a strong argument for this. However, the American Library Association has produced a statement on the use of filtering that raises some very thought provoking questions.

Relevant points cited are:

- Filters can impose the producer's viewpoint on the community.
- Producers do not generally reveal what is being blocked, or provide methods for users to reach sites that were inadvertently blocked.
- Criteria used to block content are vaguely defined and subjectively applied.
- The vast majority of Internet sites are informative and useful.

Susan Moroz

Blocking/filtering software often blocks access to materials it is not designed to block.

- Use of blocking/filtering software creates an implied contract with parents that their children will not be able to access material on the Internet that they do not wish their children read or view. It will not be possible to fulfill this implied contract, due to the technological limitations of the software, thus risking possible legal liability and litigation.

For more statements on the use of filtering, see Diane Bédard's article on p. 28. Visit www.ifla.org/faife/ifstat/alafilt.htm and also www.ifla.org/faife/ifstat/lafilt.htm. CLA has prepared a guide for Internet use in public libraries, which contains a good parent information section at www.cla.ca/netsafe/netsafe.pdf

The topic of Intellectual Freedom can ignite strong and passionate arguments on all sides of the issue. Isn't it wonderful that we are able to argue about the very thing that provides us with the freedom to do so? ■



The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books 1990-2000

Continued from page 11

46. *Deenie* by Judy Blume
47. *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes
48. *Annie on my Mind* by Nancy Garden
49. *The Boy Who Lost His Face*
by Louis Sachar
50. *Cross Your Fingers, Spit in Your Hat*
by Alvin Schwartz
51. *A Light in the Attic* by Shel Silverstein
52. *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
53. *Sleeping Beauty* Trilogy
by A.N. Roquelaure (Anne Rice)
54. *Asking About Sex and Growing Up*
by Joanna Cole
55. *Cujo* by Stephen King
56. *James and the Giant Peach*
by Roald Dahl
57. *The Anarchist Cookbook*
by William Powell
58. *Boys and Sex* by Wardell Pomeroy
59. *Ordinary People* by Judith Guest
60. *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis
61. *What's Happening to my Body?*
Book for Boys: A Growing-Up Guide
for Parents & Sons
by Lynda Madaras
62. *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* by Judy Blume
63. *Crazy Lady* by Jane Conly
64. *Athletic Shorts*
by Chris Crutcher
65. *Fade* by Robert Cormier
66. *Guess What?* by Mem Fox
67. *The House of Spirits* by Isabel Allende
68. *The Face on the Milk Carton* by Caroline Cooney
69. *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut
70. *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
71. *Native Son* by Richard Wright
72. *Women on Top: How Real Life Has Changed Women's Fantasies*
by Nancy Friday
73. *Curses, Hexes and Spells*
by Daniel Cohen
74. *Jack* by A.M. Homes
75. *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo A. Anaya
76. *Where Did I Come From?* by Peter Mayle
77. *Carrie* by Stephen King
78. *Tiger Eyes* by Judy Blume
79. *On My Honor* by Marion Dane Bauer
80. *Arizona Kid* by Ron Koertge



Continued on page 15

Welcome back to School Library World, the column that keeps you in touch with school librarianship across Canada and around the world.

CASL – PAC: Canadian Association for School Libraries Provincial Advisory Council

The Canadian Association for School Libraries is committed to promoting dialogue between provincial school library associations through its Provincial Advisory Council (CASL - PAC). The first meeting of this group of provincial presidents and the CASL executive took place by teleconference late in February.

CASL's president-elect, Marlene Turkington of the Thames Valley District School Board, chaired the conference call. Participants shared initiatives and concerns of their respective associations. While sharing many similar concerns, each association has its own distinct focus:

Western Canada

British Columbia shares many concerns with Ontario, in that the autonomy of local school boards inhibits equitable support for school libraries across the province. The BC Coalition for School Libraries has brought excellent media attention to the issues.

Alberta has seen an alarming drop in teacher-librarians, from 500 a few years ago to approximately 100 teacher-librarians today. The provincial Learning Resources Council has rewritten its *Handbook for Teacher-Librarians*. Some progress in terms of advocacy has been made with the Alberta Learning Commission and the Minister of Education.

In Saskatchewan, the Minister of Education declared Saskatchewan School Library Day on our National School Library Day. The Ministry is beginning a review of school library funding. The association is using a grant to develop advocacy posters and bookmarks for province-wide distribution.

Manitoba's Minister of Education also declared support for National School Library Day. The Manitoba Teachers' Society has agreed to review its policy on progressive professional development for teacher-librarians.

Eastern Canada

Quebec's representative reported that teacher-librarianship in that province is in serious decline, and great disparity exists between English and French school districts. This April, Montreal will be declared UNESCO's Capital of Books for 2005 – 2006. There is anticipation that this international focus will bring attention to the school library issue. New Brunswick supports its school libraries with provincial licensing of online databases, and with equitable, per-student funding for library resources. In a move which attracted national attention, MPP Kelly Lamrock recently introduced a private members bill to the New Brunswick legislature for the establishment of a "Committee for Restoring School Libraries".

The number of teacher-librarians in Nova Scotia continues to decline, with library staffing completely at the discretion of school principals. Four members of the Teacher-Librarians' Association of Nova Scotia attended the OLA Super Conference this year, and shared their experiences with other members on a day granted by their local board.

Prince Edward Island reports significant support from the provincial government for library automation and provincial database licensing. There is great concern about standards for school library staffing, with some districts

using teachers without library qualifications.

Unfortunately, representatives from Newfoundland and Labrador and from the Yukon were unable to join the teleconference.

OSLA was able to report that, despite our very serious concerns, there are some positive signs emerging. The Toronto District School Board's announcement of increased elementary staffing has been very encouraging. CASL – PAC members were very impressed with the announcement of OLA's financial support for a major research study into school libraries and student achievement. They are also looking forward to seeing the OSLA Evidence-Based Practice Tool Kit, currently under development, and the recently published TALCO poster.

CASL - PAC re-convened at the June CLA conference in Calgary. On the agenda: an update not only on our provincial initiatives, but also on CASL's progress with national issues such as copyright advocacy. Although our provincial situations vary in the details, our concerns are universal. CASL-PAC offers a forum for sharing our concerns and supporting and benefiting from each other's initiatives.

*Submitted by Anita Brooks
Kirkland, OSLA President*

News from the International Association of School Librarianship

Rick Mulholland has been appointed the new International School Library Day Co-ordinator for IASL. Rick is a teacher-librarian in Burnaby B.C., a senior editor of *The Bookmark* (a publication of the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association), and a councillor of the Canadian Association for School Libraries.

If you'd welcome the opportunity to explore the international nature of school librarianship but can't afford to travel to the annual IASL conferences, then consider purchasing the conference proceedings from IASL.

To learn more about these conference proceedings and other IASL Publications available, please visit the IASL Web site, *School Libraries Online*, at www.iasl-slo.org.

Information from IASL listserv messages posted by Peter Genco, IASL President. ■

The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books 1990-2000

Continued from page 13

81. *Family Secrets* by Norma Klein
82. *Mommy Laid An Egg* by Babette Cole
83. *The Dead Zone* by Stephen King
84. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain
85. *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison
86. *Always Running* by Luis Rodriguez
87. *Private Parts* by Howard Stern



88. *Where's Waldo?* by Martin Handford
89. *Summer of My German Soldier* by Bette Greene
90. *Little Black Sambo* by Helen Bannerman
91. *Pillars of the Earth* by Ken Follett
92. *Running Loose* by Chris Crutcher
93. *Sex Education* by Jenny Davis
94. *The Drowning of Stephen Jones* by Bette Greene
95. *Girls and Sex* by Wardell Pomeroy
96. *How to Eat Fried Worms* by Thomas Rockwell
97. *View from the Cherry Tree* by Willo Davis Roberts
98. *The Headless Cupid* by Zilpha Keatley Snyder
99. *The Terrorist* by Caroline Cooney
100. *Jump Ship to Freedom* by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier

This list was compiled based on 6,364 challenges reported to or recorded by the Office for Intellectual Freedom, as compiled by the Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association. The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom does not claim comprehensiveness in recording challenges. Research suggests that for each challenge reported there are as many as four or five which go unreported. ■

Censorship in the Forest

Janet McNaughton

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When I wrote *An Earthly Knight*, I knew exactly what I was doing. I was writing a book that dealt with sexual matters for an audience of readers who might not yet be sexually active, but who are certainly curious about sexual relations and the role those relations will eventually play in their own lives.

