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“The cornerstone of good educational programming and the first and most important idea to integrate into storytime is the fact that children are more receptive to learning when they are having fun and are actively engaged.”

What Can Librarians Learn from Elmo, Sid, and Dora? — pg 48
Emotional memory, much like muscle memory, is a powerful thing.

A strong memory from my childhood was the annual family reading on Christmas Eve of a picture book ‘Twas the Night before Christmas. It made such a vivid imprint upon me that any other version of the book just never seemed right, and when I had my own children, Mom handed me her copy of the book, that very cherished, well-loved copy from my childhood. That book was then read every Christmas Eve in my house to my children. My husband and I read it to our children until my son was old enough to read and wanted—more like insisted—on being the narrator. Finally, as our youngest learned to read, she then read the beloved story aloud to us. This one simple storytime tradition had a significant impact for generations. It helped establish us as readers, and in my family describing yourself as a reader has now passed on to the third generation.

Emotions are a significant barometer for developing a reader, especially when connected with reading aloud and the relationship built between storytime participants. As school librarians, we continue that early development of lifelong readers by hosting reading-aloud and storytime opportunities for our students and engaging ourselves, older students, community, and extended family in many traditional and creative ways. Through the habit of storytime for all ages, through all mediums, reading becomes visceral.

More than a decade ago, interactive technology was in its infancy in my school. The distance-learning equipment in my building required a separate room and consisted of a camera, floor-model big-screen TV, document camera, and dedicated lines specifically for distance-learning. Plans had to be made far in advance as the connection required scheduling through our IT department. We used this equipment to connect our classes to places they couldn’t dream of getting to in person, like Gettysburg National Park and Colonial Williamsburg. But our most popular events, repeated year after year, were simple and homegrown.

This equipment allowed us to not only reach out across the country to professionals, but it also helped us overcome distance, time, and grade- and school-level issues across the school district. Our middle school eighth-graders

Of all the distance-learning events we engaged in, the one former students came back and reminisced about the most were the distance-learning storytimes.
became reading mentors and models, connecting with primary-grade classes in our elementary schools. Through the technology both groups were able to stay in their own schools—so no worries about arranging transport and the other associated complications—and the storyteller and the audience could still interact and engage in real-time. In the beginning, it was an annual December event. In advance of the storytime, we sent the elementary school supplies to make a simple craft. The distance-learning storytime included the middle school students reading aloud a holiday story combined with middle-schoolers using the document camera to model the process step-by-step as each elementary child created a holiday ornament memento.

As the concept progressed, we expanded into another storytime project. Our eighth-graders became authors and learned about oral interpretation of literature. They created and illustrated a book, and then the distance-learning equipment supported their reading the book aloud to younger students in other schools. This storytime project was a real-world application of writing and reading with genuine emotional connections. Our eighth-grade students were treated like superstars by the elementary students. Of all the distance-learning events we engaged in, the one former students came back and reminisced about the most were the distance-learning storytimes.

As years have passed and technology continues to advance, the affordability of technology and the prevalence of wireless networks have permitted storytime to span space, time, and platforms. Technology allows storytelling to occur in newly creative and interactive ways while still maintaining the key components: a story and a reading mentor. As advancements in technology allow storytime to be more interactive and surpass many traditional barriers of format, distance, and schedules, participants of all ages can be engaged as creators, readers, and active listeners. The experiences build memories for a lifetime, add value to the instructional day, and aid in the development of an emerging reader.

A few years ago we did an action research project in my school to better understand what is needed to foster a teenager’s development into a lifelong reader. The requirements we discovered are deceptively simple: reading relationship, reading role models, and time spent reading. All are integral to a successful storytime.

**Reading Relationships:** Young people need reading mentors, those trusted elders in young peoples’ lives who have real, sincere conversations and socially engage the younger generation in reading.

**Storytime imprints habits for a lifetime.**

**Reading Role Models:** Youngsters should see elders they admire and respect reading for personal gratification and satisfaction of curiosity. Reading role models include parents, teachers, older siblings, politicians, sports stars, and other local, national, and international heroes from all walks of life.

**Time Spent Reading:** Youth require dedicated time reading for pleasure on a regular basis to make reading habitual.

Storytime imprints habits for a lifetime. It surpasses socioeconomic condition. It crosses all cultures. As it passes down from generation to generation, it breaks down generational barriers.

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**Works Cited:**


“Once upon a time, in a land far away”…thus begins the story; then the magic happens!

Have you ever been mesmerized by a well-crafted tale that took you to strange places and filled your imagination with fanciful characters and settings? If so, then you have experienced the magic of storytime.

Our lives are filled with stories—stories we read, stories we tell or hear from others, and stories we experience in the digital world of apps, games, and movies. Stories are the way we transmit important cultural information to each other. Children experience many stories throughout childhood. Take some time to watch a group of young children during playtime when they are engaged in acting out one of the many stories they know, and you will understand the importance of storytime in a child’s growth and development.

As school librarians, we know how important literature and the craft of the story are to developing literacy skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. As a result of the adoption of the Common Core State Standards we now have the responsibility to foster literacy development across the curriculum. Student learning outcomes related to literature and literacy are embedded throughout the Common Core English Language Arts Standards (2010). A crucial part of our professional work is incorporating quality literature in all genres and formats into the storytime experiences we provide. Anchor standards in English language arts for students in K–12 include the following components, all of which are critical elements in school library storytime activities:

1) Key Ideas and Detail: Gaining an understanding of literature by being able to identify central details, characters, events, and ideas

2) Craft and Structure: Gaining an understanding of how literature is structured, by narrative or informative text, the structure of the story, and the meaning and rhythm of words

3) Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: Gaining a deepening understanding of the wide range of literature, both fiction and nonfiction

4) Comprehension and Collaboration: Development of oral language skills through engagement in discussions related to literature

5) Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Gaining experience with organizing, synthesizing, and communicating ideas using a variety of media

The theme of this issue of Knowledge Quest is Storytime for Learning in a Digital World. Contributors to this issue address important questions raised about the purpose and relevance of storytime in the school library. Most significantly, is storytime a relevant school library activity in the era of STEM and CCSS? How has storytime been transformed by technology?

In response to these questions two storytellers, Kentucky Poet Laureate George Ella Lyon and Western Kentucky University’s School of Teacher Education professor Pamela Petty make an emphatic plea for the storytime...
experience in libraries and classrooms as a critical setting for socialization and learning. Both storytellers assert that a well-crafted story very effectively captures children's attention and interest in the subject matter. Pam Petty explains that, regardless of subject matter or genre, a story creates interest and engagement with content more effectively than any textbook or worksheet. George Ella Lyon believes that in the age of one-to-one devices, the social setting of a storytime activity is critical to developing a child's brain, sense of self, and the understanding that humans are all members of social groups, a community, and a culture.

One school librarian who recognizes the power of traditional stories is Sue Giffard of the Ethical Culture Fieldston School in New York City. In her article she describes how she has brought the power of Mayan and Egyptian myths to her students through interactive storytelling, thus expanding their worldview and knowledge of other cultures.

As we move into the next decade of the twenty-first century, no school librarian can ignore the fact that much of the content and learning students experience in school is via digital means. Many educators believe that the flexibility of the digital format offers a variety of instructional strategies that meet the needs of diverse learners. For example, in a storytelling environment, digital books such as Inanimate Alice bring animation, interactivity, and alternative endings to a story, thereby fostering increased student participation and engagement.

Maria Cahill, a professor of library science at the University of Kentucky, and Jennifer Bigheart, librarian at the Westbank Community Libraries in Austin, Texas, explain how the interactive problem-solving and literacy-development strategies used by instructional television can be adapted for storytime. School librarians can help students develop strategies for thinking through and solving problems, increase phonological awareness and oral language development, and introduce foundational concepts for reading while increasing students' knowledge of the world. Though Maria and Jennifer focus primarily on enhancing the educational experiences of young children, many of the storytime activities they discuss could also be used with older students.

Andrea Paganelli, a professor of library media education at Western Kentucky University, explains how the digital world can extend children's storytime experience by introducing students to new stories created for the digital age and enhancing existing stories such as Alice in Wonderland with animations and interactivity. She also provides a list of resources students can use to craft their own digital stories.

Sally Smollar, an award-winning librarian at Plumosa School of the Arts in Delray Beach, Florida, tells us about her experiences helping students develop their own digital storytelling projects using a variety of computer programs. These projects engage students in the art and craft of storytelling. Sally compares her work with students to the cooking process: her classroom is a test kitchen and they are the chefs!

The ideas presented by the authors of these articles clearly make the case for storytime both as a learning experience and as a way children can experience stories in formats beyond the book. If school librarians ever need to provide rationales for storytime in their libraries, the authors in this issue certainly have provided them. In addition, AASL's crosswalk connecting Common Core State Standards with AASL learning standards (<www.al.org/aasl/standards-guidelines/crosswalk>) can be useful in connecting storytime to learning standards.

So, let's find a lap AND a laptop for every child so the magic of storytime can be shared. Let's—as George Ella Lyon—say, “draw kids into the lap of the story with a real human voice” and—in the words of Pamela Petty—“let's all tell some stories!”

Cynthia Houston is a professor of library media education at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky. She is a member of AASL and is serving as a program reviewer for AASL national recognition. She is also serving on the Kentucky Association of School Librarians Board of Directors and is the vice-chair for the Kentucky Textbook Commission. She is a two-time winner of the Kentucky Libraries Association Best Feature Article Award. With Marty Boman, she coauthored the article “Hear Our Voices: Stories from the Autism Nation” in the 2015 winter issue of Kentucky Libraries. She also authored Organization Information in School Libraries: Basic Principles and New Rules (Libraries Unlimited 2015).

Work Cited:
Story in a Digital World
Making a Case for Thinking Outside the Book

Andrea Paganelli
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What We Know

Storytime is a fixture in many school libraries and is important in helping foster students’ reading abilities. Storytime is a top strategy for developing skills that build to reading; reading aloud to children should begin early in their lives and be present throughout the educational process (Anderson et al. 1985; Trelease 2006). Through modeling from adult readers, storytime can affect literacy development and motivation to read. Our students who read and hear a variety of stories are more likely to become lifelong readers and perform better on tests and assignments (Krashen 2004; Ross, McKechnie, and Rothbauer 2006).

Storytime creates an environment where students are able to note the differences between the spoken and written word (Ross, McKechnie, and Rothbauer 2006). Students are exposed to the parts of a story, genres, vocabulary, authors, and illustrators in a manner that keeps attention and interest. At its best, storytime is much like a performance for students. Reading aloud during storytime can connect the student audience to text through verbal and visual elements, piquing student interest and engagement (Keller 2012).

With a history of success, why would we want to alter storytime by incorporating technology?

As school librarians, we have all stood in front of a group to perform a storytime read aloud and wondered if it would successfully engage students. Would 21st-century students be able to connect with the book? For his 2015 Atlantic article about optimizing digital books for young readers, Greg Topo interviewed long-time school librarian Laura Fleming and noted the changing connection between students and books.

As a practicing librarian with twelve years of experience Fleming spent time looking for engaging books for storytime with her students. Each year it seemed students became less interested in her offerings. Fleming felt like a comedian performing for students; when speaking with Topo she said, “You have that go-to joke that always gets the crowd going,” but her material was no longer capturing the audience’s attention (2015). Regardless of her preparation and attempts at engagement, the time came when the books she selected were no longer reaching students.

Table 1. Selection criteria for traditional read-aloud storytimes and digital storytimes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READ-ALOUD HANDBOOK BOOK SELECTION</th>
<th>DIGITAL STORYTIME MATERIALS SELECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selections should include a wide variety of genres.</td>
<td>Selections should include a wide variety of genres and media to engage students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selections should be age appropriate.</td>
<td>Selections should be age appropriate and aligned with the technology proficiency of the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening levels and reading levels are different.</td>
<td>Listening levels and engagement levels are different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select books that will engage students.</td>
<td>Select materials that will engage students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition for student’s attention is strong.</td>
<td>Competition for student’s attention is strong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select books that lend themselves to extending the storytime with projects such as art, drama, reader’s theater, or writing.</td>
<td>Select materials that lend themselves to extending the digital storytime with cross-curricular elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select carefully when reading to older students to distinguish between books that are appropriate for hearing and those for individual reading.</td>
<td>Select carefully when reading to older students to distinguish between materials that are appropriate for hearing and those for individual reading.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So, how did Fleming address this? In 2009 she thought outside the traditional book and engaged readers with the *Skeleton Creek* series that included embedded URLs augmenting the plot. This change brought about greater student engagement with the storytime material—but younger students were frightened by *Skeleton Creek’s* ancillary videos. When she introduced fifth-graders to *Inanimate Alice*, though, students were transfixed (Topo 2015). Does this engagement equal learning? It has potential. Laura Fleming’s experience indicates that careful selection of high-quality materials and supportive technologies can help. Here are some of Samantha Roslund’s selection considerations for thinking outside the paper book (2012):

1) Quality narration and appropriate dictionary functions (embedded definition assistance) both could be considered positive for storytime.

2) Content-connected animations can add to student comprehension of the story and add to positive reader experiences.

