

# MSLA FORUM

SPRING 2009



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**FORUM CO-EDITORS: Patsy Divver and Jan Koleczar**

## **President's Message** by Sandy Kelly, LMS NBCT

### **Building the Future, Together**

As I gather my thoughts for my final "President's Message," I am in awe of how quickly two years can pass. In June, I hand over this position to Gerri Fegan and continue to remain enthusiastic that school library programs will grow and flourish throughout Massachusetts. I know Gerri's experience and vitality will continue to move the mission and goals of our organization forward.

New educational leadership in our state and nation has brought new vision and new opportunities for school librarians to be recognized as educational leaders that reach every student and teacher in their school community. We are experts on the skills that are required for a 21<sup>st</sup> century education, the very skills needed to build the future. We provide the resources and knowledge that our students need to gather information, utilize informational technologies and create new understanding. In this day and age, the school library with a skilled library teacher's expertise is as fundamental to a student's education as the acquisition of basic reading, math and technology skills. We provide the building blocks for future learning. Of course I am singing to the choir, but perhaps you are singing with me in other places too.



When a youngster enters our schools they are provided paper, pencils, crayons, glue and a trained teacher to begin building their skills. Continued use and practice brings their creativity, thinking and accumulated knowledge to higher levels. Good school libraries are equally vital for the growth of their learning. We provide the resources for research, creativity and global understanding. Our books and computers are the paper, pencils and crayons needed for information, practice, critical thinking and building expertise. The skills we teach them provides the glue to allow learners to bring meaning to the skills they acquire in their education.

Equally important, the school library is the learning lab, the center of the school that provides the space for building a community of learners. It creates a safe environment for every child, from the focused and driven learner, to the one that thinks or acts differently or "out of the box." These children are our future innovators, business owners who will grow our economy and world leaders. Every child receiving a free public education deserves the building blocks and skills a good school library provides.

We all know that the economy has provided stumbling blocks across the country and our world. School libraries and their teachers are not the only ones being affected by budgetary decisions. That is why it is more important than ever that our organization remains strong, cutting edge and forward thinking. When my car breaks down I look for an expert to fix it. I still like the fellow where Dad used to bring his car, but if he hasn't kept up with the technology, bought new manuals, has the skills and equipment to repair my new 21<sup>st</sup> century gadgetry, I am going to drive by. I cannot risk wasting time and my money with him. Yes, I listen to him, like him and feel sorry that he had to lay off his help, I know he has a hard time keeping up with all the little things that need to get done...but I still can't bring my car there.

My message to you is one of survival of the fittest. Stay involved with your professional network via MSLA. Be proactive not reactive. Membership and attending annual conference are the best opportunities to remain viable, informed and cutting edge. Promote your good work with your constituents; the parents who pay taxes and your salary, the principal who touts your work to other staff members, encourages integration and recommends your rehire, and the students who love coming to your library because they feel focused, engaged and safe there. No one is indispensable, but it sure is difficult to replace that skilled mechanic with whom you've built your rapport.



Sandy Kelly and Gerri Fegan

Life in the school library world is moving slowly at this time. We face difficult decision-making daily. We are all so busy trying to keep up that sometimes we do not see the forest for the trees. MSLA needs to keep growing and moving forward too. I have been proud and honored to work with such intelligent, hard working, forward thinkers on our executive board these past few years. Each one has a fulltime job, family obligations and the need for downtime. Yet each so values the work of our organization that we continue to run to meetings, continue our professional development, manage our libraries knowing that our jobs and those of our colleagues are at risk. MSLA has exceeded 800 members this year and continues to grow. We have built positive networks of communication with state legislators, the Governor's office, the Department of Education including our new Commissioner, Dr. Mitchell Chester, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, the Massachusetts Library Association, MassCUE, NEASC, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, the Parent Teacher Association. Every constituent we meet supports and values our mission and goals. We are all on the same page yet face the same difficult, decision making situations. To survive we must continually make clear our value and remain a positive force with a unified, positive voice.

It is vital to continue our work individually and as a collegial group. Though I leave the presidency I will continue on the MSLA board as past president. I have accepted a position on the AASL (American Association of School Librarians) Advocacy Committee and am applying to the committee to revise guidelines for the Library Media Specialist National Board certification. I encourage each of you to explore the national certification. It brings prestige and credibility to our profession and is respected and recognized by President Obama and his new Education Secretary, Arne Duncan.

Finally, it is up to each of us to join the team, continue the effort, and maintain the institutional knowledge and history of the MSLA board's work. Participation in board activities has brought me a broader understanding of the importance of our job, greater appreciation for the dedication of our colleagues and continued enthusiasm to do more when I feel tired. I am excited to welcome new members to our board next year and look forward to more of you stepping up to the plate so that all of our efforts continue.