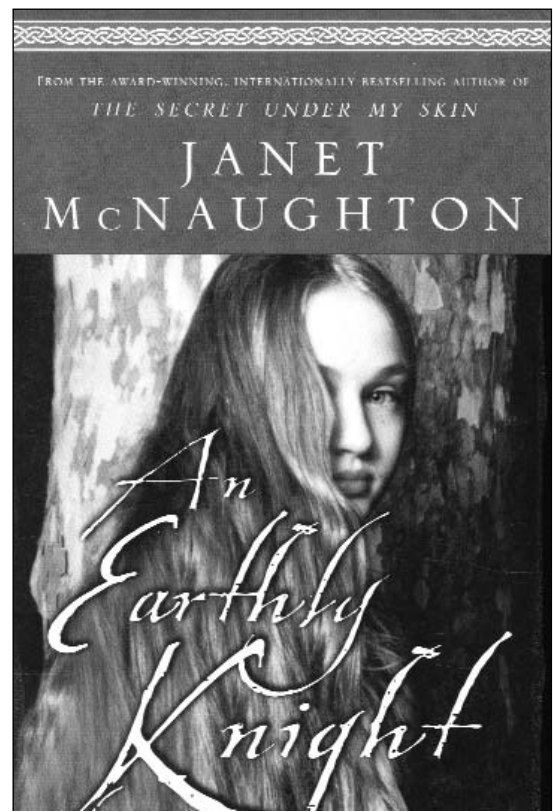
An Earthly Knight draws on an original ballad, Tam Lin, which features a main character who becomes pregnant out of wedlock. Except for unexpected plot twists, everything that happens in a good novel should proceed logically from the action that came before, so I wanted the pregnancy to come as no surprise to the reader. But, in fact, it's hard to write about sex gracefully. So I stayed inside the mind of my character, dwelling on her impressions and emotions rather than graphic details. And then I waited to see what would happen.

In Canada, no reviewer mentioned the sex scene. It was simply not an issue. But, when the book was released a year later in the US, *School Library Journal* called my sex scene “a hazily described night of passion,” and *ALA Booklist* called it “a euphemistically described night of passion”. The Americans apparently felt my sex scene wasn't explicit enough. We may be onto a significant cultural difference here. I'm still waiting for a Canadian librarian to ask me why my sex scene wasn't more explicit.

One of the first things that happened to this book after publication in Canada shocked me completely. Havergal College, the exclusive Toronto girls' school, adopted it for novel study in grade 7. They've been using it since. I

recently asked teacher Larry Tayler if they'd had any problems. He said one parent had called to ask why there was sex in this book. He explained it was part of the original ballad, important to the plot and not graphic. He added, “I think some of the girls enjoy thinking that they're getting away with something when they encounter 'the scene' — I guess they think that somehow the teachers missed it!”

If *An Earthly Knight* had stayed inside the polite world of Canadian reviewers and dedicated English teachers, it might never have found itself at the centre of controversy. But, as every Canadian author knows, the tree award programs will get your book into hands it might never have reached otherwise. Mostly, this is a very good thing. I think we are all deeply grateful for the countless hours of volunteer time that go into running these programs and the new readers we reach. But sometimes, the hands that would otherwise never have come into contact with your book are hands you might regret encountering. Until last year, my worst experience with a tree award was confined to the odd e-mail from a reader who had genuinely disliked my book, apparently for aesthetic reasons, which is fair. But last year, some teacher-librarians protested that *An Earthly Knight* should have come “with a



warning,” some restricted reading to grades 8 and up, and one, at least, pulled the book from her library shelves and forwarded it to her board office, presumably for quarantine.

In a free society such as ours, people have the right to find books offensive. What surprised me was the fact that some of these teacher-librarians restricted the book without reading it, or after reading the two-page love scene out of context. Until now, I had assumed that people who restricted books without reading them were just a stereotype I had conjured to make such behavior seem stupider than it actually is. Sadly, this is not always the case. The other surprising thing was to learn that some teacher-librarians feel it is part of their job to prevent younger students from reading anything about sex. Sex bad, no sex good, is the kind of approach that would certainly save a lot of time and troublesome thought when choosing books for young readers. But there are times when troublesome thought is entirely appropriate, the selection of books for young readers by teacher-librarians for example. The Red Maple juries are thoughtful in their selection of short lists. Problems arise when those shortlisted books are not given the same treatment in the schools. In the course of the OLA panel at Super Conference 2005, I learned that most school boards have a process for dealing with books when they are challenged. When teachers shortcut this process by removing books that might possibly offend hypothetical parents, they shortchange their students.

When one Canadian author encountered censorship problems, a teacher said to her: “Why don’t you just write nice books?” Some adults are apparently disturbed by the thought that young adult fiction has a role to play in helping young readers develop a sense of themselves as sexual beings. I think this is misguided. Biology and sex-ed classes can teach important facts about sex, but they can’t really address the emotional side of the equation, which is a huge part of sexuality. The linguist Kenneth Burke called literature “equipment for living.” For young people, literature is valuable, in part because it allows

them to gain experience without taking risks. A novel is a good place to explore sexuality. Alone with a book, the reader is impervious to peer pressure, protected from consequences, and free to sort out attitudes towards life. I think readers who encounter sexual issues in literature before they do in life will have a chance to develop their own set of moral values and sense of self-worth.

Given the current options in popular culture, I have to admit a certain bias towards young adult writers as people who might impart reasonable moral values in their work. I’ve read a number of young adult books that have run into censorship problems because they deal with sexual issues. *Silent to the Bone* by E. L. Konigsburg and *Word for Home* by Joan Clark are just two. These books are honest and sensitive. They respect the natural, healthy curiosity of young people, but they also respect their innocence in a way that popular culture does not. If I were forced to pick some aspect of popular culture from which to protect young people, YA literature would be last on my list. Remove young adult literature, and what remains in youth culture is often the more aggressive, even overtly misogynistic, expression of sexuality. So it’s puzzling to me to see that this is the one form of popular culture which is subject to censorship in schools.

Did I expect to get into trouble when I wrote *An Earthly Knight*? I guessed the sex might cause problems, but I couldn’t censor myself and ignore the needs of my audience simply to avoid trouble or to produce a more marketable book. This would be a fundamental betrayal of my audience. Young readers need to see characters behaving in ways that make sense to them, even after those characters have made bad choices and messed up lives. They also need contact with adults who refuse to compromise their principles. Distant contact with an author through the medium of a book is good, but direct contact with a librarian who advocates for their needs is much, much better. I’m happy to say this experience also taught me that many of those librarians are out there, hard at work. ■

For the Love of a Good Book

Alison Mikelsons with Sya Van Geest



I love to read. From the time I was a little person I have adored books and stories. You won't be surprised to hear that The Forest of Reading reading programs are very important to me. I fondly remember the Silver Birch Club at my school library five years ago when I was in grade four. Mrs. Thompson, my teacher-librarian, was wonderful. Imagine it - being a passionate reader and having a club where other kids want to talk books. The fun of Ms. McEwen's Red Maple Book Club in grades 7 and 8 will always be a fond memory. So I have read all the books in the Forest every year since grade four and have already read all 10 White Pine books. I tell you this not to brag, but to let you know how important reading those books is to a lot of kids. The numbers of participants in the reading programs are astounding.

Now we hear about those books that have raised eyebrows. Really now, Budge Wilson's *Fractures* and the short stories in *City of the*

Dead? Sure, the story about the Trojan horse gave me the creeps. Is that a reason to censor it? What's wrong with an author creating some shivers? But *Fractures*? I couldn't figure that one out for the longest time. Then I remembered that there's a story about a girl who gets raped. You know what? By grade 7 and 8, we know things like that happen and to have an author let us feel the horror and experience the girl's emotional pain was a good thing to think and talk about.

Then, last year, there were people who questioned *An Earthly Knight*. Now, here is a wonderful writer, an author recognized with many awards, one of whose books was dubbed one of the "Best Spring Books" by one of the Dewey Divas and Dudes. What was the offense in *An Earthly Knight*? Uh, Oh - it must be something about sex again. I should have guessed. The wonderful love between Tam and J that led to them making love was very beautiful. I know they weren't married. Not the wisest thing to do, but they were young and in love and circumstances were going to pull them apart. She got pregnant. It happens. Will it not be so, if we don't read about it?