The lines between books and other media are blurred for Fleming’s students. They do not see the distinction between traditional books and transmedia materials (a term used to describe storytelling across multiple media formats). “‘Alice’s world,’ [Fleming] said, ‘is the world the kids are growing up in’” (Topo 2015). For better or for worse, digitally augmented and/or created books are a part of our personal, professional, and educational landscapes.

**Venturing into Digital Storytime: How Should We Prepare?**

The process of planning for a digital storytime can be considered through the same lens as planning a more traditional storytime. School librarians planning successful digital storytimes may need to commit to an additional level of planning and consider creating a back-up plan in case technology problems arise.

Table 1 contains Jim Trelease’s thoughts for selecting books to use during traditional storytime (from his 2006 *Read-Aloud Handbook*) along with my augmented guide for digital storytime materials selection. Note that the differences for material selection are minor and foster engagement and use of added media.

Table 2 contains tips for preparing and presenting traditional read-alouds and my augmented tips for digital storytimes; these are adapted from Jim Trelease’s *Read-Aloud Handbook*.

### Innovation + Engagement = Digital Storytime at Any Age

“It was, [Fleming] remembered, the first standing ovation she ever received as a librarian” (Topo 2015).

Returning to Laura Fleming’s experiences, she found that adding digital elements to storytime created an environment of excitement,
revitalizing student interest. Her standing ovation was received when she read a series that included digital augmentations. Increased student engagement was the result.

When she used Inanimate Alice, which has embedded multiple media, it engaged her fifth-graders in a way they had never before experienced. Their excitement was palpable; after she projected the story onto the interactive whiteboard the students were hooked. "A few students approached her afterwards to thank her, tears glistening in their eyes" (Topo 2015). The immersive possibilities for student engagement create an opportunity to draw in students of all ages, even blasé fifth-graders!

### What Is Out There and Way Out There?

#### Continuum of Options

The following are four distinct categories of digital storytime options with concrete examples that can be used at the elementary, middle, and high school levels of interest. The examples represent increasingly adventurous levels of departure from the traditional storytime format.

- **Augmented reality** format uses materials that are standalone books created with additional visual materials that are digital.
- **Dynamic dialogue** format uses materials that are created with embedded audio, dictionary, or other digital functions.
- **Story author** format uses projects and tools selected to enable students to create and read their own books during storytime.
- **Code author** format uses projects and tools selected to enable students to define their own storytime through use of multiple

#### Table 3. Examples of augmented reality titles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>AGES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>URL</th>
<th>COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Numberlys</td>
<td>William Joyce</td>
<td>Book with Application</td>
<td>5–8</td>
<td>Travel along with the Numberlys from a gray world containing numbers but no letters to a colorful world with an alphabet supporting infinite possibilities.</td>
<td>Book: <a href="http://moonbotstudios.com/2014/10/numberlys-picture-book.html">http://moonbotstudios.com/2014/10/numberlys-picture-book.html</a> [page includes link to app sources]</td>
<td>Under $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inanimate Alice</td>
<td>Kate Pullinger and Chris Joseph</td>
<td>Transmedia</td>
<td>10–18</td>
<td>In the first episode, Alice is an eight-year-old game designer living in far north China. Her dad goes missing on a trip to search for oil. Alice and her mom go searching for her dad. More episodes follow as Alice grows up.</td>
<td>&lt;www.inanimatealice.com&gt;</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeleton Creek</td>
<td>Patrick Carman</td>
<td>Transmedia</td>
<td>8–12</td>
<td>Skeleton Creek is an unusual town. Ryan and Sarah try to get to the heart of a mystery, but an accident hampers their investigation.</td>
<td><a href="http://skeletoncreekfans.com">http://skeletoncreekfans.com</a></td>
<td>Under $20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE IMMERSIVE POSSIBILITIES FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DRAW IN STUDENTS OF ALL AGES, EVEN BLASÉ FIFTH-GRADERS!
**Figure 2. Trip and Grace, the main characters in the interactive story Façade. (Illustration courtesy of Procedural Arts).**

**Figure 3. Dot and Dash programmable robots. (Photo courtesy of Wonder Workshop).**

Digital resources to create and share their own stories through the use of code.

*In a World of Augmented Reality*
Not a book, not a movie. This is a hybrid book and application that augments reality and will keep children’s interest. It can be shared as a projected whiteboard experience. Those skeptical about the story-telling power of technology will be excited by augmented reality. “The app isn’t replacing the book; it’s showing you a way to bridge the gap between the old and the new,” explains Brandon Oldenburg of the company Moonbot, which created *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* (Thorne 2012, 1; see figure 1). The limitation is that for the book to be truly interactive each child would need a copy of the text and an iPad. Examples of augmented reality titles are described in table 3.

*Storytime to Techno-Storytime*
E-books with dynamic dialogue (embedded access to additional resources) can be used to expand storytime and increase the level of audience engagement. Dynamic dialogue can add educational value to the experience by allowing students to access additional information, audio, visuals, and dictionaries. Allison Tran (2014) spoke of the challenge and excitement: “I was amazed to see how effectively we can engage an audience with a book app. I realized that the presentation style and level of audience involvement isn’t necessarily any different from ‘traditional’ storytime—it’s just that the book is so much more visible.”

*Once Upon a Time, Students Have a Voice*
It’s not a fairytale; it can be a reality. In a school library near you, students can create and publish their own e-books. Storytime no longer must be passive; students can create their own happily-ever-after ending by reading their own stories to and with classmates. The media included in table 5 are designed to allow students to create and share their own books during storytime.

*From Passive to Interactive—Crack the Storytime Code*
Is coding an important thing to teach kids? Why or why not? Texas has passed legislation allowing coding to fulfill high schools’ foreign language requirements (Adam and Mowers 2013). Coding can make the difference between our students’ reading webpages and creating webpages!

The trend to teach kids coding meets its match in Dot and Dash, robots created by the folks at Wonder Workshop. Dot and Dash are robots that are programmable with Wonder Workshop apps compatible with iOS or Android devices. Designed to be fun and to allow the basics of coding to be learned with ease, Dot and Dash also allow students and educators to integrate coding and fun with other subjects and activities.
Table 4. Examples of e-books and story apps with embedded access to additional resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>AGES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>URL</th>
<th>COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julius Caesar</td>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td>E-book</td>
<td>11–16</td>
<td>This graphic novel's high interest level (grades 5–9) and lower reading level (grades 2–3) make it a good choice for struggling older readers.</td>
<td>&lt;www.capstonepub.com/library/products/julius-caesar-4&gt;</td>
<td>Under $40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Dragonslayer: The Chronicles of Kazam</td>
<td>Jasper Fforde</td>
<td>E-book</td>
<td>11–16</td>
<td>Enter a world where magic is real but disappearing, and people have dreams of the last dragon. Fifteen-year-old Jennifer is forced to deal with circumstances that are definitely beyond her control.</td>
<td>&lt;www.amazon.com/The-Last-Dragonslayer-Chronicles-Kazam/dp/0544104714&gt;</td>
<td>Under $10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Examples of resources that support students’ creation of their own e-books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>AGES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>URL</th>
<th>COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storybird</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>6+</td>
<td>Authors can create their own stories by adding text to existing professional artwork.</td>
<td>&lt;www.storybird.com&gt;</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Façade</td>
<td>Download</td>
<td>12+</td>
<td>Students can use this download to control the words and actions of the Façade characters.</td>
<td>&lt;www.interactivestory.net&gt;</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AnyFlip</td>
<td>Website or Download</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Authors can use AnyFlip to create and share media-rich flipbooks.</td>
<td>&lt;www.anyflip.com&gt;</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canva</td>
<td>Website or iPad app</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>Canva makes graphic design easy. It can be used to create a book starting from a blank page or an existing layout.</td>
<td>&lt;www.canva.com&gt;</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storyboard That</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>With Storyboard That students can use existing templates to bring their own stories to life.</td>
<td>&lt;www.storyboardthat.com&gt;</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As with any addition to a library program, you can start small and focus on resources your students are already interested in. Ask them!

Table 6. Wonder Workshop hardware and apps that support students’ exploration of coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>URL</th>
<th>COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dash</td>
<td>Robot</td>
<td>Dash is a mobile robot that can be programmed.</td>
<td><a href="https://store.makewonder.com">https://store.makewonder.com</a></td>
<td>Less than $200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dot</td>
<td>Robot</td>
<td>Dot is a stationary robot that can be programmed.</td>
<td><a href="https://store.makewonder.com">https://store.makewonder.com</a></td>
<td>Available with Dash in sets, some of which include accessories to expand the robots’ capabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go!</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>This application gets users started in the process of learning the uses and abilities of Dot and Dash.</td>
<td>&lt;www.makewonder.com/apps&gt;</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Dash’s course on a straight line or through a maze of obstacles can be programmed.</td>
<td>&lt;www.makewonder.com/apps&gt;</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocky</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>More-complex actions can be programmed by assembling “puzzle pieces” of code usable with both Dash and Dot.</td>
<td>&lt;www.makewonder.com/apps&gt;</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xylo</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>With Dash’s xylophone accessories and this app, kids can direct the robot to play music on the xylophone.</td>
<td>&lt;www.makewonder.com/apps&gt;</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
including storytime. The robots support recorded audio and sense each other’s presence. Students can use these features to program the robots to tell an existing or newly created story. In this way, Dot and Dash can be the presenters at storytime—while looking adorable (see figure 3). Table 6 includes apps that can be used to program Dot and Dash. All are suitable for ages 5+, though children under 8 will need adult help with Blockly.

Getting Started

The charts of books, applications, websites, and transmedia options with pricing discussed here may make digital storytime seem too complicated or too expensive for your school library program. As with any addition to a library program, you can start small and focus on resources your students are already interested in. Ask them!

If your students are interested in telling their own stories, look at AASL’s lists of Best Websites for Teaching and Learning. Digital storytelling tools, most of which are free, can support your budding authors who want to share their stories with classmates and with wider audiences.

If you and your students want to incorporate e-books in storytime but your budget is tight, explore the White House-led initiative Open eBooks, which at the time of this writing is in the planning stages. The goal is to bring free e-books to children in need (Miller 2015). Learn more at <http://dp.la/info/get-involved/dpla-ebooks/open-ebooks-initiative>.

Many basic e-books without bells and whistles are available online free or at low cost. A quick search will yield a wealth of options. For example, the Association for Library Service to Children’s (a division of ALA) Great Websites for Kids includes a link to We Give Books <www.wegivebooks.org>, a site that lets your students read online e-books for free and trigger donations of hardcopy books to someone else.

Regardless of the format, our students need positive experiences with lots of books in an environment that encourages lifelong learning under the supervision of a trained school librarian, who can bring joy and interest into reading (Atwell 2007). To support lifelong reading, we school librarians can create storytimes that are well thought out and inclusive of powerful, engaging text with supportive media.

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Works Cited:


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FEATURE

EXPANDING AND ENCOURAGING NEW PERSPECTIVES THROUGH...

Knowledge Quest | Storytime for Learning in a Digital World
EXPERIMENTS IN INTERACTIVE STORYTELLING IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY

Sue Giffard
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The scenario that I encountered when I began working in my present position was not unusual for an elementary school library: the students study a culture, and the librarian reads the stories of that culture to them to enrich the study and to make the culture come alive. My fourth- graders studied the Maya in the fall and the ancient Egyptians in the spring. In my first year in the job I did what had been done before: I read Mary-Joan Gerson’s *The People of Corn* and Deborah Nourse Lat timore’s *The Winged Cat*. My students did research on assigned individual Egyptian gods without really knowing the stories about them. It was not a disaster, but it was unsatisfying, both for me and for them. I had to figure out some other way. Is it possible, I asked myself, to share mythology in a way that respects the culture, draws the kids in, and makes the stories both interesting and alive? The traditional answer is: find a good retelling of the myths and read them aloud. The fact that the retellings can have difficult language, have incomplete stories, or take for granted prior knowledge of the context or background—all of these issues are easily pushed aside because what other choice does one have?

This is the story of how I, a school librarian who is only an average storyteller, lacking dramatic flair or the ability to do multiple voices and accents, turned this situation around and began telling the myths to my students in a way that encouraged participation and resulted in engagement and enjoyment for everyone.

**Challenges of Teaching with Mythology**

The word “myth,” in the sense of a traditional story about creation, gods, and heroes, does not have the meaning of “a widely held but false belief or idea” that popular culture has given it. Myths, traditional stories, are stories told about the origins of the world, about the place of human beings in the world. According to Karen Armstrong, myths “helped people to find their place in the world and their true orientation” (2005, 6). She goes on to say that the task of myths is not to tell objective facts about history, but to help give us “insight into the deeper meaning of life” (2005, 10).

Myths are sacred stories. Telling the sacred stories of a tradition that has been dead for a long time (Greek myths, for example) is relatively simple, but telling sacred stories that are still held as sacred today is a lot more complicated. We see the Greek myth of how Prometheus stole fire and brought it to human beings as symbolic, but we also understand that at some point in the distant past there were people who believed that this story was really true. For many of us the Greek myths lack even symbolic power and have become simply superhero adventure.
stories. Greek myths are retold, reworked, and made fun of, without any sense that these actions might be construed as disrespectful. Our culture seems to regard Greek myths as our own—that we can do with them what we will. The descendents of the creators of these myths long ago embraced another religious worldview: Christianity. When we talk about Greek myths, there is no one to insult or disrespect.