I leave you with thoughts of the two car repairmen...the nice guy who is a little old school, maybe even a little less expensive or the one who can fix my car. Which one would you choose? How about your principal?

*Sandy Kelly is the Library Teacher at Carlisle Elementary School in Carlisle MA*



## 2009 MSLA ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to **new** board members, elected in the MSLA April election for 2 year terms:

Linda Friel (Treasurer)

Judi Paradis (Secretary)

Rose DiNucci (Boston Area Director)

Jennifer Varney (Boston Area Director)

Linda Kimball (Central Area Director)

Linda Coviello (Metrowest Area Director)

Christine Steinhauser (Northeast Area Director)

Katie Cerasale-Messina (Northeast Area Director)

Also, we re- elected some **veterans** to continue their service to MSLA for another 2 years:

Cecily Houston (Central Area Director)

Char Sidell (Metrowest Area Director)

Lynn Weeks (Southeast Area Director)

Heather MacPherson (Southeast Area Director)

Leigh Barnes (West Area Director)

Vicky Biancolo (West Area Director)

The chairpersons of the various committees are appointed positions and will be announced by our incoming president, Geri Fegan.

We all appreciate your leadership and commitment to representing school librarians across the state.

## OUR ROLE: READING, TECHNOLOGY and INFORMATION by Ann Perham and Judi Paradis

In February, an article appeared in the AASL Forum, "The Case for Libraries and Librarians" submitted to the Obama-Biden Education Policy Working Group in December, 2008 by Stephen Krashen. In part, the report said:

*The case for libraries is very strong. Research shows that better public and school libraries are related to better reading achievement. The reason for this is obvious: Children become better readers by reading more and the library is a major source of books for children.*

*Better Libraries -> Better Reading Achievement*

*Study after study has shown that library quality (number of books available or books per student) is related to reading achievement at the state level, national level, and international level, even when researchers control for the effects of poverty.*

*Providing access to books is necessary but is not sufficient: Not all children who have access to libraries take full advantage of them. Keith Curry Lance's studies confirm that the presence of librarians and overall staffing contributes to reading achievement independent of other measures of library quality. The most obvious way librarians contribute is helping children find books, in addition to selecting books and other materials for the library, and collaborating with teachers.*

*If America can increase funding for libraries and librarians, I can only think that America has found one important way to rebuild itself.*

Ann Perham posted a comment to the MSLA listserv as a high school library teacher:

*Krashen's report is good, but I hope that this is not the only evidence for funding libraries.*

*Teaching our students to be information literate and technology literate are two main purposes of my program and I know that legislators don't always think of school libraries for research and curriculum support. How many times at a legislative breakfast do legislators begin their sentences with, "I love libraries...."*



*remember getting books and reading....." The library that they remember has been morphed - that's a giant leap for many.*

*Sorry to preach to the choir...just hope that someone will come out with a companion paper for Krashen's work....pushing research and technology....preparing our students to succeed in college.....teaching them to critically evaluate sources as the internet becomes littered with "junk".*

Judi Paradis, elementary Library Teacher then commented back with a different perspective:

*I had an interesting encounter with my principal recently around all this. I told him that I was getting really excited to see the progress our students were making with research skills and technology. He's a very techie guy, so I figured he'd get into this. However, he said that the thing he values most about our program is that our kids are so excited about books and reading (which is true) and that he thinks that our literacy rates are actually impacted in a very positive way by the very good access to books and excitement generated about them that we have from a flexible, staffed, friendly library. I think at the elementary level this cannot be discounted. Kids who can't or don't read won't be able to use the technology. I think we have to have a foot in each camp all the time--but I think that for elementary library teachers to push the idea that we create reading excitement and access to LOTS of books is a good thing.*

Ann's comment back:

*This exchange is a good example of the different hats we wear, and how the emphasis on reading (unfortunately) is diminished at the high school level.*

*Fast forward from the high school level to college....we hear them asking/demanding us at the high school level to do a better job of preparing students for college research challenges.*



*My point is that legislators as a whole do not see the "information" side of our job. Krashen is promoting the importance of reading, but we need to also promote the importance of technology and information literacy in our job.*

Judi's perspective:

*Good point Ann--I know that both matter, and you are right that the reading is what we are "famous for"--but I also worry sometimes that I forget to recognize that the reading piece matters as much as it does and even find myself thinking that I'm not being a good library teacher if I spend too much time on reading promotion instead of research and technology teaching. My worry at the elementary level is that we don't even have the protection of being needed for accreditation and there is a real perception that ANYONE can read kids a story and check out books when there is so much more to this if you do it well and thoughtfully--but our posts are often threatened by money allocated away from elementary libraries in favor of literacy coaches and classroom libraries--which are not evil things, but also don't replace a good librarian.*