The opportunity to think about those things is important to us. I'm not sure why there is such fear. Do some adults think that teen readers will be encouraged to willfully repeat this protagonist's mistake? I think the opposite might be true; that by prompting us to ponder these so-called *sensitive* issues and live them — through book characters that are often so real we hate to say goodbye to them when we finish a book — such books might help us learn to grow up avoiding some of life's pitfalls. Besides, Janet McNaughton was not in any way explicit in the love scene, nor was getting pregnant before marriage held up as some sort of ideal. Now that I think of it, perhaps the censors should flip their bearings and when a well-written book — with sex or naughty words

or situations, whatever the objectionable content — is found they should *urge* their children to read it and talk about it.

Here is how the books in the Forest of Reading are selected. More than 100 books, all of them new Canadian books, are read by more than 25 professional librarians in public and school libraries. They choose the 10 best out of all those books, and dub them nominees. These are educated people. They *know* books and can judge quality literature. They work with children and youth. I have faith in Ms. McEwen, Douglas Davey (one of Guelph Public Library's children librarians), and Joanne Hawthorne (head of children and teen services) to put the books on the shelves. And I have special faith in my grandmother, Sya Van Geest, to choose the right books for the list. She is one of the people holding up to scrutiny 100 books in order to select the top 10. We read these books, talk about them, write to the authors, and then, finally, vote for the one we think is the very best.

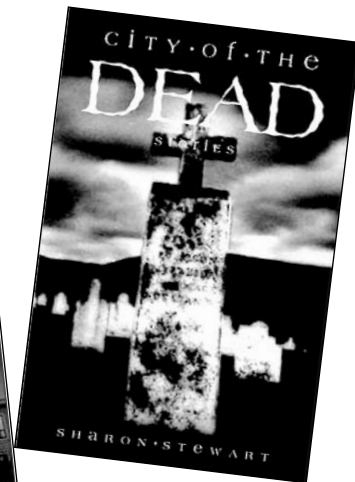
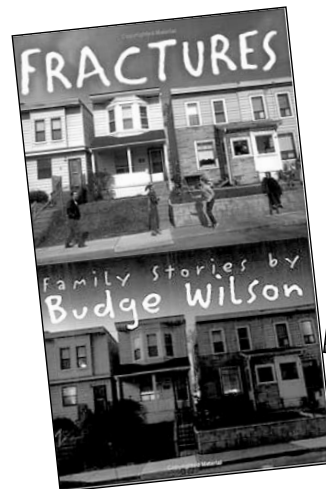
You know, I have to be honest. Sometimes we teenagers wonder about the wisdom of some of our elders — those who want to shelter us. I shiver to think of the type of books they would approve. Pap books with no oomph, with nothing of importance to say to us unless it is preached within *one* narrow framework — their's of course. As if any one person or group has perfect knowledge of what is good. Now that gives you the creeps, doesn't it?

In the winter issue of *Access*, I read an article about banned books through history and I want to go the university display. The article asks the question, "What would our world be like if these censors throughout history had been successful?" We would have Bibles only in Latin; we'd have no Galileo, no *Lord of the Flies* or *Merchant of Venice* or *Harry Potter* and no *An Earthly Knight*. When you think of it, it

has to make you angry. How dare they, really!

Let us assume that parents who want to ban books mean well, that they love their children and think that they are protecting them. But teacher-librarians caving in under pressure and taking the books out of their libraries! I don't understand that. Shouldn't librarians protect books and our access to them? Now, I'm not talking about a free for all. We have already established that the Forest of Reading selection process is rigorous. But librarians, is it not your sacred duty to protect my right to read these books? If Ben's parents don't want him to read certain books — okay, they are his parents. But they are not mine. No individual or group should have the right to dictate what the rest of us read. I want the freedom to read, to discuss, to think, to be challenged.

And I want to say to you wonderful authors who are selected for the Forest of Reading: keep writing and crafting stories that make me upset about racism and war and cruelty and troubled youth and injustice, and challenge me think about love and family and friendship and the wonders of being human. And censors — please get out of the forest. ■





Hate Mail

Marsha Skrypuch

I have the unenviable distinction of being the only Canadian children's author who has been the target of hate crimes and death threats for the subjects about which I choose to write.

The first time I became the target of a 'hate crime' was before the term had even been coined. In the 1980s, I wrote freelance articles and book reviews for my local newspaper. I did a book review of Robert Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*. This was the very first Western book written about the Ukrainian famine, and this was before the fall of the Soviet Union. In the 1980s, there were still people who would openly admit their admiration of Stalin and knowledge of the Stalin-orchestrated famine that killed 10 million Ukrainians was nil.

My local newspaper devoted half a newspaper page to the review and included photographs from the book. After it was published, my father-in-law's medical office was defaced with swastikas. Someone kept on calling my in-laws' home, asking for me (our number was unlisted). Once, when I was there and answered the phone myself, the person read portions of my book review back to me and then yelled at me for my "lies" about Stalin. He then threatened to kill me. While the police

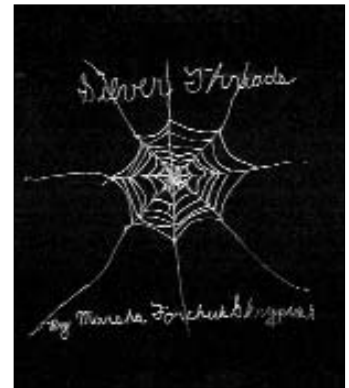
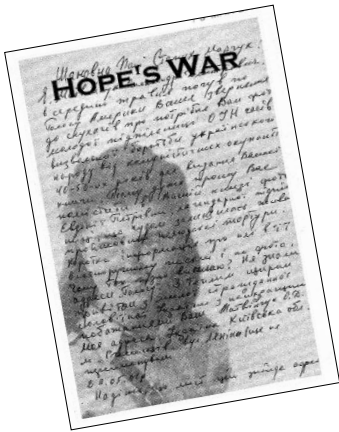
had ignored the swastikas, they did take note of the death threat and provided plain clothes police for myself and my family for the next few days. I contacted the newspaper, naively thinking they would consider what happened to me newsworthy, but they didn't. Instead, I was informed that I should stop writing reviews.

I took their advice and started writing books. In 1996, *Silver Threads* was published, and in 1998, *The Best Gifts*, then *The Hunger* in 1999.

A dozen years went by with no other hate incident and I put it out of my mind.

But also in the back of my mind was the story of the Ukrainian famine. It bothered me that most people in the western world had no awareness at all of one of the biggest genocides of the 20th century. What we don't remember, we are bound to repeat, and that is why I write about injustices that have been brushed under the carpet. *The Hunger*, my first novel partly set during the Armenian genocide, had been warmly received. I felt it was time to write about the Ukrainian famine.

The problem with a topic like this is the sheer magnitude of tragedy. People can get their heads around one death, but how can one



write about 10 million deaths in a book for children? I decided to concentrate on a single person, but I didn't want her to be a victim. What I wrote about is how one girl and her father save a whole village from famine. And since this could never really have happened, I chose a folk tale motif and wrote the picture book, *Enough*.

One month before *Enough* was published, I received the most vile and vicious piece of mail I had ever read in my life. It was from a woman I knew only vaguely, and she knew that I was writing about the famine. The letter was so horrible that I shredded it, but one line was burned into my brain, "If Stalin killed all those Ukrainians, then they must have done something to deserve it."

A month later, I received another hate letter. This one was not as articulate as the first. It was simply a photo of Stalin laughing and scrawled underneath, the words, "Ukrainian pig."

I reported this incident to the police.

Then, on the day of my local book launch, another hate letter arrived. This one contained a photo of a man in a Nazi uniform shooting a civilian in the head. The caption scrawled

underneath was, "Ukrainians and Germans, Nazi pigs forever."

Needless to say, I was shaken. Police officers accompanied me to my launch. They even bought books.

What really shook me though, was that I was in the midst of writing a more controversial book: a novel about a teen whose Ukrainian born grandfather has been unjustly accused of Nazi war crimes in WWII. I wasn't sure if the hate directed towards me was because of my picture book, *Enough*, or because of the research I was currently doing.

My husband suggested I abandon that novel. He feared for my life, and quite frankly, I feared what might happen to my family. Without going into details, suffice it to say that security measures were put into effect and I went ahead with that novel. *Hope's War* was very well received. I got no hate mail because of it, and the novel was nominated for three provincial readers' choice awards.