However, in the case of the Maya, a living culture exists within which these myths are still sacred today. Anthropologist Dennis Tedlock spent considerable time in Guatemala with Mayan daykeepers or aj kij, people in the community who are spiritual guides and who work with the Mayan calendar. In Tedlock’s work, we see the daykeepers enacting the role of storytellers of Mayan myths. Clearly, for these daykeepers the old Mayan stories are sacred and real—not an artifact from the past, but part of a living tradition with a central role in the community. [Editor’s note: Information about the resources mentioned here and throughout the article is provided at the end of the article.]

How can an outsider tell these stories of the Maya while giving them honor and respect? While the most deferential approach might be to find a well-regarded retelling and then read it aloud, I chose to adopt an alternative approach and hoped that I could make it both respectful and engaging.

The Popol Vuh of the Maya

The Story

The Popol Vuh, a book from the K’iche’1 Maya of the eastern Guatemalan highlands, survived the wholesale destruction of Mayan books by the Spanish invaders in the sixteenth century. It seems to have been passed down orally until a K’iche’ person (or people) who learned alphabetic writing from the Christian missionaries wrote down an alphabetic version of the Popol Vuh. It was then copied by a Christian monk, Francisco Jimenez, and translated into Spanish.

The Popol Vuh (meaning the Book of the Community) tells of the creation of the universe, the earth, human beings, and, ultimately, the K’iche’ Mayan people. Creation takes place through conversation between two gods, Heart of Sky and Plumed Serpent. Their ultimate project is to create beings who will be conscious and able to communicate with the gods, beings who will worship them. The gods create animals, but they are unable to communicate intelligently. Next the gods try to make a person out of mud, but it falls apart. They then make creatures out of wood, but these, too, are a failure. Their fourth attempt, using corn to create humans, will be successful, but the story moves to a different concern before this. The earth is too dangerous for people and has to be made safer.

How this safety is achieved is the story of the Amazing Twins, two demigod boys who take on various opponents in a series of daring adventures. They battle first with Seven Macaw and his two sons (the Maker of Mountains and the Creator of Earthquakes) and then with the evil Lords of the Underworld, who are responsible for diseases and death. The twins eventually sacrifice themselves to make the earth safe enough so that human beings can be created and can live safely on the earth. It’s an extraordinary story, and it has come down to us in wonderful and vibrant detail.

Doing Justice to the Story

The story of the four attempts at creating humans is the subject of Mary-Joan Gerson’s well-told picture book The People of Corn. This was the story that had been read by my predecessor, and it was a good introduction. But it didn’t capture my 21st-century students’ imaginations, and it completely left out what I thought were the best parts of the story: the section about the Amazing Twins. I had Victor Montejo’s wonderful retelling of the Popol Vuh, but the unfamiliarity of these stories, their strangeness, and the ways in which they were structured differently than most of the folktales my students were used to made me concerned that if I read directly from the book I would be constantly interrupting the story to explain or provide context. I decided that telling the story was the solution. Understanding that some might feel that I had no right to tell these stories because of their sacred nature and my position as an outsider, I pressed ahead anyhow, hoping and believing that I could, however imperfectly, bring something to the stories that would open the minds of my students and enhance their understanding.

I still had no idea how I was going to tell this story with my amateur storytelling skills. Back in the mid-1990s I had seen a small part of storyteller Diane Wolkstein’s expert telling of the story. She brought to it her trademark intensity and amazing physical movement, so that watching her was more like watching a play than a story. The memory of it intimidated me because I knew that I couldn’t do what she could.

The breakthrough happened when I was reading Dennis Tedlock’s book The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation. He wrote:

A Quiche story does not begin with a series of formal opening announcements that call a halt...
Reading this text gave me the idea, as well as a sort of permission, to try something new: storytelling as conversation. I would learn the stories, tell them as best I could, provide explanation and context while telling them, and invite the students to ask questions and comment while I was telling the story.

I had only four class sessions, and I wanted to do the stories justice. I chose to read Gerson’s *The People of Corn* first and then explain to students that the story I was going to tell took place in the middle of that story. I told the tale of the Amazing Twins, Junajpu (Hunter) and Ixb’alanke (Little Jaguar), but focused only on their struggle against the Lords of the Underworld. This section of the *Popol Vuh* begins with their father and uncle’s fatal conflict with these evil lords, and that is where I began.

I used Montejo’s 1999 retelling as my basis but quite often went back to Tedlock’s 1996 translation of the *Popol Vuh* to try to get a clearer picture of the original. I wrote down my version, sticking as close to the original texts as I could while using words I might use in conversation. I tried to make the Amazing Twins seem like real people (notwithstanding the fact that they were demigods), encouraging students to imagine how they might have felt going down into the Underworld. I kept in mind that when students were grossed out by some of the details (rivers of blood and pus come to mind), they could express that discomfort but without being disrespectful to the story. I would remind them that this was a story that was really important to real people, in much the same way that the Bible or Torah or Bhagavad Gita might be important to them and their families.

I used no pretense or playacting to create illusions of closeness or identity. The students were always aware that I, the storyteller, was an outsider, doing my best to share what I understood of the story and culture with them. This was an important aspect of approaching the stories with respect.

I decided to use the images by Luis Garay from Montejo’s 1999 retelling to help the students visualize the characters in the story. These images are drawn in a realistic style familiar to the students, and I felt that they might help bridge the cultural gaps and humanize the characters. For this reason I decided against showing the students Mayan glyph images, which are challenging to interpret without some expertise and familiarity.

The story has many potential hooks for students: the twins are near-orphans; they are smarter and better tricksters than their father and uncle; their connection with the natural world, especially with small creatures such as mosquitoes or ants, helps them to prevail; they refuse to give up; they show unswerving loyalty to each other even when things look extremely dire (Junajpu’s head is severed from his body during the final ballgame contest with the Lords of the Underworld); and the more they accomplish, the more powerful they become.

As the sessions went on, the students and I became more comfortable with this model. I had to learn to move in and out of storytelling mode and pick up the threads where I had left off. The students had to learn to be patient if a fellow student had a question or wanted to share a connection or an insight. Students were able to bring information that they had picked up in class or from their research, additions that enriched the story. During the sessions students used many of the skills they use for reading: predicting, inferring, connecting, imagining. But, most exciting to me was their interest and engagement. Students who were often bored in class were stopping me in the hallway to ask for assurances that we would continue with the next installment in the next class. Of course, the more-violent and stranger aspects of the story made it exciting for students. But we managed not to lose sight of the fact that these twins were facing down the lords of the Underworld because of their loyalty to their father and uncle who had been killed by the lords, and that, ultimately, the twins engineered their own deaths to defeat the lords and make the world safe for humans.
I USED NO PRETENSE OR PLAYACTING TO CREATE ILLUSIONS OF CLOSENESS OR IDENTITY. THE STUDENTS WERE ALWAYS AWARE THAT I, THE STORYTELLER, WAS AN OUTSIDER DOING MY BEST TO SHARE WHAT I UNDERSTOOD OF THE STORY AND CULTURE WITH THEM. THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF APPROACHING THE STORIES WITH RESPECT.

A Multitude of Gods: Ancient Egypt

The Story

Ancient Egyptian myths present a different set of challenges. As with the case of the Greek myths, the descendants of the creators of these myths have moved on to different religious beliefs and practices, mostly Islam and Coptic Christianity. There is no living cultural or religious community to be concerned about. But the mythology is extraordinarily complex, with hundreds of gods, many of whom change names, characters, and familial relationships depending on geography and historical eras.

The records are fragmentary and incomplete. The longest and most complex myth we have is the story of creation that comes from Heliopolis, now part of the suburbs of Cairo. This is the story of the creation of Ra/Re/Atum and the love story of Isis and Osiris, as well as the power struggle between them and their son Horus on the one hand and their brother Set on the other. Many other stories survive, but none that approaches this one in terms of detail or human emotion. I decided that any reading or telling of Egyptian mythology would have to begin here. However, it couldn’t end here. I discovered that the ancient Egyptian myths, being from a wide geographic area over thousands of years, were extremely varied. Other Egyptian creation myths told different stories with different gods, or the same gods in different relationships to each other.

The most coherent account of Egyptian mythical stories I could find was Jacqueline Morley’s 1999 retelling in Egyptian Myths. But this book told only the story from Heliopolis, and in a way that suggested that this was the only extant version. Clearly, I could not use just this book. I knew from the beginning that I wanted to adopt a similar approach as I had for the Popol Vuh: conversational storytelling, with input from the students.

Doing Justice to the Story

I began by trying to sort out the bewildering geography and the history of the myths. Slowly, I decided that I would take into account only geography, that is, I would tell the creation myths from different cities, without worrying about when they were told or how they changed over time. I would begin with the creation story from Heliopolis. This became the emotional heart of the unit. The story of what my students tended to call a “really messed-up family” drew students in. Not only did the tale include some of the bitterest and most violent sibling rivalry imaginable (including cutting the dead body of a brother into numerous pieces and scattering them far and wide), it also had some of the most committed and loving relationships: between Isis and Osiris and between Isis and her son Horus, as well as a wonderful
sisterly relationship between Isis and Nephthys.

I then gleaned what I could from some other creation stories from Memphis, Hermopolis, and Thebes. We were able to compare and contrast these different creation stories.

A year or two after I began telling these stories, the school library got an interactive whiteboard, and this acquisition transformed the way I told the stories. Using compatible software, I created family trees for the gods and collected images of the different gods and artifacts, putting them together to illustrate aspects of the stories. Students were being assigned pieces of the myths to read for homework, and their research was revealing all kinds of different relationships between the gods, much of it contradictory. We could note all these contradictions in the projected document, save it, and come back to it the next time.

We could create our own charts of relationships between the gods. Telling the stories became seamlessly intertwined with talking about the gods and what we knew about their characteristics. Telling the stories also became intertwined with conversations about the different ways in which the ancient Egyptians thought about reality and about the gods and discussions about how the Egyptians were the ultimate syncretists, making use of what already existed and endlessly adding to it and changing it.

Many other gods don’t appear in any of these creation stories but have important roles in the Egyptian pantheon: Ma’at, the goddess of order and justice; Bes, the miniature god of good luck who scares away evil; and many others. Despite the fact that no surviving stories provide details about the activities of these gods, projecting large-scale images to discuss in close and critical detail helped to make the gods concrete and interesting. Being able to store and retrieve any information the group wrote down about them supported deeper discussions than those possible in the past.

The Egyptian myths in particular can encourage a critical look at students’ own creation myths, whatever the religious backgrounds of the students. Sometimes focusing on Egyptian myths prompts students to ask, “What was there before there was anything?” They can then bring their religious or scientific understandings to bear on this question. Or, they start to wonder about religious belief, its relation to science, and its relativity.

Beyond Egypt and the Maya
This approach to telling myths works beyond the two sets of myths discussed here. For example, for the past couple of years I have used this approach to tell Greek myths to my students have been encouraged to reflect on the myths and stories around them, and to think about the way we approach scientific explanations of the natural world as opposed to mythical symbolic explanations.
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Expanding Horizons

Telling myths in this participatory way has been exciting and engaging. Each year that I’ve told the Egyptian myths I have refined my understanding a little more, sometimes prompted by one of my own questions and sometimes by a student’s question I was unable to answer. I have modeled learning as a continual process, as my students have watched me grapple with various issues.

My students have been encouraged to reflect on the myths and stories around them and to think about the way we approach scientific explanations of the natural world as opposed to mythical, symbolic explanations. Students have gotten a glimpse of another culture, possibly an ancient culture, which has helped them to realize that through the ages people thought differently about themselves and the universe. Once one realizes that people long ago thought differently from us, it is a short step to understanding that people today in different situations are likely to think differently as well. Although it does not allow for concrete experiences of a culture, the participatory nature of this kind of storytelling entails authentic reflection and the creation of meaning through discussion, argument, and the use of one’s imagination.

Suggested Resources for Storytelling

The Maya Story Sources


This picture book version of the gods’ four attempts to create humans is told well, provides a useful introduction for elementary students, and incorporates an appealing connection to the present-day Mayan people.


An indispensable resource, Montejo’s retelling provided the basis for my retelling.


This translation gives a good feel for the story and also includes a very helpful introduction, as well as notes and a glossary. For the purpose of telling stories from the Mayan view of creation, it is best used in conjunction with Montejo’s retelling.

Works Cited:


The Maya Background Sources


Though this is a highly specialized work, the index can be used to glean a great deal of information about the characters of the *Popol Vuh* in relation to astronomy.


The authors provide helpful historical background and context for the *Popol Vuh*.


This short video shows contemporary daykeepers explaining their role in the community.


The chapters “Beyond Logocentrism: Trace and Voice among the Quiche Maya” and “Creation and the *Popol Vuh*: A Hermeneutical Approach” are the most helpful in the context of storytelling in schools.


In a mysterious and complex book Tedlock provides an understanding of contemporary daykeepers and their relationship to the myths.

Ancient Egypt Story Sources and Background Sources


Large, lush photographs of ancient Egyptian painting and sculpture make this an excellent source of images to examine with your students and pique their interest.