*We do have slightly different missions at different grade levels--and this is not a bad thing, but you are right that just being recognized for reading promotion and support is not a good thing--we need to be recognized for ALL we do.*

*Judi Paradis is the Library teacher in Waltham at the Plympton Elementary School and MSLA co-chair of the Advocacy Committee.*

*Ann Perham is the Library Teacher at Needham High School, past president of MSLA, and is the webmaster. Ann is the Director-Elect for AASL Region I and will begin her 2-year term as Director in June of 2009.*

**Teaching American History@ Your Library:**  
**“Perspectives on Race and Politics in American History” and**  
**“Finding Civil Rights and Civic Action @ Your Library”** by Debbie Owen

On Wednesday, April 8, at Nashoba Regional High School in Bolton, MA, Diane Libbey and I had the opportunity to demonstrate to a community audience how library teachers are indispensable to the learning process. The evening event was sponsored by the Teaching American History as part of a grant from Assabet Valley Cooperative, a group of school districts in the Assabet Valley. It was intended to "inspire folks, get them thinking historically, and provide them with the opportunity to hear superb presentations by their school systems' teachers," said Yolanda Rigali, TAH Grant Co-Coordinator.

She also stated that the purpose of the TAH grant is "to support the belief that history matters! The grant is committed to not only enhancing the knowledge base of the teachers in the Assabet Valley district schools but also committed to making history become alive, visible and accessible for local community members." This evening event seemed like a perfect opportunity to demonstrate that, in our pursuit of "history that matters", understanding how to find, evaluate and use information sources is critical.

The overarching theme of the event - Politics and Civil Rights - was inspired by the historic presidential election of last fall. In choosing the title for our presentation, Diane and I incorporated the @ Your Library campaign motto into the civil rights theme. We used this theme to point out that libraries are valuable resources, both for the average person who needs general information about key political topics, as well as for those who need relevant, reliable information for research projects.

After a great performance by the Nashoba Regional High School Jazz Band, each panelist presented his/her/their topic. The presenters then sat as a panel to take questions from the audience. The evening was moderated by William Fitzhugh, the founder of *The Concord Review*, a journal that selects and publishes top-quality student research papers about history. He had the unenviable job of trying to keep each of the panelists to their allotted 10 minutes, which ultimately proved to be an impossibility! There were a number of teachers who submitted proposals, but only six topics were selected, and the fact that we, as library teachers, were bringing something different to the table, in terms of resources, certainly helped our chances of selection.

The panel members and their topics were:

- Tim Castner, Nashoba Regional HS. "Reverend Wright and Abraham Lincoln: Race, Politics, and Religion in American History."
- Brittany Burns, Algonquin Regional HS. "The White House: A Country's Racial Looking Glass."
- Deborah Owen, Hudson HS, and Diane Libbey, Westborough HS. "Finding Civil Rights and Civic Action @ Your Library".
- Josh Otlin, Hudson HS. "Divine Election, Race, and Westward Expansion in Nineteenth-Century America".
- Jessica Pires, student, Nashoba Regional HS. "The Evolution of Black Presidential Candidates".
- Leo Sakellarion, Nashoba Regional HS. "Race and Politics in the American Civil War".
- Two other panelists/teams were chosen as alternates, and their topics will be presented at a later date: Jennifer Gaudet, Shrewsbury HS. "Whitewashing History". Brian Daniels and Heather Gearty, Hudson HS, "Busing and the Politics of Race".

As you can see, there were fascinating topics with very thoughtful presentations. The presenters included a student, Jessica Pires, who had many friends in the audience. Jessica demonstrated that history isn't just for adults; students can, should, and do, take a keen interest in the historical events that are happening.

When I asked Jessica why she decided to present, and how she chose her topic, she responded, "This was my final project for Mr. Castner's AP US History. He gave us a list of topics to choose from but none of them really jumped out at me. I thought that since we were in 2008 and Barack had just clinched the nomination that it would be an interesting topic to research. I guess I like to do things differently. It did take a lot of work and time but it paid off because about a year later I got to present next to you guys. Honestly, this experience was great for me to finally do some public speaking. I want to major in International Studies and hopefully work as a diplomat or provide aid in Africa, and that would require giving a lot of speeches etc. and I thought this was good practice. I also learned that you don't have to be a teacher to have people listen to you. It seemed that many students were interested in my topic and learned from my presentation as well. That's what made me the happiest."