Tellingly, however, it was not nominated for an Ontario tree award. ■

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Selecting with Confidence,

Anita Brooks Kirkland

Does your school board have a policy about and procedures for the selection of educational resources? One of the fundamental values of public education is to foster intellectual curiosity. Having access to a broad range of resources is vitally important. Libraries in general, and the school library in particular, have an important role to play in the protection of intellectual freedom and the freedom to read.

Having an inclusive selection policy empowers educators to make selection decisions based on the merits of the resource, rather than self-censoring based on the fear of the challenge. A selection policy should also have a clear process for handling the challenges that will inevitably come. Having a clear process objectifies the issues, and facilitates a calm, consistent approach to these situations.

The Waterloo Region District School Board has had a selection policy since 1980, and it has gone through several revisions since. Over the past three years, as we worked through situations using the last version of the document, some of its weaknesses became apparent. This was particularly true in the elementary panel, where we had experienced drastic staffing cuts in the library, making the responsibilities of the remaining teacher-librarians less clear to the system as a whole. All of this led to a new revision of our document, which was released to the system this spring.

One of the great things about being involved in professional organizations like OSLA is the willingness of its members to share expertise and experiences. As we went through the long process of writing this document, we were very

grateful for the generosity of members of our affiliate, TALCO (The Association of Library Consultants and Coordinators of Ontario), who shared sample documents and offered advice based on their own experience.

Some of the improvements in the new document include the following.

Clear Delineation between Guidelines for Selection and for Use

Selection principles are philosophical statements about the collective values of resources, and are based on the values of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and documents such as the Ontario Library Association's Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual. Criteria for the use of resources are based on curriculum needs and the social and emotional maturity of students. In previous versions of our document, these areas were not clearly delineated.

Selection vs. Censorship

The new document includes a section explaining the difference between selection and censorship. Selection is an inclusive process, done by trained professionals based on established criteria. Censorship, on the other hand, is the suppression of materials, based on the specific values of the censor. Inclusive selection recognizes that providing students with the opportunity to study controversial issues is crucial, and denying students access to a resource because it might offend some members of the community may demonstrate that suppression is an acceptable way of responding to controversial ideas.

Weeding

Implicit in previous versions of our document

Not Fear

was the idea that if a resource no longer met established criteria, it should be removed. In the new version, this is explicitly stated, with guidelines. We all hope this section will validate this crucial process, particularly in library collections.

Improved Process for Handling Challenges

Our new document provides a very clear process for handling challenges, both at the school level and the system level. The process puts the onus on the challenger to demonstrate how the resource in question does not meet the board's guidelines for selection and use. Establishing a process neutralizes potentially emotional situations, and provides clear guidelines for staff members.

Better Record-Keeping

Our previous document provided no guidelines for documenting the challenge process and the outcomes of specific situations. Local lore in our board includes informal accounts of a major challenge to *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, but no formal records exist. Investigating these accounts required some detective work on our part, and we benefited from the good memories of some key people. The new document outlines a process for record keeping, which can only help in informing future situations.

Fairer Procedures

A recent situation demonstrated a weakness in the existing challenge process – the person challenging a resource was in the position of deciding the outcome of the challenge. In this instance, a vice-principal challenged a Silver Birch selection, and then made the decision to withdraw the book. The new process prevents this kind of conflict of interest. Our new

document also provides people making challenges with a fair process and fair hearing.

The process of updating this document took several months, with detailed writing sessions, review by a team of teacher-librarians, and further review by principals and superintendents. The new document was released to the system in April. We have had the opportunity not only to present the document to administrators, but also to actually use it in a couple of recent situations. It has been very favourably received.

If you are not familiar with your board's selection policy, we strongly recommend that you take a good look. A good policy is empowering, giving you guidelines for inclusive selection based on your professional knowledge, and not inhibited by the fear of the challenge. ■

Copies of the Waterloo Region District School Board Selection of Educational Resources, 2005 document may be purchased by contacting Sheila Jankura, IT Services, WRDSB, at 519-570-0003 Ext. 4440.

A Censorship Collage

Girls' Books vs. Boys' Books

*Audrey Knox
Interim Head Librarian,
Library and Learning Resources Centre
Crestwood School
Hamilton Wentworth District School Board*

“When I was a teacher-librarian in a K - 6 school, a mother came in and told me that she didn't want her daughter reading 'boys' books,' such as the one she had in her hand, which the little girl had recently borrowed. The title of the board book was *I Want to be an Astronaut*. I mentioned that Sally Ride's and Roberta Bondar's mothers didn't think that was a 'boys' book'. That was cheeky, but the mother didn't get the meaning anyway.” ■

Another Way to Censorship

*Mary Hickey
Teacher-Librarian
Turner Fenton Secondary School, Brampton*

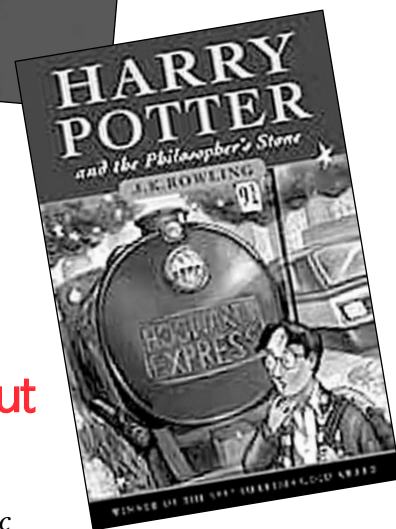
“We had a student who took a novel home from our library. A couple of weeks later she came to the desk to pay for the book. I asked her why she was going to pay already. Why not look a little longer? She said that her parents had confiscated the book. They objected to the parental abuse depicted in it and refused to give it back. Rather than argue with her parents, she just decided to pay for her 'lost' book.” ■



Harry Potter Out Loud

*Scott Gardner
Beaverton Public School
Durham District School Board*

“I had a parent express concern about using the first Harry Potter book in class. As the DDSB asked that we clear this book with parents before using it, I invited the parents in talk about it. They took the book home and read it themselves. They definitely felt that parts, especially where Voldemort as the snake drinks the blood of the unicorn to stay alive, violated their beliefs. It was not too much trouble to find another equally effective read-a-loud. The parents were very appreciative.” ■



ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual

In affirming its commitment to the fundamental rights of intellectual freedom, the freedom to read and freedom of the press, as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Library Association declares its acceptance of the following propositions:

1) That the provision of library service to the public is based upon the right of the citizen, under the protection of the law, to judge individually on questions of politics, religion and morality.

2) That intellectual freedom requires freedom to examine other ideas and other interpretations of life than those currently approved by the local community or by society in general, and including those ideas and interpretations which may be unconventional or unpopular.

3) That freedom of expression includes freedom for a creator to depict what is ugly, shocking and unedifying in life.

4) That free traffic in ideas and opinions is essential to the health and growth of a free society and that the freedom to read, listen and view is fundamental to such free traffic.

5) That it is the responsibility of libraries to maintain the right of intellectual freedom and

to implement it consistently in the selection of books, periodicals, films, recordings, other materials, and in the provision of access to electronic sources of information, including access to the internet.

6) That it is therefore part of the library's service to its public to resist any attempt by any individual or group within the community it serves to abrogate or curtail access to information, the freedom to read, view and listen by demanding the removal of, or restrictions to library information sources in any format.

7) That it is equally part of the library's responsibility to its public to ensure that its selection of material is not unduly influenced by the personal opinions of the selectors, but determined by the application of generally accepted standards of accuracy, style and presentation. ■

*Updated and Approved,
Ontario Library Association
1998 Annual General Meeting
November 7, 1998*

To Filter or Not to Filter

Diane Bédard

What is Filtering?

Content filters have one purpose in life – to stop objectionable Internet content from reaching the screen or desktop of the user. Just what the filter decides is objectionable, however, can be open to wide range of interpretation.

Firewalls are a specific kind of blocking filter, intended to protect the network integrity and server hardware. Designed to resist brute-force attacks, foil hackers, and generally police every file going in and out of the network, firewalls can block content, but their primary focus is on what is likely to do damage to the computer hardware or network, not the end user.

