

**SCHOOL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGIES ONLINE NEWSLETTER**

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**From the desk of Larry Nesbit:**

About two weeks ago all the School Library Faculty met for our summer faculty meeting in Mansfield. These are always enjoyable times and this was especially the case because it was the first time that Kathleen ODean, Marjorie Pappas, Phyllis Brunkin, and Suzanne Franklin have traveled to Mansfield so we wanted to make sure we did it right!

You all have probably experienced faculty meetings in your schools where the people resent being there and while they are there in body, their minds are elsewhere. Just to let you know that this is not the case with faculty members in your program, I will give you a little idea of what they pack into a couple of days. On Sunday morning, Larry Schankman began with a review session for new faculty on protocols of eCollege. Once that was done, the recruitment committee met with individuals who were interested in being considered for the full time position which Dr. Dorwart currently holds, and then the day concluded with a review of how we evaluate your courses so they are well organized and teach the material which they are designed to teach.



On Monday morning we began our regular two day meeting and covered topics such as preparation for the NCATE visit, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education review in Spring 2006. While these issues were among the most involved topics, we decided that we may submit another grant proposal to IMLS to seek more scholarship money, and discussed how to recruit additional students to the program and which states we should emphasize. In addition to these topics, we also discussed other agenda items which help make our program unique and successful. Your feedback from the semester evaluations is analyzed and I can assure you the guiding principle for us is a quality, pragmatic program so that when you graduate you will have all the necessary skills to be a successful school librarian.

My point in summarizing this meeting for you is to let you know that your faculty members demonstrated their commitment and their willingness to go the extra mile by volunteering to attend the three day meeting at Mansfield. Sometimes I wonder why we have been so successful in producing exceptionally well trained librarians like you and it is because we have an exceptional faculty. Please join me in welcoming them back for another successful term when classes start again in a few short weeks. I know we are going to make you work harder than you ever thought feasible, but you will truly reap the rewards when you begin your first professional position and actually KNOW what you should be

doing to help students learn how to use information.

Best wishes as you begin the new school year.

### **Intellectual Freedom**

Jessica Myers, Student

A few years ago, at the dawn of the *Harry Potter* craze, I found myself excited to share this new and wonderful world with my third grade students. I was hoping to provoke interest in reading for some of the non-readers. I also found a great unit of study to do with my advanced readers. Having heard the rumblings of the controversy surrounding *Harry Potter*, I dutifully asked my principal if he had any objections to my reading the book to my students and completing a literature study on it with the advanced readers. He had no objections. I was ready to begin, kids were on the edge of their seats excited to hear the book that most of them couldn't read on their own but were dying to hear. A hand shot up and was waving frantically at me. "Miss Myers, my Mom says I can't hear or read any *Harry Potter* books." Thus ended the reading of *Harry Potter*, if only I knew then, what I know now.

**Intellectual freedom is the cornerstone of American Democracy and should be embraced and nurtured in all library settings.** "Intellectual freedom, accords to citizens the right to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction" (ALA, 41). Having said that, there are guidelines within intellectual freedom that responsible Americans and educators must support.



Even within the American Constitution's First Amendment right to Freedom of Speech, there are guidelines. For example, you can't yell out "FIRE" in a crowded theater, without incurring a consequence. The right to intellectual freedom should not allow the malicious degradation of others and their opinions. In a world where children are spending more time online surfing, chatting, and instant messaging- the Internet has also become a proverbial dumping ground of false information and poorly thought out publicized opinions. Children and young adults are extremely impressionable and are more apt to follow the "gospel" of their favorite rock star, than that of a well educated individual offering a factual based opinion on either side of an issue. It is important that we don't stifle a student's right to intellectual freedom and searching for the answers to both sides of the coin, however, that should not give them free reign to run amuck with inappropriate Internet searches and chat rooms. Many young people become the prey of adults in online forums and are exposed to propaganda which has no factual basis. The Library Bill of Rights contains recommendations for dealing with such circumstances. One way schools can alleviate this problem is to use a filtering device which eliminates web sites dealing with inappropriate material- mainly those of a pornographic nature. Maintaining an Internet Use policy also helps to protect all parties involved. While parents have the right to restrict certain materials from being used

by their own children, they can not restrict the rights of other children to have access to those materials (ALA 153).

What about resources which are not electronic? What about the wonderful world of books? Many parents and conservative thinkers take issue with some of the classic works that have shaped our literary world today. Many parents also take issue with the world of *Harry Potter*. At one time the Library Bill of Rights supported creating a restricted area for controversial materials but later, after further examination, it was determined that the policy truly restricted intellectual freedom and therefore it was dropped. Now the only valid reason for creating a restricted area is to prevent damage and theft of materials. Therefore, I say fill the library with wonderful books of all shades, colors, and opinions!

A student should have the right to have their own opinion and research both sides of a topic that may be considered controversial. "What the library sanctuary usually comes down to is the assurance that each individual user has the assurance that he or she is not going to be the victim of a snoop" (Isaacson, 27). It is an absolute necessity that a librarian protects the student's right to have their own opinion, research said opinion, and share that opinion in a dignified and appropriate manner. A librarian must "go to bat" for a student's right to research, write about, and share a view that may differ from the opinion held by their teacher on the same topic. For example, a pro-life teacher cannot restrict a student from sharing his or her opinion and research about pro-choice.