I would say that Jessica's positive experience from this event not only helped her begin to hone some of the life skills that she will need for her intended career, but it also demonstrated for the audience that they, too, can do research and presentations that make a difference in people's lives. The message seemed to sink in immediately, because, although there were questions for the panel from adults, there were also a number of students who asked important questions, and they really wanted to know what we all thought.

Consistent with the theme of politics and race, Diane and I chose to focus on the events of



1969 in Crystal City, Texas. A brief summary: over time, the demographics of the city had been changing from white majority to Mexican-American majority, but the way the town's and school district's laws and rules were set up, the white minority still had all the power. In response to an incident involving discrimination on the cheer-leading squad, great numbers of students staged a month-long walk-out, which ultimately led to changes, not only in the school but also in the city.

We tried to emphasize that young people, armed with resolve and information, can make significant changes in society. We then had a very brief opportunity to show the community some of the free databases that are available to them simply by using their public library card. We even included how to apply for the Boston Public Library eCard. If we had had more time we would have shown some specific searches on "civil rights" and the kinds of results that they would have gotten, but 10 minutes goes by quickly!

In addition to the civil rights message of student empowerment, our library message was that quality research is available to everyone free of charge at their library. Resources provided by the state contain information that makes research easier with better results for both the researcher and the reader. It was gratifying, after the presentation, to have several people thank us for giving an animated presentation in which they learned something valuable!

I asked Marilyn Zavorski, another TAH Grant Co-Coordinator, what outcomes she had hoped for from the event.

She replied, "My goal was that there would be community involvement, and that people would get a sense of the positive things our teachers and students do in American history and in our classrooms. That they would enjoy, appreciate, and celebrate all that is wonderful in education." Yolanda added that "there was a synergy of the collective. From the jazz band performance that opened the program, to the attendance of principals, superintendents, teachers, and many students, there was lots of support." It was the perfect place to find your local school library teachers!

*Debbie Owen is Library Teacher at Hudson High School*

## MTA RESOLUTION in SUPPORT of SCHOOL LIBRARIES – May 2009

*At the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (April 30 to May 3), MSLA representatives Heather MacPherson and Claire O'Neil presented this resolution and ushered it to its eventual passage. Patsy Divver was helpful in offering supporting information. The resolution was written by the MSLA Advocacy co-Chair, Judi Paradis.*

**Background** Success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires that our students are literate, comfortable in a multicultural world, and able to access and evaluate information efficiently. School libraries that are well-staffed and have adequate resources ensure student success.

Resource-rich school libraries and licensed school librarians play key roles in promoting information literacy. They help students acquire critical thinking skills and increase their global awareness. More than 19 studies have demonstrated that the services of professional school librarians, well-funded collections, and rich digital resources enhance student achievement. These research studies show that, when classroom teachers collaborate with full-time, credentialed school librarians to design, implement, and assess instruction, student achievement increases significantly (see collected data from studies at [http://librarypublishing.scholastic.com/content/stores/LibraryStore/pages/images/slw\\_04.pdf](http://librarypublishing.scholastic.com/content/stores/LibraryStore/pages/images/slw_04.pdf) ). Yet, Massachusetts has no leadership within the Department of Education, no clear plan for improving school library programs, no requirement for licensed school library teachers in its schools, and no statewide standards for school library programs.



The Massachusetts Teachers Association recognizes that all students need equal access to school libraries that provide 1) full-time, licensed professionals; 2) adequate resources that reflect multiple perspectives; and 3) opportunities for classroom teachers and school librarians to collaborate.

**Resolution** Given the lack of support for library programs in Massachusetts and the need for strong literacy and library programs that lead to students' overall academic success, be it resolved that the Massachusetts Teachers Association

- Supports our members in the Massachusetts School Library Association in their efforts to petition the Massachusetts Board of Education to appoint a study group to develop a long-range plan for school libraries in Massachusetts;
- urges the Governor, members of the Board of Education, state legislators, and local elected officials to increase funding for credentialed school library teachers, books, online resources, and other library materials;
- promotes policies that ensure access to library resources for all learners;
- supports professional development opportunities for school librarians and classroom teachers consistent with local, state, and national standards; and
- encourages collaboration between classroom teachers and school librarians to enrich student learning.

*Judi Paradis is the Library Teacher at the Plympton Elementary School in Waltham. She is also the co-Chair of the MSLA Advocacy Committee.*

## STATUS OF FUNDING OF MA SCHOOL LIBRARIES by Judi Paradis

I attended the Advocacy Institute (precursor to the May MLA conference in Springfield). I was part of a panel that spoke about how different types of libraries are faring and what they are doing to advocate for services. My presentation was well received and several people attending told me that it really helped them to know the status of school libraries in MA, including Keith Michael Fiels, who is the executive Director of ALA.