Email SPAM sieves are also filters, but their purpose is to block unrequested mail, bulk remailers, and advertisements. SPAM sieves look for a “subject” line and check it for keywords, check for empty or “spoofed” headers, strip certain kinds of attachments (such as executable files and zipped, compressed files) and use RBL services (Real-time blackhole lists) to totally block some ISPs/IPs (such as China & Asia) which blatantly ignore email rules. Some email filters can also be set to look at the message text for specific content, but most often the personally addressed mail from a properly validated sender is passed forward, unblocked, even if of objectionable or pornographic content.

While both firewalls and email spam sieves can be fascinating to explore, my focus today is on the controversial area of Internet content filtering.

How filtering can be applied

Content filtering can be done in several ways and at several different levels:

- ◆ by preference settings for the Internet browser or search engine you use, limiting what results get returned,
- ◆ by a commercial software package you install on your local computer, blocking keywords and banned sites,
- ◆ by your school/board network administrators using network server software, limiting what they allow on the network,
- ◆ by your Internet service provider limiting what they allow through, based on the customer’s request.

When you control the computer (you have administrator privileges) you can choose to install or enable a number of these features, depending on your level of comfort. If someone else is the computer administrator, that individual may have made some of these choices for you already, installing some software or setting some browser preferences. Please remember that, short of unplugging the computer from the Internet, NONE of these options will guarantee 100% filtering!

“FREE” Options

Internet Service Provider (ISP) Controls -

Depending on how you connect to the Internet, you may have an ISP which provides some filtering options built into your Internet account. One example is AOL, which provides both Parental Control and Internet Access Control settings. Parental Control allows the adult to filter Web sites based on AOL’s pre-selected list of banned words and sites. The Internet Access Control allows the adult to limit the child from even launching any browser to access the Internet.

When you use your service provider to limit what is/is not acceptable, you are usually limited to choosing a level of filtering (none, some, squeaky clean) and have no control over just what it is the ISP chooses to consider offensive. While this is one way of trying to

protect young children, it becomes very restrictive for older users. A teen's homework assignment on breast cancer for her biology class will find few, if any, search results to work from when the Parental Control is set high.

Web Browser settings - Browsers are becoming more and more sophisticated. Most of the newer ones have some options for "content advisor" controls. Once this is turned on, the browser checks for a third party rating of the site before displaying it. The most frequently used rating system is ICRA... the Internet Content Rating Association. [www.icra.org] These options are set on the local computer, and would have to be set on every computer individually.

This sounds like a good idea, but there are actually some holes. The browser will only filter sites with ICRA ratings; so un-rated sites can be passed through. Even among the rated sites there is some question as to validity of the rating, as ICRA allows some Web sites to rate and label themselves.

If you want to see what this looks like, turn on Microsoft Internet Explorer's Content Advisor (Windows only) by going under the TOOLS menu and selecting INTERNET OPTIONS. In the Internet Options dialog box which appears, click on the CONTENT tab and you'll be able to ENABLE the Content Advisor... now you can use the slider control to set acceptable levels of content for Language, Nudity, Sex, and Violence. Just remember, this will only stop sites that have honestly been rated by ICRA, unless you click on the GENERAL tab and also choose to block sites that have no rating. If you choose to "stop users from seeing sites that have no rating", you are turning off access to about 85% of the Internet!

Once you have turned Content Advisor on, you'll need to start tracking and adding sites under the APPROVED SITES tab. Whenever a site gets blocked that you (the computer administrator) feel should be allowed, you'll need to copy that site's address into the "allowed list" to let it through. We've had

problems with parents turning this feature on at home, then finding that valid sites we encourage our students to use, such as *eLibrary* and *Career Cruising*, get blocked!

Search Engine Preferences - Search Engines are also building in filtering controls. Examples of these are Alta Vista's "Family Filter" and Google's "SafeSearch". Filters on search engines screen for sites that contain explicit sexual content and delete them from your search results. You can usually choose from among three filter settings:

- ◆ NONE,
- ◆ MODERATE/MULTIMEDIA filtering which excludes most explicit images, video and audio results but doesn't filter ordinary web search results,
- ◆ STRICT/ALL INCLUSIVE filtering which applies filtering to your entire search results (both media searches and ordinary web searches).

If you start at the Advanced Search screen in Google, you can also adjust your SafeSearch settings on a per search basis. To learn more about these settings and for instructions on how to enable them, go to ...

Google SafeSearch -

www.google.com/help/customize.html#saf

AltaVista Family Filter -

www.altavista.com/web/ffset.

Remember, these filters take an all or none approach with filtering web sites, and you have no input into what they choose to block. Read the setup pages carefully and understand what judgments they make. If you have a favourite



... That is the Question!

search engine, go to its home page and explore the advanced settings offered – most will offer some level of filtering. As these options are set on the local computer, you'll need to set these preferences individually on every computer, for each search engine.

“COMMERCIAL” Options

Cybersitter, Net Nanny, CyberPatrol, Cyber Sentinel, We-Blocker, Optenet, I-Gear, Bsafe School, N2H2 ... the list is endless! Commercial software abounds for filtering. There has been a growing offering of these applications since the US government enacted the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) in 2001. CIPA regulations require all schools and libraries which receive US federal funding or subsidies for Internet access to install some form of “technology protection” capable of blocking “material deemed to be harmful to minors.”

How do filtering applications work?

Available for the home computer (local level) or for the network server (school board/system level), these programs use a number of

common strategies to filter the content before you see it. Gatekeeper approaches simply decide to apply wholesale inclusion or exclusion. More complex acceptability algorithms can test sites, based on criteria.

Inclusion filtering takes the Banana Republic dictator approach...it assumes that every site is “guilty until proven innocent”! The Microsoft Internet Explorer Content Advisor previously discussed follows this model. Software that takes this approach uses a WHITELIST - a pre-selected list of approved, squeaky clean, safe sites that are allowed. Everything else is blocked. As thousands of new web sites are created each day, your filter is only as current as the last time you updated the whitelist and MANY, MANY good legitimate sites get blocked simply because they have yet to be classified for whitelist inclusion. This is a very restrictive approach.

Exclusion filtering is far more liberal-minded - it assumes that all sites are “innocent until proven guilty”. BLACKLISTS of bad sites are maintained and updated daily with reported offenders. This approach is leaky - it lets a lot through simply because it has not yet been reported. Again, your filter is only as current as the last update.

The filter companies are notoriously closed about telling you what they have specifically blacklisted. If you are the owner of a blacklisted site and you feel the listing is not deserved, or you have fixed whatever was causing concern, it can take up to a year to get an appeal hearing and have your site unblocked.

For network server versions of inclusion/exclusion applications, the whitelists and blacklists are usually live and are constantly updated. In the home computer version, you may have the option of automatically updating every time the Internet connection is established, or you may have to remember to do the update yourself manually. Either way, expect to pay an ongoing subscription fee for list updating and know that the better services with substantial, well maintained lists cost more... legions of employees have to be paid to surf the web hourly, rating all sites.

Acceptability filtering is more complex. It

Over-blocking is a common problem...

With encrypted lists, it is difficult to accurately determine the extent to which things are over-blocked, but there are ways of seeing what is actually happening if you know the technology and have access to log files.

[The big filtering software] companies estimate that they block four sites in error for every site they block correctly... log investigation indicates that in many cases the numbers are easily 10-1 and can go as high as 100-1... I tested and found that more than 50% of the sites blocked were blocked in error.

Ultimately, the best filter resides between the ears of the children. There is no substitute for information literacy and educating children to be safe online.

Art Wolinsky, The Internet Library
<http://www.concentric.net/~awolinsk/books>
Archived from the Classroom Connect- Connected Teacher listserv @CLASSROOM.COM
Tue, 13 Feb 2001 03:13:04 -0800

uses algorithms, pattern analysis, and sensitive measurements to examine and test content to determine whether it passes or fails a set of criteria. These tests vary, ranging from counting the occurrence of certain trigger words to doing pixel checks for skin tones in images. This method is prone to error as it is usually a computer-driven process with little human checking and judgment of the results. The actual tests done by any one of the acceptability filters are trade secrets as underground web content creators are constantly trying to find ways past these tests. As testing methods get broken, new ones get developed, so you need to update the software periodically.

Additionally, acceptability filtering downloads a bigger workload onto the end computer, consuming memory and processing power. The plus side of this is that at least you get to surf all of the net (unlike inclusion whitelists) and even new unrated sites get checked before they get through (unlike exclusion blacklists).