This very helpful resource is challenging, both because of its complex writing style and its detailed historical approach, which requires some background knowledge.


Circumstances force a young servant girl to visit the Netherworld. The story and detailed illustrations, plus an afterword on ancient Egyptian beliefs and customs, can pique students’ interest in Egyptian mythology.


The myth from Heliopolis in this book is well written and extremely useful as the framework for telling the story. With smooth language and clear descriptions, it lends itself easily to storytelling.


Pinch’s explanation of the historical development and the geography of myths was indispensable during my research process. Also useful was her alphabetical listing of gods.


These complex accounts of the myths are highly technical and trace the origins of the deities to specific times and places.


Clearly written with high-quality photographs, this is a very helpful reference source.


In this unusual version of the Osiris story Nardo combines the stories of Hermopolis (with the Ogdoad), Heliopolis, Thebes, and Elephantine (with Khnum the ram-headed god). I chose to separate and extract these stories, and begin with Heliopolis.

Ancient Greece Story Source


This is the definitive retelling of the Greek myths for young people. It is packed full of wonderful descriptions and clearly told stories.
Why Story Circle Matters
I wonder if you’ve heard this story. A little girl asks her mother, “Does it hurt to die?” and her mother says she doesn’t know. “We could Google it,” the little girl says. “All right,” her mother tells her, so together they face the screen and embark on a Web search.

I find this scenario disturbing. The mother abdicates her parental role, side-stepping a conversation that could be difficult but important, and the daughter appeals to her higher power, Google.

As if substituting Web information for a parent-child talk weren’t bad enough, I recently saw an ad for interactive pajamas for children. They are being touted as the only product that is a combination of PJs and bedtime stories. When you scan the dots printed on the fabric with an iOS or Android device loaded with the manufacturer’s app, the story unfolds on the screen. Ninety stories per pair! Your iPhone can put your child to bed. Who wants, who needs all that reading and cuddling?

The ad shows parents curled up with the child and the app-equipped iPhone. That might happen, but it seems more likely that parents will leave kids to their own devices. Either way, I think interactive pajamas are a destructive idea and a theft besides. A child’s growing relationship to story—and through it to herself and the world—is crucial. And having the story read or told to you by someone you love is part of how that relationship grows. I don’t believe that listening to a grown-up read a story is passive. It’s relational. The human voice casts the story’s spell, and both child and reader are held in that circle of affections and attention. Siri, or whoever’s voice resides in your smartphone, can’t do this.

Yet every day another source tells us that more and better technology is the answer to our educational problems. A while back, a politician pledged a laptop for every child, like a chicken in every pot. My response was that we don’t even have a lap for every child. Let’s start there. Let’s draw kids into the lap of the story with a real human voice. Let’s teach them to hear their own voices and stories. Let’s weaken them and ourselves from our embrace of all things digital. Let’s limit screen time and reconnect with our children, our students, and ourselves.

But the screen gets kids’ attention, you may counter. And the screen is where their future learning will take place. This is what we are told—and sold.

Nicholas Carr, who wrote about technology and culture in his Pulitzer-nominated book, The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains, asserts, “[W]hat the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski” (2008).

I know that feeling, that state of being. We all know it. I’ve been a professional writer for over thirty-five years, yet today it’s a struggle for me to calm myself down into real reading or writing. Take this essay, for instance. It requires effort to hold enough focus to discover what I have to say and then articulate it in a way that might be meaningful to you. My mind wants to zigzag, not settle and center itself. While the discovery and the articulation have always been strenuous, the focus has not. These days I’m having to deal with my overwired fidgets. I’m experiencing a net loss from my time on the Net.

If adult attention is screen-scrambled, what about kids, whose brains are still developing? What about the teenager I heard interviewed on the radio? Twice hospitalized after serious accidents caused by her texting while driving, she said she wanted to give it up, but wasn’t sure she could—this in the face of having shown herself twice that it could get her killed.

What is it that makes her so frantic for constant connection that she will risk her life, and that of anyone on the road in her vicinity, to have it? My take on the desperate young woman is that she doesn’t feel she has a self without having her reality constantly confirmed by exchanging messages. She is addicted.

In “Why We’re All Addicted to Texts, Twitter, and Google,” behavioral scientist Dr. Susan Weinschenk explains that “the culprit is dopamine,” which scientists have discovered is not the pleasure chemical but one that causes “seeking behavior. [It] causes [us] to want, desire, seek out, and search” (2012). The increased arousal and goal-focused behavior dopamine triggers in us is essential to our getting what we need to survive; the problem comes when we can’t turn it off.

Seeking behavior should lead to liking, the opioid or pleasure response. But our online searches don’t work that way. In the actual world, search for food leads to the pleasure of eating and so to the opioid response that ends our seeking. But Dr. Weinschenk tells us: “With the Internet, Twitter, and texting [we] now have almost instant gratification of [our] desire to seek” (2012). Because of this, our brains can get in a “dopamine-induced loop” so that we continue our seeking behavior long after we found the informa-
We are over-stimulated and hyperlinked-in, but we are deprived of the kind of time with a person or an experience that deepens and sustains us.

Addicted to seeking, unable to be satisfied in finding, we just keep going. How well this serves those selling us devices and services and how poorly it serves us.

This change in brain activity also changes our relationship to ourselves.

The fact is, we’ve only got so much attention to pay. We have to budget attention like money and time, or we will be bankrupt. Studies of our brain show that when we think we are multitasking, we’re actually switching—zigzagging—our attention back and forth, and things can get lost in the switch-time. Moreover, we can’t get to deep attention by this ragged path, and attention deprivation is as destructive as sleep deprivation. Without regular deep sleep our brains get starved for the reweaving and regeneration that real rest gives. Without deep attention, we get separated from ourselves. And without access to ourselves, we lose the ability to be fully with another person, a place, a line of thought, a feeling. We cultivate distraction, impatience, frustration.

In my own elementary and high school years, many voices and images competed for my attention—family, friends, church, school, books, TV,
music, movies, magazines—offering different visions and versions of who and how I should be. Sometimes this competition could be confusing, but it was rarely overwhelming because all these elements stayed in their places. The portal to a million worlds was not in a gadget in my pocket or on my desk.

If I needed to do research, I sat in the high school library, read actual books and magazines, and took notes on index cards. (Index cards!) If I wanted to talk to someone, I could only do so in person or while holding a phone tethered to the wall. I watched movies at the theater or at fixed times on TV. I wrote letters with a fountain pen on real paper, put them in envelopes, got stamps at the post office, and mailed my letters. I let them go. Chances were, I wouldn’t hear from that friend for two weeks at least, so I could relax as far as that relationship was concerned.

Now we can get a reply almost instantaneously, just as we can locate exponentially more information about any topic in five minutes than I could find in a week in the Harlan High School library. But twenty-first-century humans can’t read or evaluate or think or respond faster than I could in 1967. Not with any depth. We think we can. We can download a ton of information. But information isn’t understanding. It can’t weigh and evaluate and synthesize. We have to do that.

Likewise, it takes time to feel. Everything has sped up, crowded in on us, and become so chaotic that it’s difficult to register a feeling much less reflect on it. We are over-stimulated and hyperlinked-in, but we are deprived of the kind of time with a person or an experience that deepens and sustains us.

The story circle can be such an experience. A school child can empathize and imagine in response to the language, character, and emotion in the story she is hearing. This pleasure is offered through the voice, the presence, of the reader. If the child’s home doesn’t include this ritual—and I know many do not—it’s all the more important that she be drawn into the circle at school. The ability to engage with story this way is essential to our humanity, for it teaches us to see and feel beyond our own limited lookout. The first gift of the library is the one from which all the rest flow. Our circle widens, but it stays centered in this shared experience.

Soon after I became poet laureate, I gave a reading in a small-town library in Kentucky. To my dismay, two audience members, including the librarian, spent the entire half hour looking at their phones. Leaving aside the rudeness of this behavior, the greater worry is that these folks were not there. Were they paying bills? Ordering shoes? Catching up on e-mail? In Dr. Weinschenk’s terms, they could not stop seeking. They were caught in the dopamine loop. (Lest you think I’m a total Luddite, let me say that I drafted part of this on a laptop in the mall parking lot while waiting for my iPhone screen to be replaced.)

I’m happy to use the smartphone as a pocket library to fetch information that a conversation calls for. But it’s
not my venue for serious reading. (I’m the author of the picture book Book, after all.) I still want actual pages, whereas my husband, who went through a Kindle phase, now reads primarily on his phone. When circumstances require him to read a physical book, he laments not having hyperlinks. If he wants to know what Saint-Malo looks like while reading Anthony Doerr’s All the Light We Cannot See, my husband wants to be able to click on the town’s name in his text and have the image appear in his hand as if by magic.

I want to travel by the magic of Anthony Doerr’s words. While part of me would like to have a picture supplied immediately, more of me wants to stay in what John Gardner calls the “vivid and continuous” dream of fiction (1985, 31). If I break the story’s spell every time I come to something unfamiliar, I will dilute its power. And what’s to keep me from being lured into further reading about Saint-Malo on its website, then looking up Anthony Doerr, then checking to see if he’s related to Harriet Doerr (Stones for Barna), then searching to see if there’s going to be a movie, etc., etc.?

The answer is, nothing. There is nothing to stop me. The rabbit hole of the Web has no bottom. You can keep falling till you fall asleep. If you can sleep after all that zigzagging screen to screen.

Yes, the zigzagging gives me images and information from a larger world, but where is my center? And how, after following the zigzag of digital links, do I get back there? Do I even remember my center? We can learn a vast number of things via the Internet, but we cannot learn how to be human. On the contrary, we can be dehumanized, perpetually irritated at actual people whom we cannot control with keystroke or joystick, chronically impatient with the slowness of the actual world and with our limitations as creatures within it. Rather than face and work to reverse this loss of our ability to relate to one another, we are likely to hasten online to escape it. But that won’t work. The problem is never the solution.

We mustn’t become so sped up and fragmented that we forget what matters. We mustn’t let the virtual world rob us of what’s real.

George Ella Lyon is the author of four books of poetry, a novel, a memoir, and a short story collection, as well as thirty-eight books for young readers. Her honors include an Al Smith Fellowship, fellowships to the Hambidge Center for the Arts, numerous grants from The Kentucky Foundation for Women, a Pushcart Prize nomination, and a feature in the PBS series, The United States of Poetry. Her books have been chosen for the Chafin Award, the Appalachian Book of the Year Award, the Aesop Prize, ALA’s Schneider Family Book Award, the Jane Addams Honor Book, the Golden Kite Award, the New York Public Library’s Best Book for Teens list, and the Parents’ Choice Silver Medal.

Her newest books are Voices from the March on Washington, co-written with J. Patrick Lewis, and Boats Float! co-written with her son, Benn, and illustrated by Mick Wiggins. A native of Harlan County, Kentucky, Lyon works as a freelance writer and teacher based in Lexington. For more information, go to <www.georgeellalyon.com>.

Works Cited:
One School Librarian's Digital Journey

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The Magic of Digital Storytelling
Magical!

This is the word I use to describe the excitement in the room when students have been given digital tools and the chance to create and share their own stories and/or illustrations.

If you have ever watched students sitting in front of a blank piece of paper, especially during state writing assessments, you know that look—pure torture! Students are not highly motivated to produce a well-crafted story that is destined to be seen only by the teacher or, at best, posted to a bulletin board somewhere in the hallway. In testing situations, students often have even less motivation to use their imagination and storytelling abilities.

However, in the digital world everything changes. When stories are shared via online publishing platforms, students are excited about their own creativity and collaboration and feel pride in their work. It doesn’t matter if we use basic presentation software or the latest iPad app, the result is always the same—pure magic!

As an elementary school librarian, I have had access to the latest technologies since document scanners were considered cutting edge. We developed a writing lab in the back storage room of the library, and it was the most popular place in the school. Even then, allowing students to scan images to insert into their stories was a game changer. Since those days I have never stopped experimenting with various platforms and applications to let students express themselves. As with most experiments, sometimes what works with one group might flop with another, or the whole activity may just bomb completely!

Over the years I have amassed a wide number of lessons and activities related to digital storytelling. In your exploration of the treasure trove of examples I am going to share with you here, keep one thing in mind: you don’t need to master or even learn how to use a particular application. Give yourself the gift of freedom and flexibility. Think about creating a digital story as you would a new recipe! In fact, I often tell my students that my classroom is my test kitchen and they are the chefs!

For example, if you give kids a loose project outline and a brief introduction, I guarantee they will figure it out. Or even (Yikes!), "Here is something new I want to try—let’s explore it together!" What I love most about teaching the art of digital storytelling is when kids are immersed in a project and come to me with "Is it okay if I do it like this instead?" The answer is almost always "Yes!" I want them to be independent thinkers and always encourage changes to the project as long as the changes make sense in the context of our learning objectives.

Now, if I haven’t scared you away yet, let’s dive into some examples. Keep in mind, the examples of these projects used as illustrations and at the webpages for which URLs are provided were created by the kids and are in their raw, unedited form.

Digital Storytelling Applications and Projects: Kid Pix, PowerPoint, Picaboo, and More: Creating Stories and Memoirs!

*The Snowy Day*
Kid Pix 3D is a drawing application designed primarily for children.
Originally released for Apple computers, a Windows version is now also available.