Some things that were interesting to hear:

- Several state legislators and local officials were clear that lobbying makes a difference when times are tight
- ALA is also working on starting a "friends of school libraries" sort of movement and we should look to see what they are doing
- MLA is definitely clear that it benefits public library to support school libraries--this came up repeatedly.

### ***My report:***

#### **Status of Funding for School Library Programs in Massachusetts**

- Currently our major support at the state level comes from the MBLC, when in fact, we also should be getting support from the BESE—as they are the statewide agency that sets standards for programs and staffing. BESE has no long-range plan for school library programs, no person charged with overseeing school library programs, and no standards or frameworks for library programs
- Chapter 70 is the funding source for education in public schools. School libraries are not explicitly mentioned in Chapter 70 (though it is entirely possible to use chapter 70 money for any book or equipment purchase in a public school, INCLUDING libraries)
- Because we have no standing within the BESE and are not mentioned explicitly in Chapter 70, we often get hit hard when state aid or local aid is reduced. We all rely on local school committees to make decisions about what programs to support--and without strong support from the DESE we have little chance of surviving major budget cuts.
- In many communities, principals lose their library staff and replace professional, certified library teachers with teacher's aides or parent volunteers, which we believe violates union rules about replacing teachers with non-certified staff.
- At present, we are not looking for funding at the state level. What we are looking for is a commitment from the BESE to appoint a library professional at the DESE to develop a long-range plan for programs and staffing in our public school libraries. We would like to see a set of standards adopted, and MSLA recently developed and adopted Information Literacy Standards for pre-K to grade 12 that we would like to see used as a starting point in this process.
- MSLA and MLA agree that we need both school and public libraries in our communities. Our children need 21<sup>st</sup> century skills—critical thinking, a high level of literacy, technological skills, an ability to efficiently access reliable information—this requires the foundation that a school library provides. Support for school libraries produces citizens that see the value in public libraries. Our hope is that all librarians will help us in our effort to convince the BESE to commit to supporting school library programs, and to impress upon local officials and school administrators that keeping school library programs in local budgets is a sound expenditure.

*Judi Paradis is the Library Teacher at the Plympton Elementary School in Waltham. She is also the co-Chair of the MSLA Advocacy Committee.*

## MSLA FRIENDS LETTER TO OFFICE OF EDUCATION by Susan Verdicchio

*This letter was sent to Michele Norman, Director of the Executive Office of Education by Susan Verdicchio, a Winchester parent and active member of the MSLA Friends of School Libraries*

Dear Michele,

I just wanted to follow up on your talk at our recent Stand for Children forum. It was very encouraging to hear from a state policy-maker the idea that we need to move beyond thinking of technology as a separate subject. It is really not enough for a class of sixth graders to go to a computer lab and have a teacher walk them through making a pie chart of their family pets using Excel (to use an actual project my son brought home earlier this year). We really need to be teaching students how they can use technology to learn.

A number of Winchester parents, after being involved as volunteers in the elementary libraries, have perceived that integrating technology skills and fostering inquiry-based, resource-based, and other 21st century learning experiences happens effectively at schools that have a 21st century library media program, staffed by a full-time library media specialist teacher. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills' white paper discusses the importance of Information Literacy, a core component of what school library media specialists are trained to teach. By doing research projects in the library media center, using print and online sources, children can grow up learning how to ask useful questions and then locate, evaluate and communicate information effectively. This is a skill set they need not only for college, but also to become lifelong learners.

There are many studies showing that students who have a professionally staffed, full-time school library score higher on standardized reading tests. The most recent study, by Ruth Small at Syracuse University, looked at over 1,600 urban, suburban and small-town schools across New York. Results showed not only higher test scores, but also greater student motivation in school, when students had access to quality library media centers. Preliminary report available at [http://www.nyla.org/content/user\\_1/Preliminary\\_Report\\_Small.pdf](http://www.nyla.org/content/user_1/Preliminary_Report_Small.pdf)

School librarians play a fundamental role in helping students become lifelong readers. Reading is the most basic of all information processing skills.

Many states set standards for school libraries, their professional staffing, and for information literacy curricula. Six of the states in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills have such state-level policies. For example, North Carolina has an Information Skills Standard Course of Study for K-12, available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/information/scos/> Library and/or Information Literacy standards for West Virginia, Iowa, Kansas, Wisconsin, and South Dakota are at the URLs shown in the enclosed list.