For me intellectual freedom remains a part of the internal struggle of being a good role model for students on moral issues and being a good role model for students on their rights, even as minors, to learn and read what interests them. I have always been one to challenge the opinions of others, but what does one do when they are faced with being the only true adult role model for a student with an "absentee parent"? Perhaps the best role a librarian can take is that of a listener. Peattie urges librarians to listen to the oppressed people involved before determining the truth that can lead to appropriate action (Betz-Zall 28). Too often we dismiss students and their interests because we deem them inappropriate from the get-go. To maintain the spirit of intellectual freedom, at the very least, we owe each student the right to share their desires to an open mind.

The library is a place where patrons should feel safe and free to explore the wonderful world of information literacy. They should enjoy the right to intellectual freedom. To those who disagree with such a "liberal" view we will "try to explain (yet again) that our higher purpose is not simply to make the library a safe place for people to view Internet pornography" (Bary 13) but a place where they can safely research, find information and develop their own opinions.

#### Works Cited

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Betz-Zall. "When Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility Collide". Alki. March 2003: 28. "Library Literature". Wilson Web. 6 July 2004.

Isaacson, David. "Sanctuary in Libraries". American Libraries. March 2004:27. "Library Literature". Wilson Web. 6 July 2004.

As you are aware, Sallyann Talley, one of our students, lost her home in the recent tornado that hit Campelltown, PA. Here is what Sallyann had to say about the checkbook we gave her with over \$1,800 donated by students and faculty

### **To my friends at Mansfield University:**

One never expects to become the center of a disaster, and when such a tragedy occurs, it can be difficult to find something positive in all of the sadness and despair. However, I was fortunate enough to find a brilliant rainbow following my horrific storm. Once you learned of my situation, you let me know that I was in your thoughts and prayers; I felt your support and was comforted by it. Rarely does a person receive such an outpouring of kindness from people one has never even had the opportunity to meet in person. I guess we have a special kind of bond. I feel as though I have gotten to "know" many of my classmates through our forum postings, and all of my instructors have been so

very helpful and have always made an effort to make themselves available to answer questions and clarify course material. From the time I enrolled in the program and spoke with Doris Dorwart via telephone, I felt that this program was suited to me and would meet my needs.

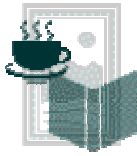


When I met with Doris today and she presented me with the benefit account which had been established for me, I could not contain my emotion. I was just overwhelmed by your kindness and your extreme generosity. I am truly blessed to be associated with all of you through Mansfield University. This experience has taught me a great deal. Through it, I have learned that disaster such as this to bring people **closer** together. My neighbors and I were extremely close prior to July 14<sup>th</sup>, but we have a new found love and appreciation for one another now. I feel an even stronger bond with my Mansfield "family" now, as well. In the wake of such a devastating experience, it is truly comforting to be surrounded by such compassion and support. You have all been so good to me, and I feel as though words are not adequate to convey the gratitude which I feel. Your generosity means so much to me. Thank you for all that you have done to help me in my time of need; my husband and I look forward to rebuilding our home, moving back to our caring community, and creating new memories. Thank you for

helping to make all of this possible. God bless you and keep you safe.

**Fondly, Sallyann Talley**

**Try Verse Novels – Classroom  
Applications and  
Entertainment for Students  
and Teachers  
By Jane Fenn**



There has been a nation-wide resurgence in interest in poetry over the past few years. This can be seen in many ways, for example the availability of open mic nights at coffee shops and similar spots where poetry often is read. Also, poetry slams have become fairly routine occurrences. My own local newspaper recently ran a twenty day sequence of feature articles by a local poet who drove cross-country on old US Highway 20, sending in articles and poems about towns and sites along the way.

When we think of poetry in elementary and middle schools, authors like Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky come quickly to mind because they are so perennially popular with both students and teachers. There are also many other well-known poets who write for children and are readily available in school libraries and found in classrooms.

In high schools, the current surge in publishing of poetry for young adults means there are many more collections and anthologies available, and school librarians should be finding and

purchasing as many of these as possible since teens in particular seem to be ahead of the curve on this trend! For me, the most used poetry resources in my collection have been the verse novels that have been appearing. These have many strengths for use by high school students and teachers.

First of all, they tend to look different and seem shorter than comparable prose novels. And for many students, that added white space on the page and the corresponding shorter length mean they might actually get through a whole book! So using these books as book reports for more reluctant readers can be very successful, and they also have classroom applications in poetry studies. They can be useful and interesting in so many ways and merit further exploration by librarians as well as further use by classroom teachers.