Some of the simpler home versions of these filters may use only one filtering method, but the large commercial services subscribed to at the network server level use a combination of all of them... some sites are always allowed, others can be blacklisted, and the balance get tested for acceptability.

Such "server-side solutions" are both powerful and flexible. The IT department can manage and deploy the filtering software across an entire network, while still allowing various user logons (teachers vs. students or elementary vs. secondary, for example)—to have distinct levels of access to the Internet. Any update touches all computers instantly.

But running a filtering application on the network server itself can create quite a bottleneck in the traffic load. All Internet results for every user, anywhere on the network, must be passed through the filter application before being passed on. During heavy use times of the day Internet response will seem to slow to a crawl... it's not the Internet that's slow... it's the filter application forming a bottleneck where all returning responses are queued, waiting to be allowed in. "Cache-on-demand" service can significantly speed the time it takes to retrieve documents

“ALA's view is that protecting children online is complex, and the solutions demanded are also complex as well as varied. ... Filters are not the only solution, nor even the best solution. If you educate children, you are developing an internal filter that is going to remain with them throughout their life.”

Judith F. Krug,

Director of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom”

from the Internet, but requires large, fast memory buffers (frequently accessed pages are cached locally the first time they are requested and subsequent requests for those pages are filled from the memory cache, bypassing the filter). Most robust filters require their own server so that regular internal network traffic in your system is not affected.

Filtering at the district board level is costly. Either the board needs to house and maintain another network server or license a proxy server solution that resides at a remote location. Either way the filtering companies often charge by student population... and with annual fees running from \$2 to \$20 per student, you can quickly see how expensive it gets.

“In addition to technology solutions, children need choices about how they behave on the Internet. An swimming pools. Swimming pools can be dangerous locks, put up fences, and deploy pool alarms. All of important thing that one can do for one's children i

Former Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, Chairman of

So... does it work?

After you enable the local computer settings for browsers and search engines, contact your ISP for filtered service, and pay out the bucks for monthly subscription to a filtering application, are you finally protected?

No, not really.

Short of unplugging the computer from the Internet, NO option will guarantee 100% filtering!

If you get to the point that your filters are set high enough to stop most possible objectionable content, you will also find that you've blocked out most of the content you could have used. If you back off the block level at all, something will get through.

It's also important to note that filters are language-specific. If you work in a second language environment, an English filter will not block any French content, nor will the browser or search engine preference settings. You can buy additional filters for additional languages such as French, German, Italian and Spanish... you could also run a foreign-language version of the browser.

If your school allows students to use chat programs, know that the chat contents are very poorly blocked as few chats are done in proper English... and chat slang like “cu l8r” is impossible for a filter to decipher!

Streamed movie content and animated flash movies can contain very objectionable content and filters have no way of analyzing this unless the movie file itself has an explicit name. You could choose to block all movies and flash objects, but that would disable most of the

interactive educational content and teaching examples on sites like *PBS*, *Brainpop* and *National Geographic*.

In my humble opinion, commercial filtering applications tend to be more of a cost and a maintenance hassle than they are worth and they build a false sense of comfort. Teachers tend to be less specific in the Internet assignments and do less computer time supervision if they believe the filter will take care of it.

I really like the clarity of opinion expressed by David Splitt in his article “No substitute for due diligence”:

Let's pretend we're talking about something more traditional. Imagine a super floor mat for school gyms claimed to "prevents 99 percent of injuries." Would the principal to allow the gym teacher to pop out for a cup of coffee while the mats "protected" the students?

In short, it's fine if your schools want to use filtering software as part of a program that also includes close supervision and monitoring of student online activities (as well as swift loss of privileges for students violating the rules).

But if anybody on your school leadership team views mandated filtering as a panacea for potential liability for what students (and staffers) do on the Internet, be prepared to spend a lot more on lawyers than you paid for the filters.

www.eschoolnews.com/news/showStory.cfm?ArticleID=1060

*to be taught how to make wise
analogy could be drawn with children and
us for children. To protect them, one can install
if these measures are helpful, but by far the most
is to teach them to swim.”*

the National Research Council (NRC) committee reporting on "Youth, Pornography, and the Internet"

What Safeguards can be Put in Place?

At the school or at the board level, there needs to be informed discussion about whether or not to put the dollars (and they are BIG dollars) into large-scale commercial server packages, or whether to use the “free” options built into operating systems, browsers and search engines.

- ◆ If you choose to use filtering, select one that tells you it has blocked something (not just silently deletes it) and has some way for teachers and students to contest blocked sites.
- ◆ Whether you filter or not, have a notification process for inappropriate sites. Who should be told? What should they do about it? How timely should the response action be?
- ◆ Ensure that your school or board has clear language in the Student Acceptable Use Policy to cover the accidental stumbling upon objectionable content, indicating what students should do when they encounter it.
- ◆ Have clear wording on the Internet Permission form so when parents sign to allow their child on the Internet, they know we cannot guarantee their child will have 100% clean surfing.
- ◆ Provide in-service for teachers, reminding them that student use of the Internet must always be supervised, and should not be just open “surfing” play time.
- ◆ Implement the use of specific Internet portals for younger students instead of using open search engines or “googling”

every question. Select portal services where the sites are pre-selected for their good educational content and curriculum match. Services like *StudentLinks2* (www.studentlink.org) do a superb job of this for the K-8 market and have been developed around the Ontario curriculum. This is the opening “home page” on every Internet browser in my board’s elementary schools. It does not stop students from getting to the open Internet, but at least starts them in the right direction.

- ◆ Use specific student and staff logons onto the network (not just generic “student1” logons) so that when the daily, automated server report on inappropriate usage flags activity, the network logs can pinpoint the offender... and have clear consequences for those who search maliciously.

We do need to protect our younger students, whether it be through applied filters, curriculum-specific portals, or simply limiting Internet access to well supervised sessions. However, like all other learning opportunities, lessons dealing with the acceptable use of technology are best learned when they are understood and internalized. Intrinsic self-control and a clear moral judgment about right and wrong will stay with the students long after they move beyond the externally- applied limits of a filter. ■

elementary level



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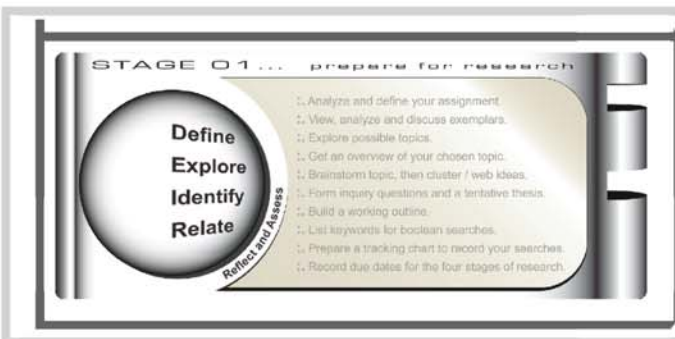
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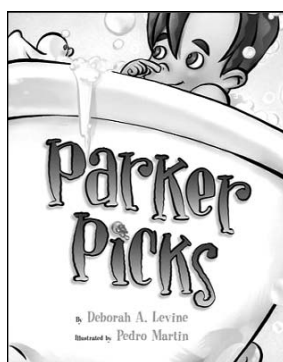
secondary level



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These books are all a bit controversial, in keeping with our censorship theme, but are wonderful books, with high quality writing, great theme exploration, and in many cases, superb appeal to reluctant readers. Some are even award-winners or nominees!



Parker Picks

Deborah A. Levine
illustrated by Pedro Martin
2002.
068983456X

Sample Curriculum Links:
Grade 1 Health

Summary:

Parker is a boy who just loves to pick his nose. Nothing anyone says can deter him, but when he gets his finger stuck in his nose one day, he begins to realize his habit has its downside.

How to Use This Book:

This book is a great one for introducing hygiene to young audiences in an entertaining way.

Sensitive Elements:

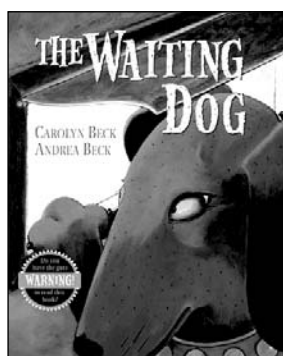
Some teachers have been so appalled with the whole idea of a boy character picking his nose that they have refused to allow it in their classrooms. Even some teacher-librarians won't allow it in their libraries, despite its obvious curriculum link and popularity.