My first attempt at creating a digital e-book using student-created illustrations was in 2010 when *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats was selected for “Read for the Record.” I cut apart the pages and let each student pick one and then create his or her own interpretation of the artwork using Kid Pix on our Apple iMac computers. A second-grade teacher was our guest reader, and I recorded her as she read the story to the class. To combine the images with the audio, iMovie was an easy choice, and the results were not only available to share digitally, but the printed pages (imported into PowerPoint slides as .jpeg files) were displayed on the bulletin board outside the school library. The hallway was buzzing, and kids were lining up to read *The Snowy Day*! You can view our project on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrCSoWPQ2ao&feature=youtu.be>.

Grab a copy of the book and follow along.

Over the years students have been inspired by other books, too. Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are* inspired *Where the Generous Things Are* (see figure 1 for excerpts of a book created with Kid Pix and Microsoft Word).

*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*

Alexander is a favorite in our school library, so I thought it would be a great way to teach the students to use PowerPoint, a widely used presentation application. Students love to tell stories about themselves. This project is a fun opportunity for them to tell a story about events that ruined their day just like Alexander’s. First, students...
created storyboards to plan their own mishaps. They created digital art using Kid Pix on our iMac computers and then exported each image as a .jpeg file and organized the files into a folder. Next, they created PowerPoint slides, inserted the images that they created, and then saved their slideshows (see figure 2).

Hometown Alphabet Book
The Snowy Day process used for digital storytelling was flawless. The kids loved it! So I soon jumped into another project using the exact same workflow. This time I used the format of an alphabet book about the town we lived in: Delray Beach, Florida. First, we discussed what makes a city unique. For example, in our town, we have the historic Colony Hotel with an original iron-gated elevator. We also discussed what things in a city are the same wherever you go, like Dunkin’ Donuts. Then we took a field trip to the downtown area so students could experience the city from a different point of view. We even got to take a ride in the old elevator! Students chronicled their experiences in their own stories, which I compiled into an ABC book format. When the book was finished, I gathered all of the text into a Wordle for the front cover (see figure 3). The results were so fantastic that I used the Picaboo website <www.picaboo.com> to create a hardcover book. We invited the Delray Beach mayor to come to our school and presented him with a copy. You can view our final product at: <http://tinyurl.com/qxj3z96>.

6-Word Stories
For my students I adapted the concept of the 6-word memoir, in which the writer chooses six words to capture a memory, and called the project 6-Word Stories. Here is how I begin my introduction...
Ernest Miller Hemingway (July 21, 1899–July 2, 1961) was an American author and journalist. His distinctive writing style is characterized by economy and understatement. In the 1920s Ernest Hemingway’s colleagues bet him that he couldn’t write a complete story in just six words. They paid up. He wrote: For sale: baby shoes, never used. Hemingway is said to have considered it his best work.

Next, I ask the students to try to interpret the meaning behind Hemingway’s 6-word story. After a lively conversation, I give them a questionnaire titled, “All about Me.” We use it as our planning sheet for writing 6-word stories. As part of the project, the students create images using Kid Pix and insert them into PowerPoint slides. The project is always a hit! One year, I turned the slideshows into a new Picaboo book and used Wordle to create the book cover. I was delighted to see that the most common words were “friends,” “family,” “home,” and “love”! You can view a slideshow at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOF5oa6PMBM>.

GarageBand: Poetry Podcasts
Our school library has an extensive collection of children’s poetry books, but many of them are underutilized and just sit, collecting dust. The students tend to gravitate towards Shel Silverstein’s and Jack Prelutsky’s poetry, and that’s it. To expand our students’ exposure to poetry I decided to involve them in a project using GarageBand on our Apple iMac computers. To start, I loaded up a cart with the neglected poetry books and gave the students ample time to browse and pick out a poem of at least twelve lines to practice reading aloud. The students then used GarageBand to record their voices and added beats and rhythm. We also discussed how the mood of the poem influenced the choice of audio elements and overall effect of the poem on the listener. When our podcasts were complete, we had a Poetry Slam event where we enjoyed listening to each other read poetry. What an awesome day! As a result of this activity I created a tutorial for a professional development workshop to show others how to.
Students collaborating on using claymation and iMovie (right).

Fourth-grade students Wyatt and Myles using the iMovie app to create book trailers to promote books nominated for the Sunshine State Award (above).

Isabella using the iMovie app to create a book trailer for Natalie Babbit’s Tuck Everlasting (left).
create poetry podcasts. You can see it at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRJz54sJ4oE>.

**VoiceThread: Literature Circles**

I used the literature circle model in my first attempt to use VoiceThread for digital storytelling. I purchased thirty copies of Lynne Jonell’s *Emmy and the Incredible Shrinking Rat*. I then sent fifteen copies of the book to a third-grade class across town and invited them to join in on the conversation. My class read the book and used Kid Pix to create an image of their favorite scene. We used the Literature Circle model to ask questions created by my students, and uploaded the questions, along with the artwork, into VoiceThread. Then we invited the other class to respond by sending them the VoiceThread link. The author of the book was kind enough to join in our VoiceThread conversation and answered questions for the students. The experience was, indeed, purely magical! A recording of our VoiceThread discussion is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EP8St2V_6Rw>.

**Drawing Pad: Sticker Stories**

When we first received our iPads, I downloaded several drawing and painting apps, hoping to find one that the third-grade students would enjoy as much as Kid Pix and, ultimately, found the Drawing Pad app. I typically don’t let students use clip art because I want to encourage them to create their own artwork. However, since we were evaluating various apps, I let them explore all of the features. They loved creating original “Sticker Pictures” by drawing pictures using the graphics and clip art in the Drawing Pad app. As I watched students play with the stickers and clip art, I had a brainstorm! “Now, let’s try to create a story to go with your Sticker Pictures.” Using Microsoft Word, we wrote narratives based on our pictures. Then I taught students how to import the images into the story. Go to this URL to see the results: <https://youtu.be/ipVDebvH684>. Enjoy!

**StoryKit: Endangered Animals and Wordless Books**

StoryKit is my all-time favorite app for the iPad. I use it for the simple reason that kids of any grade level can figure it out without much help and instantly their imaginations take off! In this project third-grade students researched endangered animals while learning to use various electronic databases. Then they used the StoryKit app, which allows them to use photos, original art, text, and audio on the iPad. Also using StoryKit, students in my summer program, ranging from third grade through middle school, worked on stories together. The multiage collaboration was a magical experience. I observed a third-grade student assigning roles to the older kids who collaborated to act out her story, and they loved it!

Here are URLs for some examples of StoryKit projects:

- <http://iphone.childrenslibrary.org/cgi-bin/view.py?b=mthvpjcjtszidvclpitz>
- <http://iphone.childrenslibrary.org/cgi-bin/view.py?b=mjmdyjgr2qfquvfxpivu>
- <http://iphone.childrenslibrary.org/cgi-bin/view.py?b=g2sqg4jjautvguwytjc>
- <http://iphone.childrenslibrary.org/cgi-bin/view.py?b=4gbbc7nu2nxfcdgf3fd>

**It doesn’t matter if we use basic presentation software or the latest iPad app, the result is always the same - pure magic.**
I love wordless books for sparking creativity; students create original stories as they turn the pages just as if they were watching a movie—simply magical! The students loved using the StoryKit application to create a story inspired by the wordless book *The Snowman* by Raymond Briggs. First students wrote stories and recorded the audio narration; next, they created artwork to go along with the story. Here are URLs for pages where you can view a couple of examples of works in progress:

<https://vodcast.palmbeachschools.org/player/8R3SN>

<https://vodcast.palmbeachschools.org/player/P4KWN>

You can find a complete StoryKit tutorial at: <https://elementaryedtech.wordpress.com/2012/05/14/story-kit-and-the-ipad-its-not-just-a-toy/>

**Story Starters and Sharing Platform**

Scholastic has a wonderful resource called Story Starters for generating ideas to help students develop their stories. The website allows you to select a theme such as Adventure, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, or Scrambler and then a grade range. After selecting a theme, students pull down a “slot machine” arm that spins four wheels and comes up with a random writing prompt they can use to get started with their story. To write and share stories we used Edmodo, a web-based platform that enables students to connect, collaborate, and share content. Here is the URL of the Story Starter website and an example of using the Edmodo application:

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/story-starters/>

<https://www.edmodo.com/post/444345587>
Storybird

Storybird.com is a fabulous website of curated artwork by illustrators and animators; this art can be used by writers in telling their stories. Students use this application to access illustrations that they can insert into an original picture book, long-form book, or poem. When I taught a digital storytelling class at the local community college this past summer we began brainstorming ideas using the Scholastic Story Starters website mentioned above and then inserted pictures from Storybird. Here is a link to an original story by Sophia called “The Butcher and the Baker”: <https://storybird.com/chapters/the-butcher-and-the-baker/?token=xd2u7px6g2>.

iMovie Trailers: Extreme Weather and Book Trailers

In my years as a school librarian I have done many projects using iMovie, a movie production program found on Apple computers. I regularly teach students how to create movie trailers using the iMovie app on our iPads and incorporate this application into many projects. The project that gives me the most pride is the Extreme Weather Research Project. Students were very engaged in researching information for their extreme weather movie trailers. When a local meteorologist Chris Martinez visited our school library, he was very impressed with the students’ knowledge about extreme weather topics. Here is the URL of a documentary video of our Extreme Weather project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqUezpdcIVo>

We also love making book trailers about our favorite books. Here are URLs of some examples:

<https://vodcast.palmbeachschools.org/player/D0HiU>
<https://vodcast.palmbeachschools.org/player/tN522>
<https://vodcast.palmbeachschools.org/player/6DV81>

Claymation Project: Endangered Animals

We hired a company called The Director’s Cut <www.thedirectors-cut.ca> to bring claymation into our school library where, as part of an in-house field trip, the students learned to create backgrounds and clay characters and to use stop-motion animation. Students first researched endangered animals and then created their claymation animations. This was indeed a magical day for the students and for me. Here is the URL of a documentary video of our experience: <https://vodcast.palmbeachschools.org/player/TL84W>.

E-Publishing with Apple’s Pages: Red Goes to School

In this project we used EPUB, an open e-publishing standard compatible with many devices, to create e-books that would open in the iBooks app on our iOS devices. Learning how to use this e-publishing standard was a little bit more of a learning curve for me than some of the other projects, but it was worth the effort because students were able to experience the magic of opening up their own e-books on their iPads. To create the publications students created the images in Kid Pix, then used Apple’s Pages to write the text. When students were finished with their stories, they exported them to the standard EPUB format. I was very fortunate to experience some real magic as part of this project when one fifth-grade student discovered she was a real storyteller. Before we began the e-publishing project Tammy Lynn was extremely shy and would never allow anyone to see her work except me. When Tammy started her project and realized how awesome her story was going to be, she decided on her own to use a fictitious name so it could be published for the world to see (see figure 4). You can imagine her delight when the students opened up the iBooks app on the iPads and saw her book published there!

Until then, no one, not even Tammy, had a clue that a budding author was sitting in the classroom! Here is the URL for her story ”Red Goes to School”: <http://bit.ly/1IsGf6A>.

Share the Magic of Digital Storytelling

I hope you have enjoyed reading about my journey into digital storytelling and will try some of these ideas or create your own magical experiences for your students. I have created a VoiceThread where we can share ideas with each other. Join the conversation at: <http://voicethread.com/new/share/6976597/).

All of these examples are tried and true, tested on real kids, and can be adapted to any topic or story idea. The common takeaway from each idea is that students will engage their imaginations when they can become publishers and not just consumers of stories.

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AWARDS
WHAT CAN LIBRARIANS LEARN FROM

ELMO, SID, AND DORA?

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES OF
EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION TO STORYTIME

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"Lalala, Elmo’s world. Lalalala, Elmo’s world..." Like numerous children, you probably learned this song, along with a whole host of other interesting things, from *Sesame Street*. Since its first airing in 1969, the overarching goal of the show has been to prepare young children for formal schooling, and numerous research studies (Fisch and Truglio 2001) confirm that the producers of the show accomplish that goal. With the great success of *Sesame Street*, other producers and television networks have also developed programs intended to boost the cognitive and social development of children. Learning and school readiness are at the heart of educational television. Yet many, if not all, of the best-known educational television shows produced for children are not just educational; they’re also humorous, engaging, and interactive.

Parents and caregivers can maximize children’s engagement with educational television programming by co-viewing and discussing concepts and issues during and following episodes, and parents and caregivers can poach ideas and processes from these programs and apply them to their own interactions with children. School librarians might also consider taking a few pages from the educational television playbook and applying them to storytime. Though in this article we focus primarily on younger students, shared reading-aloud sessions with older students—who can themselves be presenters—can effectively incorporate many of these same strategies.

**General Benefits of Educational Television Programming to Integrate into Storytime Programming**

**Problem Solving**

Children meet challenges every day in a variety of different contexts, and many educational television shows such as *PAW Patrol* on Nick Jr. provide great examples of problem solving. Problems for children range in difficulty according to the situation and task. Problems can be as simple as trying to reach a plate of cookies on the counter, moderately more difficult such as attempting to safely cross a busy street, or as complex as trying to understand laws of physics. When children see others successfully tackle problems, they are able to learn from those situations. Many educational television programs encourage children to solve hypothetical problems, and sharing in these problem-solving experiences helps children select appropriate tools and develop confidence germane to real-world situations. Skills developed through virtual exploration can be applied to resolve actual problems encountered in everyday life.