Sometimes these stories are told by a single narrator – as in Sonnes’ *What My Mother Doesn’t Know*, reflecting the innermost explorations of the narrator’s thoughts on love and lust among other things. *Stop Pretending* about an older sister’s mental illness and *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies* about a girl forced to live with a famous film star father whom she has never known also have a teenage girl as the narrator. Wayland’s *Girl Coming in for a Landing* is another that explores a school year through the eyes of a somewhat younger teenage girl. Boys looking for a more male focus on life might enjoy Koertge’s *Shakespeare Bats Cleanup* as told by an ardent baseball player on forced bed rest due to mono. He discovers poetry rather reluctantly, and through his explorations may just bring other boys along with him to an

understanding and enjoyment of the art. In a similar vein, Woodson's *Locomotion* focuses on a boy in foster care due to tragic family circumstances who explores his losses, his situation, and his hopes for re-uniting with a sister through his growing interest in writing poetry. Sharon Creech wrote *Love that Dog* in which a younger boy also "finds" poetry and sees his own life and experiences in a new way.

Other times a variety of people in the story speak through the poems, with each one indicating who is telling the story at that point. An example of this type is *Jump Ball* by Mel Glenn who tells the story of a basketball team's dream season and terrible aftermath through players, teachers, townspeople, other students – any of the many types of involved characters and bystanders you would expect to find. Glenn's multiethnic, multiracial speakers from Tower High give voice to many novels in this verse format, such as *Who Killed Mr. Chippendale* (a murder mystery), *Split Image* (the double life of an overburdened teen girl), *The Taking of Room 114* (a hostage drama about a flipped-out teacher who forcibly holds one of his classes – be careful who you give this one to!), and *Foreign Exchange* (another murder mystery set in an urban-rural teen exchange experience). This year's Printz medal winner, Frost's *Keesha's House*, also has many speakers who work through their miserably trying lives while crashing at a safe place near enough to home to let them continue in school – which they all want to do, a great message in itself. This particular verse novel uses sestinas and sonnets, allowing for all sorts of vibrant and interesting applications in high school English classrooms through specific

poetic forms on issues and ideas that teens can truly relate to.



Another kind of fiction genre, historical fiction, can also be found in verse novels. Sharon Hesse dealt with the Great Depression in *Out of the Dust*, a Newbery title for upper elementary and middle school readers. Her *Witness* deals with the Ku Klux Klan in 1920's Vermont, which is eminently suitable for older readers too. *Aleutian Sparrow* is a World War II story about a true but little known war relocation from the island of Unalaska of all its Aleut inhabitants to dreadful camp conditions. It also would be wonderful for younger as well as older teens, finding a place in social studies classes dealing with prejudice, the Second World War, or Japanese internment camps. These are brief but highly lyrical in their free verse poem format, and their historical settings allow for many classroom opportunities.

Contemporary issues have been explored in these verse novels. Teen suicide, an issue of personal and professional concern in secondary schools all over, is explored in Fields' *After the Death of Anna Gonzalez*. Poems by a series of narrators bring out aspects of the aftermath of suicide as well as considerations in a new light of things that went on before. Taking on a personal crusade to end use of a school's Native American mascot which he finds disrespectful, shallow, and unfair leads a

teenage boy to confront many in his school and community, culminating in a dramatic scene at graduation. Carvell's *Who Will Tell My Brother?* tells the story of this campaign in verse form – just made for taking a look at the typical public affairs or government participation project in an entirely new and dramatic way.

This look at a variety of verse novels would not be complete without mentioning The Make Lemonade Trilogy, which still stands at two titles as far as I can tell. Very short chapters with free line lengths and language full of cadence and rhythms that seem like poetry or even music make these short books so appealing. Along with legions of fans everywhere, I am eagerly anticipating the third book to come after *Make Lemonade* and *True Believer* by Virginia Euwer Wolff. Artfully the stories never identify a city or an ethnic or racial group, promoting identification by teens everywhere. These stories of life in a bleak environment as told by fifteen-year-old LaVaughn show her getting her friend Jolly, a dropout with two children by two different fathers, back on track and in school. She zeroes in on her own dream of a college education and career in nursing. She confronts her feelings about her almost-boyfriend when she finds out he may be gay. And most of all, she and her mother concentrate on living a moral and true life of sound values. The books send an outstanding message, and anyone who meets LaVaughn and her mother want to cheer them on with every change in their circumstances. If you have never experienced verse novels for teenagers, start with these two titles, as I did, and I can guarantee you that you are in for an amazing experience with this

format! I have concentrated on their applications and possibilities, without mentioning that they are also very entertaining reads as fiction in a new and different format. Start “making lemonade” with LaVaughn right away, and you’ll be ready to sell these enthusiastically to the students and teachers with whom you work.

**DID YOU ORDER YOUR  
TEXTBOOKS?  
BETTER VISIT THE PORTAL  
PAGE NOW!**

#### **DATES TO REMEMBER**

|                |                                   |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Aug. 23</b> | <b>Courses will be live</b>       |
| <b>Aug. 30</b> | <b>Fall semester begins</b>       |
| <b>Sept. 7</b> | <b>Last day to drop a class</b>   |
| <b>Oct. 22</b> | <b>Last day to withdraw</b>       |
| <b>Oct. 25</b> | <b>Spring registration begins</b> |