The Waiting Dog

Carolyn Beck,
illustrated by Andrea Beck
2003.
1553370066

Sample Curriculum Links:
Grade 5 Science:

- Human Organ Systems
- Primary Language Arts: Reading
- Primary Language Arts: Writing



Summary

Told from the perspective of a dog waiting for the mailman, this story is essentially one long poem. The eager dog hears the mailman's arrival, and this prompts him to explain in detail how he would go about devouring his

enemy. The poem recounts in graphic detail each of the body's systems, as the dog makes his imaginary way through them in his dream.

How to Use This Book:

This book is a wonderful way to introduce the body's systems to bloodthirsty young junior boys. It is also a great example of writing from a different perspective, especially as the illustrations also feature a variety of perspectives. It is a huge hit with reluctant readers, who love the gore factor.

Sensitive Elements:

Because of its graphic nature, many teachers and teacher-librarians find themselves shocked and put off by this book. Kids adore it, however.

Pictures of Hollis Woods

Patricia Reilly Giff,
2002.
0385900708

Sample Curriculum Links:

- Grade 3-6 Language Arts: Reading
- Grade 6 Health and Guidance

Summary:

Hollis Woods is a foster child with an unbelievable ability to draw. Whenever things get too miserable for her, she takes her pictures and goes on the run. As



the story begins, Hollis is once again being "placed", but is full of memories of her last home with The Old Guy, Izzy, and Steven. The reader understands that something occurred at this last home that has affected Hollis deeply. Hollis' new home is with Josie, an elderly artist, and Josie's cat, Henry. As Josie slowly gives Hollis time to heal, we see her past through her pictures, and learn the mystery that has brought Hollis to this place. Unfortunately, Josie is in the early stages of Alzheimer's, and so Hollis decides to take Josie and go on the run again. She returns to the summer home where the mystery is finally fully explained, and Hollis realizes that she can love people and do the right thing after all.

How to Use This Book:

This book is an easy read for intermediates, in terms of language and size, but its use of flashbacks and the weaving of story threads make it more challenging in structure. It is beautifully written, and was a

Newbery Honor Book. The mystery of what happened with the Regan family will keep reluctant readers reading, and provoke much discussion, especially about Hollis’ decision-making skills, a grade 6 guidance topic.

Sensitive Elements:

Because Hollis is a foster child who experiences some neglect and implied abuse, and because she goes on the run, sleeping under overpasses, etc., some teachers will find this book less than appealing. The portrayal of Alzheimer’s, and Hollis’ decision to run with Josie, breaking into the summerhouse, etc. will also cause comment in some quarters.



Pirates

Celia Rees,
Crown Publishers. 2003.
1582348162
Web site:
www.celiarees.co.uk

Sample Curriculum Links:
Intermediate Language

Arts: Reading
Grade 9 English:
Literature Studies and
Reading

Summary:

Nancy Kington is a wealthy merchant’s daughter in the early eighteenth century, when her world suddenly falls apart. Her father loses his ships in a storm and then dies suddenly. Nancy is sent to the family plantation in Jamaica and forbidden contact with William, the young naval officer whom she loves. In Jamaica, she is appalled by the treatment of the slaves and the cruelty and prejudice she sees. She becomes best friends with a half-slave girl named Minerva, angering the overseer and Nancy’s brother.

On her sixteenth birthday, Nancy learns she is to be used as a pawn to save her family’s fortunes, and soon will be forced to marry a cruel plantation owner and ex-pirate named Bartholome. Nancy returns to her plantation and is trying to come up with a plan of escape when Fate intervenes. She has to save Minerva from a near-rape by the overseer, and in the process, kills him. This sets Nancy and Minerva on an exciting adventure, during which they join a pirate crew, find treasure, learn they have the same father, and run into William. Unfortu-

nately, Bartholome will not let Nancy go, and when he finally catches up with them, Nancy is saved by Minerva, who puts a gruesome end to Bartholome once and for all.

How to Use This Book:

This book is a great choice for a discussion about prejudice, slavery, the colonization of the Americas, and Good versus Evil. It would be a wonderful literature circle novel for intermediate and secondary grades. This is a classic adventure story, but with a brave and strong-hearted young woman as the protagonist, and the elements of romance will make it a popular favourite with female readers. It should go over well with fans of *Pirates of the Caribbean* or lovers of historical fiction in general. Both *School Library Journal* and *KLIATT* gave it a “starred review.”

Sensitive Elements:

The near-rape is not graphically described, however there are a number of scenes of violence that are more detailed. The sharing of the same father by both girls could also be an issue in some schools.

Counterfeit Son

Elaine Marie Alphin
2000.
0142301477

Sample Curriculum Links:
Intermediate Language
Arts: Reading

Summary:

Cameron Miller is alone in the world. His father has just been killed by the police in a shootout, and he is terrified of his future as the son of a serial killer and child abuser. He decides to adopt the identity of one of his father’s victims, Neil Lacey, so that he can have a home and reinvent himself. Just as Cameron’s settling in, his father’s former accomplice arrives on the scene and starts threatening him. Cameron sees that he may have to reveal his true identity in order to protect himself and those he’s come to care about, but the truth is not at all what he believes. As secrets are revealed, Cameron discovers he has a real home after all.



How to Use This Book:

This book is a powerful, award-winning mystery with “edge-of-the-seat

purchases for your school's curriculum needs

suspense built into its structure. The abuse suffered by Cameron is not explicitly described, but is still startling in its realism. Reluctant readers and kids who thrive on real-life drama will adore this book, and it is a great choice for literature circles as well. It is the winner of the *Edgar Allan Poe Award* and also an *ALA Quick Pick*.

Sensitive Elements:

Because Cameron's life has been full of bodies in the basement, implied sexual abuse and violence, this book has (naturally) a high controversy level. Still, it is a powerful, well-written, and captivating novel that holds great appeal for kids because it is "real."



Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging

Louise Rennison
2001.

0064472272

Sample Curriculum Links:

Intermediate Language

Arts: Reading

Grade 9 English:

Literature Studies and
Reading

Summary:

This hilarious journal recounts the life of Georgia

Nicolson, a 14-year-old English girl whose greatest aim in life is to capture the heart of Robbie, the "Sex God." Georgia's family, one of her greatest challenges, includes her wild Scottish cat, Angus, her little sister, Libby, and her very embarrassing parents. As she negotiates life in her all-girl's school and plots to win her man, she takes on bullies, the neighbourhood's answer to Mick Jagger, and the challenges of adolescence as only Georgia can.

How to Use This Book:

This is a hilarious coming of age novel, told in the voice of what some critics have called a "young Bridget Jones." It is the first of a series of six (so far), and is a huge hit with both male and female teens and preteens. Georgia's decisions

provoke a great deal of discussion, and the diary form of this first person narrative makes it a great reluctant reader choice. It won the *Michael L. Printz Honor Book* award in 2001, as well as *Books for the Teen Age 2001* (NYPL), *Books for Youth Editor's Choice 2000* (Booklist), *Top 10 Youth First Novels 2000* (Booklist), *Best Books for Young Adults* (ALA), and *2001 Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Readers* (ALA).

Sensitive Elements:

This book is very much an *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* for the new millennia. Georgia wrestles with all sorts of puberty issues that preoccupy many fourteen-year-old girls, but some of the topics (and the title) have made it a popular choice for censorship. ■

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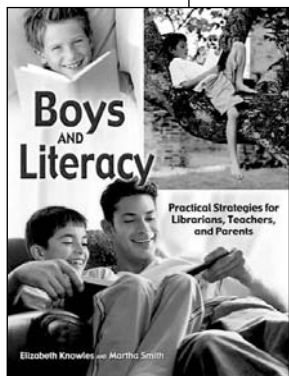
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Boys and Literacy: Practical Strategies for Librarians, Teachers, and Parents

Elizabeth Knowles and Martha Smith.
Libraries Unlimited,
2005. 1-59158-212-1.
\$46.20

Boys' literacy skills are a hot topic in the educational community and all kinds of efforts are being made to address the issue of boys falling behind in literacy skills development. This newly published book is a valuable and welcome addition to the recent literature on boys and their literacy achievement.