Here in Massachusetts, unfortunately, there are no state standards for school library media programs, nor is there any individual at the DESE charged with overseeing school libraries. The MSLA estimates that half of the Commonwealth's schools are without full-time library staff. May I urge you to please look into developing policy in Massachusetts to support school libraries? For a start, the DESE should assess, monitor and plan for library media programs in schools across the Commonwealth. The DESE is authorized to do this by statute (M.G.L. Ch. 15, Sec. 1R)

It just seems counter-productive to allow funding for school library media programs to be at risk in local school budgets during this economic crisis, just at a time when students need the 21st century skills library media programs so effectively teach. Massachusetts should follow the lead of the other members of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and support school library media programs where students can learn to read, read to learn, and learn to learn.

Thank you for speaking at our forum, and for all you do for education.

Best regards,

Susan Verdicchio

# MSLA Forum: SPRING 2009

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Included in Susan Verdicchio's letter to Michele Norman was this listing of links:

## Library and/or Information Literacy State Standards

### North Carolina

Standard Course of Study, Information Skills <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/information/scos/>

### West Virginia

Content Standards and Objectives Policy 2520.17 <http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/csos.html>

### Iowa

Code of Iowa 256.11(9) and Iowa Administrative Code Rule 281

School Library Program Guidelines and Sample Information Literacy Curriculum Framework

[http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&Itemid=999999999&gid=651](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&Itemid=999999999&gid=651)

### Wisconsin

Wisconsin Statute 121.02(1)(h) and Administrative Rule PI 8.01(2)(h) Model Academic Standards for Information & Technology Literacy <http://dpi.wi.gov/imt/itlstfst.html>

(WI Dept. of Public Instruction, Instructional Media & Technology)

### Kansas

Kansas State Dept. of Education Library Media & Technology Model Standards

<http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=146>

### South Dakota

South Dakota Board of Education School Library Standards <http://doe.sd.gov/contentstandards/>

## Proposed Information Literacy Standards for Massachusetts

Massachusetts School Library Association <http://www.maschoolibraries.org/>

*Susan Verdicchio is a Winchester parent and is active in the MSLA Friends of School Libraries.*

<b>2009 MSLA CONFERENCE: "MSLA Now, More than Ever"</b> by Jan Koleszar
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Have you received your postcard yet? If not, keep watching your mail as it should arrive soon. Please register and join your colleagues for the 2009 MSLA Conference—MSLA Now, more than ever Oct. 4-5 at the Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center in Sturbridge MA.

This year's highlights include:

Speakers: Susan Ballard, Robin Brenner, Valerie Diggs, Beth Gallaway, and Carol Gordon

Authors: David Biedzrycki, Greg Maguire, Mitali Perkins, Melissa Steward, and Ralph Masiello

Sessions: Learning 4 Life, Media Literacy, Gaming, Learning Commons, Storytelling

Additional Highlights: Job-Alikes, Awards, Giveaways, Author Fest, and Book Signings.

Congratulations to our Director Kathy Lowe who recently posted that she had reached a personal goal of 800 members in MSLA. Let's do our best to keep those numbers expanding and have a good attendance for this year's conference. As stated on the post card, it will be "educational, economical, and exciting."

Win a FREE registration by bringing a friend to the conference! Details are on our webpage under Membership Recruitment: <http://maschoolibraries.org/content/view/565/256/>

*Jan Koleszar is the MSLA Conference Vendor Liaison and co-Editor of the MSLA Forum*

## HOT HITS ON OUR LISTSERV by Patsy Divver

If you haven't been on the MSLA Listserv, you are missing out on lively discussions, intriguing ideas, and numerous resources for your work. Even if I'm not writing or responding, I find topics relevant and useful to some aspect of my library. And – as the 'only' library teacher in the school building – the listserv also connects me to other professionals.

So...what's hot on topics? Facebook in School... Twilight ... Library Evaluations... Library Automation Systems... Charging for Copies and Printing .. Training programs ... Thinkfinity ... Meetings and conferences .... Classes and freebies!

We also hear great news about our colleagues! For example, check out this information posted by our President-elect, Gerri Fegan, last month:

*Library Journal has recognized one of our members as an outstanding librarian! Please follow the link for more information on one of our favorite speakers at the MSLA Conference! Maureen will be with us again this fall, so don't forget to register early!*  
<http://www.libraryjournal.com/MS2009Inductee/2140336005.html>

So – new member or 'veteran', if you haven't been part of the MSLA listserv, consider joining. Leigh Barnes is our moderator and does a terrific job. It is a wonderful connection to other library folks, as well as a place to get quick answers, reliable input, and lengthy lists of 'hits' for your inquiries.