Problem-solving tasks can and should be incorporated into everyday interactions with young children. Encouraging young children to predict upcoming events during book reading or as an event unfolds in real time is a proven method for supporting the development of problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. One fun and engaging method for scaffolding the development of prediction, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills is to incorporate in shared reading a multiple-choice format, like those found in shows such as *Ruff-Ruff, Tweet and Dave*, and *Dora the Explorer*. For example, "If the dog buries the bone in the garden, will he: a) make birds angry, b) turn purple, or c) damage the flowers?"

To help children develop strategies for thinking through and solving problems, adults can also harness those teachable moments that naturally occur during children’s play. For example, if two children want the same manipulative during a creative-interpretation activity, a school librarian could take time to discuss the situation with the children involved, as well as with those on the sidelines, and together develop possible solutions.

**General Foundational Concepts**

General foundational concepts are those basic understandings that children need to perform everyday tasks and to be ready for formal schooling. Colors, numbers, shapes, time, and quantities are all examples of foundational concepts. Many educational television shows, including *Peg + Cat* on PBS, incorporate a variety of foundational concepts. Similarly, school librarians can select books that incorporate these concepts. Additionally, librarians should intentionally weave foundational concepts into general storytime routines and communications. For example, ordinal terms can be used to describe storytime procedures, e.g., first, we will...; second, etc. Finally, foundational concepts are easily incorporated into planned library program activities and storytime crafts.

**World Knowledge**

Children need some background knowledge on a whole host of topics and events to support later learning and reading comprehension. As Susan Neuman has so eloquently stated, “Children are natural knowledge seekers. Whether it’s orca whales, dinosaurs, or the latest technological doodad, children’s activities are often guided by their need to know. They want to become expert in a domain. And it’s this goal that drives their ambition” (2010, 301). When children have a basic understanding of science and social studies concepts, they
have the requisite foundation for more-detailed learning and for pursuing unique individualized interests. These foundational understandings of social studies and science concepts, such as land forms, scientific classification systems, cultural traditions, weather systems, history, and so much more, facilitate later academic endeavors and reading comprehension.

Educational television programs for children have been incorporating naturally interesting topics into episodes for years. Take, for example, the content and characters of PBS’s *Cyberchase*, *Sid the Science Kid*, and *Wild Kratts*, as well as newer programs like Nick Jr.’s *Blaze and the Monster Machines*, Disney Junior’s *Miles from Tomorrow Land*, and *Fishtronaut*, which is available on Netflix. Rather than sticking to traditional early-childhood themes such as teddy bears, apples, and pets, school librarians can broaden storytime program themes to those that are more eccentric and naturally interesting, and, thereby, expand the knowledge base of young children. Topics such as jungles, amphibians, natural disasters, and other less-mainstream subjects will expand children’s interests and repertoire of stories and information. Incorporation of cultural themes, customs, and an intentional focus on diversity like that found in Sprout’s *Super Wings* or Disney Junior’s *Handy Manny* will help prepare children for success in the twenty-first century.

**Literacy-Specific Benefits of Educational Television Applicable to Storytime**

Educational television programming supports both foundational and less-constrained reading skills (Parris 2005). To be school-ready, children need finite skills such as letter-name and letter-
sound knowledge, as well as broad exposure to language, ideas, and experiences that support vocabulary development and comprehension of complex storylines, arguments, and information.

**Letter-Name, Letter-Sound, and Phonological Awareness**

The alphabetic principle, recognition that print letters represent sounds that are combined to form words, is a key understanding for early reading success. Many educational television shows concentrate on supporting children’s letter-name and letter-sound skills. Programs such as *Sesame Street* and *Between the Lions* are well respected for focusing on letter concepts, and newer programs such as *Wallykazam!* also draw viewers’ attention to letters and their corresponding sounds. Through intentional selection of books, songs, and rhymes, school librarians can integrate a focus on letter names and letter sounds into storytime. Even more effective are activities that are personalized based on children’s interests. For example, librarians can use the names of the children as the entry points for letter awareness. In addition, librarians should encourage caregivers to personalize letter-name and letter-sound activities for the children in their care.

Many educational television programs also help advance young children’s phonological awareness. Studies (e.g., Goswami 2001) suggest that the more language children hear, the better able they are to differentiate individual sounds in words. Children’s phonological awareness can be further enhanced when their attention is explicitly directed to identifying, segmenting, and/or blending the phonemes within...
words. Attention to the individual phonemes within words through language play occurs regularly in many educational television programs. Fun phrases such as "Meeska, Mooska, Mickey Mouse!" (Walt Disney Television Animation 2006) are peppered throughout most programs aimed at young children. The more children are attuned to recognize the different and unique sounds of words, the more phonemically aware and capable—and, in turn, the better equipped for beginning reading and writing—they become.

School librarians can integrate wordplay into storytime routines. Songs, fingerplays, chants, and action rhymes are natural entrees into phonological awareness. Inclusion of simple language play and games that promote segmentation, blending, and identification of phonemes are more intentional ways to further enhance children’s attention to phonemes within and across different words (Reutzel 2015). Librarians might consider songs like Willoughby, Wallaby, Woo or the Banana Nana Bo Bana (the Name Game) chant as personalized methods to promote phonemic awareness.

Print Concepts
The term "concepts of print" refers to children’s knowledge of print conventions: written words symbolize spoken words; English words are read from left to right; books in English are read from front to back; books have titles, authors, and illustrators, etc. Many educational television shows such as WordWorld on PBS promote concepts of print through the pairing of written text with spoken words. Other programs integrate word formation, word reading, and sentence building to convey the concept that words and sentences are read from left to right. For example, on the PBS show Super Why! Princess Presto possesses spelling power. As she waves her wand from the left side of the screen to the right in the title sequence, the word, “spelling” synchronously forms above her head. Librarians can also take simple measures to further advance children’s print understandings. For example, many school librarians point to the printed words while reading. Librarians can also draw children’s attention to text features such as speech bubbles, headings, and picture captions—especially easy to do when projecting an e-book. Finally, talking about parts of hardcopy books (e.g., cover, spine, title page, etc.) will help children develop this context-specific vocabulary.

Oral Language Development
Well-developed oral language skills in early childhood promote later literacy proficiency and heightened general cognitive development during the schooling years (Cunningham and Stanovich 1997). The more language interactions children have, the better developed their language skills. Oral language is particularly important because children need guided practice expressing and fine-tuning language.

Research (Hart and Risley 1995, 2003) suggests that by age three children from families on welfare hear about thirty million fewer words than children from families with parents employed in professional positions. Hence, the contributions to oral language provided through out-of-home experiences are particularly important for at-risk children. Vocabulary, one component of oral language, can be easily enhanced through storytime.

Vocabulary
Educational television promotes children’s vocabulary development through incorporation of less-frequently heard and complex words. Additionally, television programs commonly pair those target words with actions or images and contextual definitions. For example, in one episode of the classic Blue’s Clues (the episode titled “Blue’s Wishes”), Blue illustrates the clue: “glide.” In the segment, Blue’s paw moves back and forth. The character Joey states, “Our third clue is sliding back and forth”—pairing a contextual definition with the action. He then states the word, “gliding.” As the show continues, the words “gliding,” “glide,” and “glides” are paired with movement or action nine more times within two minutes.

In storytime it is also fairly easy to pair interesting vocabulary with action and images to pair words with simple, contextual definitions, and to repeat their use. Before reading a story that contains some words new to the listeners, a school librarian can discuss one or two of those words, pairing them with images (in the book or projected from other sources) and/ or action. When encountering the word during the reading, the librarian can provide a little refresher definition or invite the children to apply the meaning in the context of the story. After reading, the librarian can discuss the story, being sure to incorporate the vocabulary words into the discussion. Even more beneficial, the librarian can structure the discussion so that the children themselves will be speaking the word as part of the discussion. This technique is effective with learners of all ages!
Text Structure
Though at first glance book reading and television viewing seem diametrically opposed, educational television can promote children’s understanding of text structure, both narrative and expository. Whether informational or fictional, the structure or organization of material within a text is either narrative or expository. Those books and television programs told in story format have narrative structures, while those that relay information through description, sequence, compare/contrast, cause/effect, procedure, or problem/solution like Sesame Street segments of Elmo’s World, have expository structures.

Children’s understanding of the narrative structure enables them to devote greater attention to comprehension, vocabulary learning, and their understanding of concepts and world knowledge during storybook readings. Within and in conjunction with storytime, school librarians can further support children’s understandings of narrative structure. First, it’s important to engage in dialogic reading with discussion of each book throughout and following the reading. Narrative understanding can be advanced through explicit discussion of the beginning, middle, and ending components of the story. Interactive retellings with flannel boards, students’ reenactments, and other creative play also foster understanding of narrative structure.

Young children also need exposure to and an understanding of expository text structures. Because of the human affinity for storytelling coupled with the fact that parents, teachers, and other adults such as librarians tend to read many more narrative than expository books to young children (Duke 2000), children become more familiar with narrative language structures than expository. However, familiarity with expository text structures is particularly important because most in-school reading in later grades and reading in adulthood (e.g., newspapers, e-mails, text messages, work memos, healthcare information, etc.) consist of expository text. One simple way for school librarians to promote children’s understanding of expository text is through incorporation of informational books into storytime. Additionally, while reading informational books in storytime, librarians can point out text features: table of contents, headings, captions, etc. Within storytime itself and in activities following storytime, librarians can also incorporate expository activities that require description, sequencing, comparing and contrasting, identifying cause and effect, and matching problems and solutions.

Insights about the Learning Environment Drawn from Educational Television
Motivation and Comprehension
Children’s fascination with and active participation during educational television programming give testament to the motivational features associated with it. One lesson readily drawn from educational television and applied to storytime is the importance of keeping a focus on fun and enjoyment!

Studies of educational television suggest that attention and comprehension are strongly related: the more content children are able to comprehend, the greater attention they are willing to expend, and the greater the attention expended, the more the viewer will comprehend (Anderson and Kirkorian 2006). Consequently, good educational television shows incorporate strategies to capture attention and to facilitate comprehension. These same strategies can be modified for storytime.

Spark Curiosity
Children are naturally curious and want to learn about the world around them. Educational television programs for children typically open with scenes that grab viewers’ attention to draw them into the storyline or whet their appetite for learning. School librarians can also use educational hooks to interest young children. Consider how an image or a prop might be used to garner attention about a topic. For example, a librarian might use actual (or silk) chrysantheums, roses, and lilies to attract the attention of young children. The librarian might prompt the children to consider how the objects are similar and different, whether the props are living or nonliving, how or why people might use them, etc. Consider how this hook might provide a perfect segue into a reading of Kevin Henkes’ Chrysanthemum in conjunction with a “names” themed storytime.

Instructional Previews and Concluding Wrap-Up
Children, like adults, enjoy achievement and mastery; therefore, the likelihood of their engagement in an activity increases with their success in or understanding of that activity. Adults can and should set children up to succeed through structural components that build on the children’s existing knowledge and strengths. Consider how educational programming for young children subtly activates
prior knowledge while also preparing viewers for what is to come. Programs like *Dora the Explorer* and *Thomas and Friends* structure these previews through maps. *The Mickey Mouse Clubhouse* previews the “Mouseketools” or objects that will be used to complete an adventure or solve problems, and a librarian can use this strategy as well by creating a visually enhanced storytime progression chart or agenda and then revisiting it at each transition: first, we investigated snails, and then we had fun with our opening song; next, we’ll read _____, etc. Viewers of the long-running *Barney and Friends* will recall that Barney concluded each programming with “Barney Says” in which he narrated, with accompanying visual clues, each major action or event of the episode. Librarians can incorporate this concluding routine in storytime or encourage parents to do so individually with their children.

**Repetition**

Another technique for boosting success, which, in turn, enhances enjoyment and furthers learning, is repetition. Television programming for children employs multiple forms of repetition, and storytime programs for children can also. Many television programs use recurring characters and replicate components across episodes to form a structure. For example, in every episode of the classic *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*, Mr. Rogers changes out of his jacket and dress shoes into a sweater and blue sneakers, and a trolley ushers viewers into the Neighborhood of Make-Believe. Similarly, *Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood*, a spinoff of *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*, has two different but related stories in each episode. A song that is introduced in the first story of each episode is then repeated in the second story of the same episode. School librarians also employ
The cornerstone of good educational programming and the first and most important idea to integrate into storytime is the fact that children are more receptive to learning when they are having fun and are actively engaged.

Repetition is also used within single episodes and single stories within episodes of children’s television programs, primarily as a method for teaching and reinforcing moderately complex concepts and vocabulary. For example, in the “Caillou the Builder” episode of the program Caillou, the main character and his mother discuss the meaning of “detour” when they encounter a fallen tree in their route to preschool. Later in that same episode, the preschool boy explains the meaning of detour to his friends as he constructs a detour around a tree in the sandbox. Advanced concepts and vocabulary can be repeated throughout and across storytimes through book selection, planned activities, and discussions. School librarians can also encourage parents to build on the ideas and repeat the terms in interactions and discussion with their children beyond the library.