The book begins with a short but informative review of the recent literature in a chapter entitled, What does the research say? In this section, the authors refer to some of the essential studies and important recent articles and provide a summary of major research findings. Following this section, the authors include a chapter of strategies to create change both at school and



at home. These short behaviour, reading, and writing strategies are valuable because they suggest ways we can change how we do things at school and at home. What is of most value in this section is a separate set of strategies for a whole school reading plan which offers many approaches to providing opportunities for everyone to read for pleasure.

The bulk of the material in the book consists of chapters about 11 genres (Humour, Adventure, Information/ Non-fiction, Fantasy / Science Fiction, Horror / Mystery, Sports, War, Biography, History, Graphic novels, and Realistic fiction). Each genre chapter provides a short annotated

list of about a dozen exemplary books in the genre, including books for various age levels, followed by a more comprehensive bibliographical list without annotations which includes fiction, non-fiction, and picture books each with a suggested grade

level. Finally, each genre chapter contains a carefully selected annotation for a particularly important journal article.

This book should be considered a must-have for school libraries as it provides a large

amount of useful and well organized information to help you develop a collection which will include materials that will help motivate boys to do more reading.

Developing and Promoting Graphic Novel Collections

Steve Miller.
Neal-Schuman, 2004.
1-55570-451-1.
\$65.93

Several useful books on selecting and promoting graphic novels have been reviewed recently in this column. Although it is written from a public librarian's point of view, Steve Miller's new publication is a welcome addition to resources in this area as it is more comprehensive than some of the previously reviewed titles.

The book is organized into four sections, each of which has much useful information. The first chapter, Explaining Graphic Novels, discusses what graphic novels are, provides a history of the evolution of books in graphic format, and covers (with examples) the diversity of subjects and genres available in graphic format. The second section provides valuable information about setting up a collection of graphic novels for teens. Miller discusses specific selection criteria and offers tips on setting up a pilot collection (including the use of patron surveys). Subsequent chapters offer tips for cataloguing fiction and non-fiction graphic format books, for displaying and promoting them, and provides lists of core titles for teens.

Recommended for secondary school libraries.

Teaching Reading Strategies in the School Library

Christine Walker and Sarah Shaw.
Libraries Unlimited,
2004. 1-59158-120-6.
\$46.20

It is a fact that many elementary teacher-librarians are expected to provide

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reading instruction, especially for primary students, in their role as prep. time providers. This practical new book provides teacher-librarians with self-contained lessons which can be used in the limited periods of time they have with each group of students.

The lessons focus on 10 commonly taught reading strategies, such as sequen-

cing, prediction, and comparison and contrast, and how to use these strategies with particular picture books. Each chapter provides a strategy, a graphic organizer with which to teach it, and an in-depth discussion of how to use the strategy with two



or three picture books. Each chapter includes an annotated bibliography of other books that would lend themselves easily to the teaching of this strategy.

This book contains a great deal of practical material

for use with K-3 students and provides ready-made lessons and templates for teacher-librarians to use to support school literacy programs.

Recommended for elementary school libraries, especially for schools where the teacher-librarian provides primary prep. coverage. ■



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INTO OUR SCRAPBOOK: Spring 2005

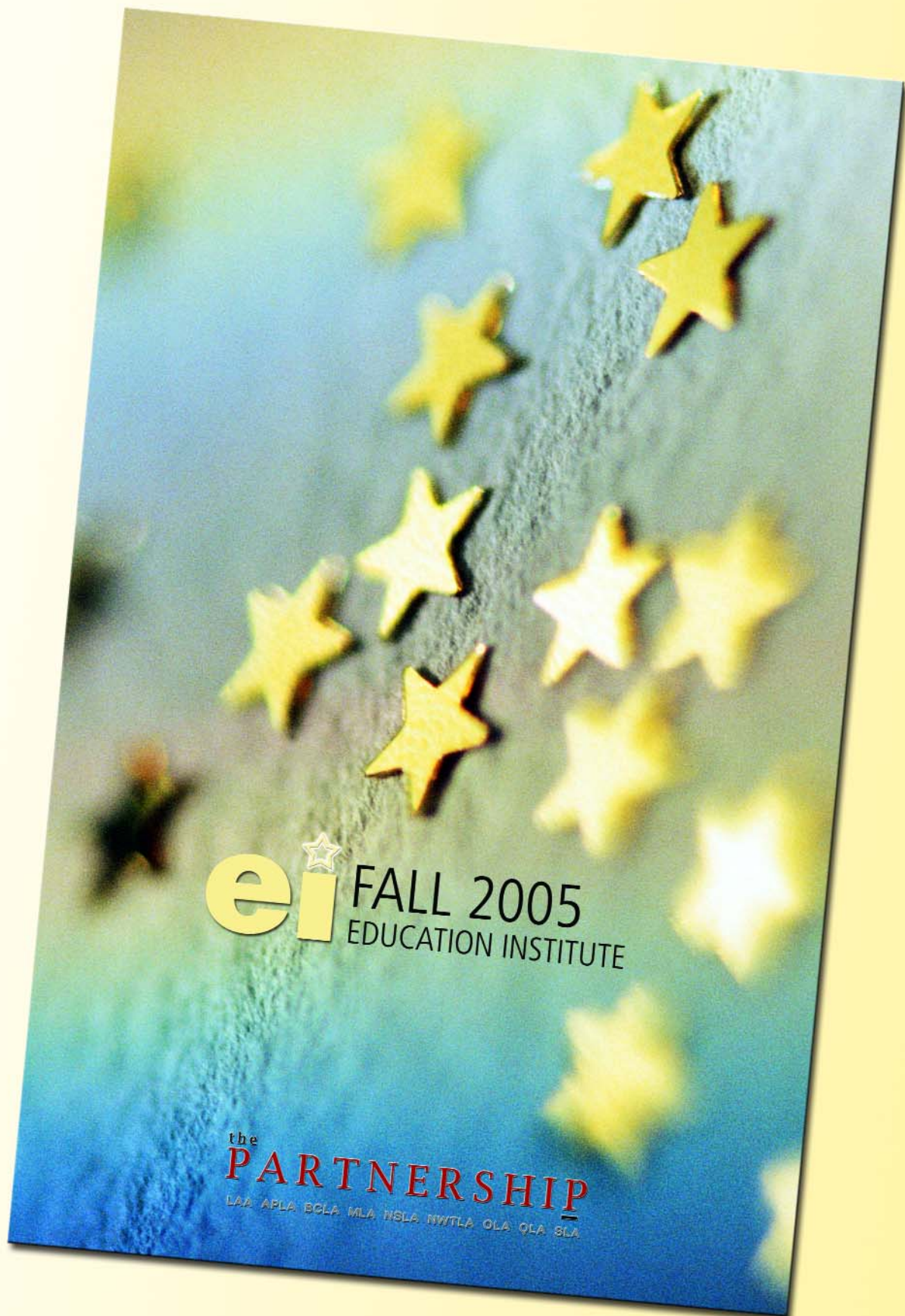
A \$17,000,000 GRANT PROVIDED UNIQUE SUPPORT TO SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND TO BOOK PUBLISHING

When the Ministry of Education announced that each school in Ontario was to receive \$3,100 each to refresh the school's library collection, it was the first major special injection of provincial money into school libraries in four decades. \$3,100 per school does not seem to be an enormous amount of money until you consider that it adds up school-by-school to some \$17,000,000. This represents an enormous amount of purchasing. School libraries were refreshed and so were publishers and book distributors. It was a massive and unexpected shot-in-the-arm for school libraries and supported the first firm statement by the Ministry of Education about school libraries and their

impact on student achievement. But...how to buy so much in so little time?! Some small, more remote boards used the OLA's database of recommended materials for elementary schools to accomplish the task. On the other end of the scale, Barrie, Belleville, Bowmanville, Chesley, Huntsville, Kingston, London, Mississauga, Oakville, Ottawa, York Region, Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury, and Toronto, among others, took over arenas, curling rinks and local fair buildings to meet the task. The picture on this page is from the mammoth resource exhibit developed by Thames Valley District School Board in London. Photo thanks to Marlene Turkington. ■



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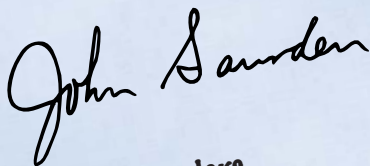
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It is our belief that support should be consistent and ongoing. We recognize and thank The Government of Ontario, The Ministry of Education and the school boards of Ontario for taking this important step.

Yours truly,



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