*Patsy Divver is Library Teacher at the Millis Senior/Middle School and is also co-Editor of the MSLA Forum*

## 2009 BOOKMARK CONTEST WINNERS

Once again the April 2nd Legislative Day proved to be a great success allowing us to make good connections with legislators. It was also the showcase for our annual Bookmark Contest.

### **Congratulations to our 2009 Bookmark Contest Winners and our MSLA members:**

Brooke Elliott (Great Oak School , Danvers); Lisa Swaine, Library Aide

Rachel Shereda (Pierce Elementary, Newton); Jaime Lightfoot, Library Teacher

Minna Wang (Overlook Middle, Ashburnham); Julie Farrell, Library Teacher

Jaime Peck (Belchertown High, Belchertown); Maryanne O'Brien, Library Teacher



You all did an outstanding job portraying "School Libraries: Learning for Life." See these winning bookmarks as well as those of our Honorable Mention winners on our webpage, <http://www.maschoollibraries.org/>



**Lunch with an Author: Brian Cassie** by Linda Redding

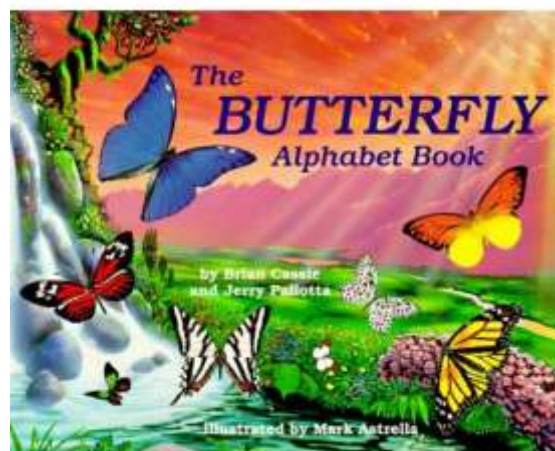
I caught up with science author and educator Brian Cassie in Plymouth this winter at the rare sighting of an Ivory Gull.

One book that I keep in my car for quick reference is the *National Audubon Society Field Guide to New England* that you wrote along with Peter Alden. You have also authored a couple of other field guides. Does the writing of a field guide differ than writing a book like *Say It Again*, *The Butterfly Alphabet Book*, or *Tornadoes*?

*Writing a field guide is all about getting the facts straight. Don't get it right and your credibility is shot. So it is weeks of choosing material, writing about it, matching up photos to text, and having editors say, "We need one more line." Editors are indispensable and make good books better. And they keep you on your toes.*

*Say It Again* is a wonderful book to read to early readers. What inspired you to write an animal book in rhyme?

*I wrote this book as a story about a brother and sister who end up visiting a land where all of the animals have double names. I liked the idea but the editor chucked all the "story" text, also in verse, in the trash and just kept the poems. Oh well. But your real question was why rhyming and the answer is because I like rhymes. I wrote a poem a day for quite a spell. Maybe I'll find them and look them over. Thanks for reminding me.*



A few years ago you were facilitating an after school nature program for students in Halifax and presenting professional developments workshops to the teachers. Now, you are back in the classroom. How does it feel to be back in the classroom?

*I am in the classroom but not technically back in the classroom, as this is my first teaching job. The students and their parents are very appreciative of my work and our work together and so it is most worthwhile and fun being a science teacher.*

What did you think of the Ivory Gull visiting Plymouth, MA this winter?

*Ivory Gulls of any age are a rare sight in New England. Two adult Ivory Gulls at the same time in Massachusetts....one in Plymouth and the other in Gloucester....was magical. Of course, I went to see both of them and loved my time viewing them.*

What projects are you working on now?

*Right now my #1 writing project is in the research phase...and has been for many years. I am gathering information on the seashells of New England for a popular book on the subject. Most of the data I have is my own and is based on thousands of hours of fieldwork and lab work. I wrote *The Butterfly Alphabet Book* in four hours. This book has taken ten years...so far!*

For more information about Brian Cassie visit: <http://www.charlesbridge.com/contributorinfo.cfm?ContribID=59>

Linda Redding is Library Teacher at Silver Lake Regional High School



## IDITAROD and IDITA-READ by Linda Coviello

For a fun winter Library Lesson, nothing beats the Iditarod. And at the Lt. Job Lane Elementary School, we do it up big! On the first Saturday in March, scores of mushers and their dog teams take off from Anchorage, Alaska each hoping to be the first team into Nome, over 1,000 miles northwest. There are so many connections that can be made from this one topic: the history of the original 1925 Serum Run, the dogs like Togo and Balto, the sport of sled dog racing that almost died out with the development of more modern transportation, the rugged beauty and geography of the Alaskan wilderness, the cultural aspect of the native Alaskans, and the strength and endurance the mushers must have to complete the race.