Interaction and Sufficient Think Time Nickelodeon’s groundbreaking and award-winning Blue’s Clues first introduced the “learning by doing” concept into the television viewing context, and many programs produced for children have since copied the technique. Characters in many children’s productions address questions or issue invitations to viewers and then provide time for response. For example, the central character in Special Agent Oso regularly faces directly toward the viewer, asks for assistance in making a choice, waits several seconds, and then continues...
action. School librarians are expert dialogic readers and understand the value of interacting with children during book sharing. Interaction can be also integrated into other components of storytime. For example, children can participate in story retellings by placing and moving flannel-board pieces. When engaging in dialogic reading, inviting children to volunteer, and leading question/response exchanges, librarians should be sure to provide a three- to five-second think-time pause to allow all children sufficient time to consider the issue and respond. At a Family Night event school librarians can increase the number of active participants by inviting each child to respond to the accompanying adult rather than directly to the librarian.

First Steps for Incorporating Literacy and Learning Concepts into Storytime Structures

The cornerstone of good educational programming and the first and most important idea to integrate into storytime is the fact that children are more receptive to learning when they are having fun and are actively engaged. School librarians make storytime fun for young students through interesting book choices, incorporation of movement activities such as finger plays and action rhymes, integration of music, and cheerful dispositions. All except finger plays are effective with older students, too!

We encourage you to consider how you can apply lessons learned from educational TV to storytime at your school library. Consider, too, how older students can be engaged in storytimes (traditional and digital) for peers and for younger students.

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THE BABY AND THE BATHWATER

A TALE OF STANDARDS AND STORYTELLING

Pamela Petty
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This is a story about the baby and the bathwater. In other words, it is a tale about storytelling in a time of standards. It begins with a story and ends with an important lesson on how educators must hold on to the pleasure, joy, and love of stories—the affective components of teaching and learning—when navigating the educational environment of national standards and standardized testing.

In the lyrics to one of his hit songs, popular country music star Trace Adkins was asked why he sings country music songs with “twang” about “trains and hillbilly things.” The singer responded simply, “cause they’re all just songs about me” (Smith and Hill 2004).

Many of us see our lives in the songs, poetry, and stories of others. Through songs and stories we find words to put to the feelings we have and connect with feelings that inspire our words. While we find ourselves in the stories others tell, nothing is as satisfying and fulfilling as telling our own stories. Trace Adkins is trying to tell us that, as he glorifies the pleasure of singing songs, he is telling us the story of his life, his dreams, and his experiences.

Some of the best stories we tell are in the form of a song. These three- to four-minute tales put to music can weave complete stories. They may recall spectacular events; ponderings on life, love, history, or patriotism; or feature more-common elements like tractors, cowboy hats, big trucks, mamas, and friends lost along the way. Regardless of the tale or theme, song or story, the point is that songs are creative expressions of our shared experience. In each case, some writer/storyteller in some moment of inspiration scribbled or keyed some words, fitted them together
into a form that no one else had ever quite formed before, and felt the contentment that comes from setting a story free to become what it will with those who hear or read it. Sometimes these writers/storytellers are poets, and sometimes they are singers. Sometimes, if we are very lucky, we find them in classrooms paving the way for future writers, storytellers, and poets to bring their imagination and experiences to life.

Storytelling is a craft that takes “talking” to the level of “telling.” The cleverest of teachers know these tricks. The shift from talker to teller is the one that makes the difference with the students we find the most difficult to reach. The best educators have a particular knack for storytelling—taking the dry facts of history lifted from textbooks, dusting off the dates, times, places, and names, and injecting life into these captured moments that shape our world, our country, and our lives. These gifted educators are the ones who bring to life people and places long dead and can share the magic of the story. Educators who value and use storytelling in the classroom, in the library, and in special school events aimed specifically at highlighting the history and the people of a community have the potential to make the most positive lasting effect on student literacy and to cultivate a love for literature.

Children who have never heard a parent or a grandparent spin a tale, who have never lost themselves in a yarn, and who have never thought about the precious jewels of stories that lie inside each of them do not know the magic of story. Many of our school children have not experienced this magic. Consequently, when hearing tales for the first time, these students have to be drawn in slowly, lured into almost absent-mindedly following a trail of breadcrumb story-kernels until these listeners are lost in the forest of a spectacular word journey into the past, the future, the heart of an earthworm, or floating on one of the world’s last remaining icebergs.

Textbooks won’t take children to the places a well-told story does. Workbooks won’t take them there, and neither will computers. Books and multimedia are wonderful components of the big picture of getting students to these imaginative places—but the only path that leads to loving language and the gift of story is the same oral tradition that has sustained life on this planet since the beginning: storytelling.

As is often the case in education, we are at the mercy of the pendulum that swings wildly—bringing in new methods and materials, and, many times, rapidly abandoning the old. Many educators find it challenging enough to ensure their students all meet the standards without adding to the list of mandates. However, if we fail to deliberately target the love of reading and do not model the love of reading and story, then how can we find it surprising that, although students can read, they simply choose not to?
Although it is true that we do not see specific academic outcomes related to cultivating a love of stories and storytelling in our national standards, the two are not diametrically opposed. In fact, stories are likely the most powerful tool we have to make the multitude of clinically written, jargon-infused, drained-of-meaning, “the-students-will” standards palatable to the human brain—something our students can actually learn, remember, and value. Standards that guide our language arts and reading instruction are what we must follow, but the Common Core State Standards have no codicil that states, “Please, abandon all reason and things you know that work.” In essence, let’s not be the educators that throw the baby (storytelling) out with the bathwater (previous standards). Instead, let’s be the ones who champion the value of story as a major component of how the human brain learns.

Opportunities abound for harnessing the power of storytelling. Every discipline taught in our schools provides fodder for story. The famous—and not so famous—people, events, places, and inventions are wrapped in story. The emotional and sensory factors of a story are more powerful ways of learning than simply reciting a set of facts. Mining biographies and autobiographies reveals some powerful and interesting facts that can jumpstart a story or introduction to a topic of study.

For example, did you know that left-handed Leonardo da Vinci wrote notes for himself from right to left and that other readers needed a mirror to decipher his writing? Were you aware that Alexander Graham Bell received his middle name as a birthday present from his father on Alexander’s eleventh birthday? A common misconception is that George Washington had teeth made from wood. Not true. His teeth were made from hippopotamus ivory and teeth from donkeys and horses. He also suffered from taphophobia, the fear of being buried alive. All these historical tidbits reveal real, complex human beings whose lives had many dimensions aside from their famous
THE VALUE OF STORY AS A MAJOR HUMAN BRAIN LEARNS.

discoveries and contributions to science, art, and politics. It is the stories that surround these famous people, not just the shortcut facts of what they did, that people gravitate to, savor, and remember. Our social studies/history, science, math, art, music, language, and sports classes provide daily opportunities to capture imaginations, appeal to the "ancient" brains of learners, and spark interest in knowing more about our world through story.

It is my belief that the reason many teachers and administrators (and people in Washington, DC, who have committees to look into just these sorts of things) snub their noses at the value of storytelling as an integral part of content-area instruction in the classroom is that storytelling doesn’t cost anything; it isn’t glitzy; you can’t buy it prepackaged in a box, and it didn’t make the short list for being “research-based.” It is just the most ancient, lasting, proven (Jesus, Buddha, Confucius, Moses, Mohamed) device for reaching people and impacting lives since humans developed language, sat by their fires, and tried to make sense of the world.

As a veteran teacher and storyteller, my advice to educators is simply this: Let’s not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Stories and storytelling are integral to teaching and learning across the curriculum. Finally, in this time of performance measures, high-stakes testing, accountability, tracking, benchmarks, and—sometimes—bats-in-our-belfries, let’s take a moment to try something that has moved people since the dawn of time. Let’s tell some stories.

Pamela Petty is a professor at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green and director of the university’s Center for Literacy. She has been a storyteller for the last twenty years. Her stories feature the life and times of a little girl growing up in rural Tennessee in the 1950s and 1960s. Pam’s stories pay tribute to a loving family, including her treasured grandmother and grandfather. Her encounters on the family farm will make you laugh, and stories of the family members who shaped her life will make you cry.

Work Cited:
Building Your PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORK (PLN):

21st-Century School Librarians Seek Self-Regulated Professional Development Online

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Professional Development 1.0

Before the Internet and the introduction of online professional development (PD) and social media tools, face-to-face PD was the traditional method for educator learning. Weekly faculty workshops, monthly or quarterly district-level staff development, summer institutes, and the like were and are still offered. For many school librarians, these traditional PD offerings, which are often focused on concerns specific to the classroom setting, do not meet the unique needs of library professionals. While it is important for school librarians to understand and support PD focused on classroom topics, they also have library-specific learning needs that can and should be addressed.

In larger districts, particularly those with district-level school librarian supervisors, some school librarians participate in monthly meetings designed exclusively for them. These shared learning and networking opportunities are important for building a cohesive cadre of library professionals and for meeting the specific needs of practicing school librarians. However, many school librarians work without a district-level library coordinator and must seek PD on their own. For some school librarians that means participating in library-focused professional development by attending state-level, national, and international conferences. Others, who are unable to secure professional leave or funding, seek out other venues.

"Self-regulated" PD, in which adult learners determine what they want to learn and how they will learn it, is aligned with the theory of andragogy, the science of adult learning. To summarize, adult learners:

- are self-directed and take responsibility for their own learning;
- have prior experiences that can be a positive or negative influence on learning;
- are motivated by an internal need to know;
- and have a problem-solving orientation to learning (Knowles 1990).

Professional Development 2.0

Bringing this model of adult learning into the 21st-century means that effective PD must be "connected to a teacher’s (librarian’s) own work with students and the teacher’s (librarian’s) curriculum and school culture, as well as connected with technology to the wider world of learning" (Trilling and Fadel 2009, 138). With the further development of the Internet and rise of social networking tools, educators have many online options in terms of how and where they seek self-regulated PD.

For school librarians, being part of a "connected" community provides support for getting specific needs met, solving personally relevant and meaningful problems, and developing professional expertise. AASL provides many avenues for members of the profession to learn with and from one another. These include AASL and subgroup electronic discussion lists, eCOLLAB for webinars <www.ala.org/aasl/ecollab>, the recently launched blog on the Knowledge Quest website <http://knowledgequest.aasl.org>, and the Twitter hashtag #aasl.

State-level, university-based, and independent groups of school librarians have also formed communities of practice (CoP) in the online environment (Wenger 1998). Through regular contact with one another, participants in these CoPs learn from one another, develop shared meanings through exchanging ideas and information, and enculturate one another into the ever-evolving profession of school librarianship. These groups also initiate and develop discussion lists, Webinars, blogs, and social media networks.

Electronic Discussion Lists

Electronic discussion lists have been sources for professional networking and learning since the invention of e-mail. Most list members are job-alike colleagues with common interests and concerns. Organizers and members use electronic discussion lists to disseminate information, share resources, pose questions, and seek expertise, advice, and the collective wisdom of the group. Some lists, such as AASLForum <aaslforum@lists.ala.org>, require that users be members of an organization.

Over time, these groups develop distinct cultures. Most lists have formal rules, and all have cultural norms that members are expected to follow. Some lists have moderators that approve or reject members’ posts. Effective electronic discussion lists have protocols for subject lines, posting, responding, and forwarding posts. Some lists have a "chit chat" or social reputation; other lists are more "serious." When members have a shared commitment to each other’s learning, lists can be useful PD tools.

Webinars

Webinars, focused on timely and specific topics, can be especially effective PD venues. Prospective webinar participants read the description, learn about the presenter(s), and self-select sessions based on their interests and need.
to know. Just as school library services for pre-K–12 students are most effective at the point of need, webinars can meet the just-in-time learning needs of adult learners.

Not all webinars are the same in terms of content presentation, interactivity between the presenter and participants, and among the participants. Some webinar facilitators encourage participation through polls during the session. Some webinars are organized with Q&A throughout the session; others hold the “official” Q&A at the end. Most webinars offer a chat feature for participants to engage in side conversations during the presentation. There is often a moderator who collects the questions posed in the chat or notices chat themes and brings these to the attention of the presenter for discussion at some point during the webinar.

AASL sponsors webinars throughout the academic year using the eCOLLAB tool <www.ala.org/aasl/ecollab/upcoming>. The association also offers an archive of complimentary webinars on a wide variety of topics <www.ala.org/aasl/ecollab/complimentary>. In one such webinar, Patricia Owen discusses AASL’s workbook A 21st-Century Approach to School Librarian Evaluation (AASL 2012) <www.ala.org/aasl/ecollab/evaluation>, which offers an evaluation rubric based on Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs (AASL 2009). Some of the complimentary webinars also spotlight back issues of Knowledge Quest such as one presented when the KQ “Coteaching” issue was published <www.ala.org/aasl/ecollab/coteaching-web>.

Blogs

Blogs abound in the world of school librarianship. Bloggers in our field represent a wide range of interests and variety of perspectives—too many to cite here. In 2014 the School Librarian Certification Degrees website published a list of the “Top Fifty School Library Blogs” <http://tinyurl.com/slibrarianblogs14>. While the stats on the site are not current, this matrix provides a list to consider.

Some school librarian bloggers focus exclusively on issues related to technology tools and trends, some on children’s and young adult literature, and some shed light on a wide array of topics and issues. Many school librarians who seek regular PD follow specific blogs and bloggers through RSS feeds, e-mail alerts, and apps that remind them to check in with these thought leaders. Most blogs, however, lack the interactivity that some adult learners need for effective online learning. While blogs feature multiple ways for bloggers and followers to share content via social media, very few blog posts engender comments or vibrant exchanges of ideas.

Blogs that involve multiple bloggers avoid the single perspective of most blogs. Currently sixteen different contributors are providing posts to AASL’s KQ blog. The 2015–2016 KQ blog contributors were selected by the KQ Working Group (which included the chairs of the AASL Blog Committee, the KQ Editorial Board, and the Essential Links Editorial Board Committee). These bloggers are listed on the KQ website at <http://tinyurl.com/kqbloggers1516>. Interested in joining these bloggers? Please complete the application at <www.ala.org/aasl/kq/bloggers>.

For school librarians, being part of a "CONNECTED" COMMUNITY provides support for getting specific needs met, solving PERSONALLY RELEVANT and MEANINGFUL problems, and developing PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE.
The Building a Culture of Collaboration (BACC) blog is another group blog <http://buildingacultureof-collaboration.edublogs.org>. This blog is organized around a topic of the month and is facilitated by four school librarian educators (Karla Collins, Lucy Santos Green, Judy Kaplan, and Judi Moreillon) who rotate responsibility for weekly posts. The goal is to share multiple perspectives on each topic. While both the KQ and BACC blogs seek to stimulate professional conversations, like many other blogs they suffer from the dearth of comments from the field and lack lively exchanges.

Micro-blogging via Twitter is another way for school librarians to share ideas and information and connect with colleagues. Almost all school librarian organizations use Twitter to reach out to their members at the international level (#iaslonline), national level (#aasl), and state and district levels, too (see table 1). Following professional associations and using additional hashtags such as #librarians or #schoollibrarians can help individuals build a robust PLN.

Individuals also use Twitter to disseminate information. Some tweeters are focused on broadcasting information and collecting followers; others tweet to exchange ideas and make connections. For school librarians who are seeking an online PLN, Twitter chat groups are some of the latest online PD venues. Table 1 shows some of the active state and national Twitter chat groups that, at the time of this writing, meet regularly.

### #txlchat Research Study

School librarians who have yet to experience PD via social networks may wonder what they could learn from such activities. Preservice school librarians who know they must plan for continuous improvement may have concerns about how they can continue their learning once they earn their degrees. School librarian educators may question whether or not they should encourage graduate students to get involved in PD-focused social media networks. Like me, these librarian educators may also wonder if venues such as Twitter groups offer information that can help professors keep their fingers on the pulse of the profession and practice lifelong learning.

With these questions in mind, I reached out to study the #txlchat Twitter group in the 2014–2015 school year. During the academic year this Twitter group meets on Tuesdays from 8:00 to 8:30 p.m. Central Time. The purpose of the study was to thoroughly describe the lived experiences of the cofounders, core group members, and participants. I set out to learn about the #txlchat culture and the value participants place on this online PD experience. In addition to answering general questions about the efficacy of PD via social media, my hope was that this study could provide insights to help other Twitter chat groups create, build, and extend their PLNs.

I collected data via the #txlchat archives, interviews with key informants (cofounders and selected core group members), a survey of participants, and my participant-observer field notes. These are the research questions that guided the data analysis:

- What are the procedures and practices of #txlchat?
- What are the motivations and characteristics of the cofounders, core group members, and participants in this PLN?
- How do participants describe the value of this PLN?
The research study, conducted totally online, involved interviews with the three #txlchat cofounders and selected members of the core group of moderators. (The complete study report includes the interviewees’ vignettes reported in their own words.) I disseminated a link to an online survey over a six-week period during the chat; twenty-five people responded. I had access to the entire #txlchat archives, which are available to the public at <http://txlchat.weebly.com>. I collected data from forty-five chat archives. After my study was approved by my university’s Institutional Review Board, I also collected field notes during my three-month focused participation in the chat.

The three #txlchat cofounders’ original goal in launching the chat was to provide a democratic forum in which all participants have an equal voice. These founders held and still hold high expectations for the chat’s reach. From the very first chat in April 2013 through February 24, 2015 (the last chat included in my study), 111 Texas librarians and 121 librarians, authors, and others from out of state participated in the chat. The cofounders hoped that school librarians would get connected for professional learning and networking. As cofounder @sharongullet noted: “If librarians become comfortable with the Twitter chat then they will more likely use the hashtag outside the Twitter chats to stay connected.”

The cofounders also hold high expectations for the impact the chat can make on a participant’s practice.

In her interview, cofounder @_MichelleCooper asserted that it is important to remain “open to continuous learning and creating, imagining and innovating.” This is how she defines her daily practice of librarianship; this is her aspiration for chat participants as well. Cofounder @EdneyLib (Marsha Edney) expressed the hope that participants will “embrace innovations in teaching and increased student involvement in their own learning” because #txlchat participants experience ownership in their own PD in the weekly chats.

A group of twelve moderators, three for each week of the month, determines the chat topic, rotates responsibility for promoting the chat, and facilitates the exchange during the chat. Chats are organized around four or five focusing questions, and there is a protocol for posting the questions and answering them. For example, the first question is posted as “Q.1,” and participants begin their responses to that question with “A.1.” All posts include the #txlchat hashtag. Chats related to technology tools were the most frequent topics during the period of my study. Some of those included connecting on Skype, being a “connected” librarian, and marketing via social media; these chats were also among the top ten in terms of the greatest number of participants, tweets, and retweets.

In their interviews, core group members expressed the value they place on their participation in the chats. Elementary school librarian @shawnford1 attested to the benefit she receives from just-in-time learning: “Whether it be participating in a chat or just reading my Twitter feed, I learn something new. I can spend five minutes, 15 minutes, or 30 minutes searching the #txlchat feed and
learn something.” @sue_fitz, a middle school librarian, noted: “Many #txlchat participants are eager to share, model, and teach their practices via social media. Chat participants are always amazed at what others are able to accomplish and we eagerly respond with positive encouragement.” High school librarian @txlibraryguy suggested: “When school librarians and classroom teachers have more experience with social media, they will be able to integrate social networking tools more effectively into instruction for students.”

The #txlchat cofounders and core group members have created a “democratic” context for the chat and are committed to ensuring that participants’ voices are heard. Everyone I interviewed and those who responded to the survey noted the benefits they receive from learning from others and from sharing their knowledge and experience with the group. @debramarshall summed up her experience this way: “I am a better librarian because of Twitter.”

Ryan D. Visser, Lea C. Evering, and David E. Barrett (2014) found that K–12 teachers who use Twitter for self-directed PD highly value the relationships they form and the information they share and receive via this tool. This is also true for the participants in #txlchat. My complete study report has been published in School Libraries Worldwide, volume 21, issue 2.

**Self-Regulated Online Professional Learning**

School librarians have many ways to build their PLNs. In addition to the venues discussed in this article, Facebook, Nings, Google+ communities, and more offer PD venues for “connected” school librarians to “think, create, share, and grow.” While AASL’s Learning4Life initiative motto is intended for pre-K–12 students (see more at <www.ala.org/aasl/learning4life/school-librarians>), it can and should apply equally to school library leaders who are charged with continuous learning and sharing their learning with others.

When you are searching for self-regulated PD, I hope you will check out some of these resources.

Judi Moreillon is an associate professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman’s University. She has served as a school librarian at every instructional level. She currently researches online professional development networks for school librarians and the roles of school and public librarians in literacy communities. Judi has written books, numerous articles, and several book chapters focused on the school librarian’s instructional partner role. Judi is also the author of two recent professional books for school librarians and classroom teachers focused on coteaching reading comprehension strategies. Judi has been an AASL member for twenty-five years. She currently serves as the chair of AASL’s Student Bridge Scholarship Program Committee and is the chair of ALSC’s journal Children and Libraries Advisory Board. She tweets @CactusWoman.

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Games, worksheets, and art activities help to create an interactive storytime, a storytime that breaks from the traditional way to read to a group of children.

The Art of Storytime

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As a teacher, mother, children’s book author, and grandmother, I have adapted the art of storytime. And yes, I do believe there is an art to storytime.

Anyone can pick up a book, read it to a child, and be finished. It’s better than nothing, right? But it’s not too difficult to go from just reading the words to reading a story in an interactive way that engages both the reader and the audience. When the interest level is high, the audience is more likely to reap higher benefits: language development, stimulation of cognitive skills and imagination, along with an encouragement for the love of books.

My own interest in books, especially for children, grew rapidly in college as I studied to become a teacher for children with special needs. As a student on a scholarship, my studies included working twenty hours a week at a private school for the deaf. Storytime became a daily event, and I began to see the joy, enthusiasm, and skills the children were gaining just from having an interactive story read to them. Hearing-impaired children tend to be particularly animated with their facial expressions, so their excitement was great positive reinforcement for me. I became a voracious reader of children’s books, and I loved selecting them. I looked for books with simple language and wonderful illustrations. I looked for books that opened a child’s eyes to places around the world, and I looked for books that were fun! I became more expressive as I read, and I followed each reading with a quick game or craft related to the story. For example, if we had read a story about animals, I might adapt the game of Simon Says. “Simon Says, swing your trunk like an elephant.” “Roar like a lion. Oops did I fool you? I didn’t say Simon Says.”

When I became a mother, I couldn’t wait to start storytime. Beginning when my children were as young as four months, I had storytime multiple times a day. I was naturally taking my storytime to another level. It was fun to read a book, but it was
even more fun to add an activity along with it. *Pat the Bunny* led to pat your head, pat Mommy, pat your tummy. I took my children to the public library frequently. With their own library cards in hand, they became part of the art of storytime. At the dinner table, I extended storytime. If we had read a book about going to school, I might start a discussion about friends, how to make them, how to be one. I carried my experiences with storytime at home back to the classroom, and vice versa. My children grew to be strong students with a great love of books and reading. My students thrived and enjoyed the activities that were spun off from storytime. Games, worksheets, and art activities help to create an interactive storytime, a storytime that breaks from the traditional way to read to a group of children.

After twenty years of teaching, I decided to pursue a dream that had been percolating in my mind since my first teaching job. I wanted to write for children.

Ideas? Where would I find them? In reality, they began bouncing into my mind like a kid on a trampoline. My book *If an Armadillo Went to a Restaurant* was "born" from a game I played with my four-year-old grandson. While waiting for our food in a restaurant, I said to him, "If a bear walked into this restaurant, what would he order?" Glancing at the menu, I said, "Macaroni and cheese?" Giggles galore as my grandson shook his head. I said, "Actually a bear might order salmon and blueberries." Bingo! What a cute idea for a children's book!

When I write, I think about how I want children to learn and have fun. I want them to say, "Can we read it again?" I want them to carry to others the knowledge gained. "Grandma, do you know what
armadillos eat?” “I do! Ants and worms and beetles. Yuck!”

I want readers—and listeners—to giggle at the silliness and use the language to answer questions. When Mom asks, "Would you like peas for dinner?" the answer is, "Impossible." As kids carry their knowledge forth, they have learned to expand storytime. Pint-size experts!

I want them to smile when they see the illustrations, and I want them to be excited when they read the companion book If an Elephant Went to School.

Now my storytime has gone back to the classrooms, the libraries, the bookstores, and on to Skype in the Classroom. When I do a presentation, I always have a hand puppet with me. It engages the children as soon as they enter the room. The chosen hand puppet is the star of the story I will read. I bring large laminated animal cards too so I can reinforce the facts I have taught. I suggest follow-up activities for the children after the reading, and I engage them in a Q&A. Big groups? No problem. I can digitally project my books onto a large screen.

Computers are creating educational opportunities for children in reading and writing. And the digital world is here, so children need to be technologically skilled. It would be a very sad day if digital books replaced traditional books, but I feel there is plenty of room for both. A nice example of this is the Reading Rainbow app. Cleverly, it narrates and animates the books, effectively engaging little ones. Use of the app can enhance reading, especially for reluctant readers. Children can work independently at their own pace. I am very proud to say that my book If an Armadillo Went to a Restaurant is now available on the Reading Rainbow app.

My journey into the art of storytime is still evolving. There are more books to be written, more storytimes ahead. There are more creative ways to enhance storytime. And I always find time to shop for those deliciously wonderful books to read to my grandchildren for snuggle time and for storytime.

Ellen Fischer grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, but has been a North Carolina Tar Heel for over thirty years. She has taught elementary-age children for over twenty years and is the mother of three. She is also the author of If an Armadillo Went to a Restaurant (Scarleta Kids 2014), If an Elephant Went to School (Mighty Media Kids 2015), Latke, the Lucky Dog (Kar-Ben 2014), and several Sesame Street books, including Grover and Big Bird’s Passover Celebration (Kar-Ben 2013), It’s a Mitzvah, Grover! (Kar-Ben 2013), and The Count’s Hanukkah Countdown (Kar-Ben 2012).