There are a multitude of books and activities that can be introduced for all of these topics and more. At Lane, we begin prepping a couple of weeks prior to the start of the race. I might read "*The Great Serum Race Blazing the Iditarod Trail*" by Debbie Miller. We explore the extensive website [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com) for some facts and information. Then, we divide the mushers up equally among the classes. These teams will represent their class during the race. We track the race's progress on our bulletin board.

For the room's musher that arrives in Nome first or receives the Red Lantern award (finishes last), the entire class is treated to an ice cream party! In addition, we run an Idita-READ contest. We challenge the entire school to read one book for each mile of the Iditarod (on even years, that's 1112, and 1131 in odd years). While some students seem intimidated, I encourage them to think of the school as a team; with a population of 550 students, if each student reads just two books during the race, that's already 1100!

For each book read, the students fill out a paw print with the book title, their name and room number. We keep a classroom tally and tape them up all over the school so that the paw prints resemble a trail. If we reach our goal before the race is over, the school gets a trophy to proudly display in the Idita-READ winner's classroom. This year, an amazing total of 1,759 books were read *during the race* and the winning 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class read 289. They were also treated to an ice cream party and received Idita-READ book bags.

I would highly recommend exploring the [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com) website...there's a tab at the top "For Teachers" with a wide variety of lesson plans and links for further study.

*Linda Coviello is the Library Teacher at the Lt. Job Lane Elementary School in Bedford, MA*

## SCHOOL LIBRARIES on YouTube by Patsy Divver

It used to be that only my students were 'hooked' on *YouTube*. Now, I'm getting emails from staff, friends and family, all sending their latest find on this site. So why should I be surprised to find that there was a suggestion on our MSLA listserv?



- From library teacher Linda Coviello (and School Library Journal's twitter) is the humorous and fun, "I am A Librarian": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SvdkP573ak>
- Then, as I was working on a Moodle project, I came across several other entries that were fun AND related to library work, such as "How NOT to do Powerpoints": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cagxPIVqrtM>
- Also – for many of us who are plagued with plagiarism questions and copyright concerns, check out, "A Fair(y) Use Tale": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cagxPIVqrtM>

So...I'm hooked. There are some very creative and fun clips to capture student interest (and appeal to teachers, too! Check out "Teacher Tube", as well). Have you found some *YouTubes* that You Use? Send them along and we'll publish them in the next Forum.

*Patsy Divver is Library Teacher at the Millis Senior/Middle School and is also co-Editor of the MSLA Forum*

## **Letter to the PTA The School Library: What Parents Should Know** by Kathy Lowe

*Our Executive Director, Kathy Lowe, wrote this article for the Massachusetts PTA organization for their newsletter. Due to space constraints, the section on contacting improving school libraries was omitted. This is the article, in its entirety.*

Learning today means more than memorizing facts. It means learning to learn for a lifetime. The school library is key to teaching students not only to read, but to practice the skills they need to seek, evaluate and use information throughout their lives. In fact, studies<sup>1</sup> conducted in 19 U.S. states and Ontario between 1999 and 2007 demonstrate a significant link between a strong school library program and student achievement, which was highest in schools with full-time, certified school librarians. In Massachusetts, a study conducted at Simmons College in 2002 found that students in schools with library programs have higher MCAS scores.



### **Does your child's school library measure up?**

School library programs in Massachusetts vary greatly from one community to another. Almost half of Massachusetts' schools lack a full-time librarian. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has no standards in place for school library programs, nor is there an individual at the DESE charged with overseeing school library programs. Consequently, Massachusetts ranks below the national average for spending on library materials, book collections, and circulation rates, according to a 2004 report<sup>2</sup> on school libraries issued by the federal government.

The best way to find out about your child's school library program is to pay a visit and ask the following questions suggested by the American Association of School Librarians, a division of the American Library Association:

- Is there a state-certified full-time school librarian?
- Can your child visit the library anytime during the day to use its resources? Does the library offer access online from home?
- How often can students visit the library with their class? Individually? In small groups?
- Is the library an attractive and convenient space where children can work individually and in small groups?
- Does the library have a wide range of resources in a variety of formats that appeal to different learning styles and interests?
- Does the library provide access to the Internet and other electronic resources?
- Are the resource materials current?
- Is the budget adequate to provide a full range of both print and electronic resources?
- Are children encouraged to read, view and listen both for understanding and enjoyment?
- Are administrators knowledgeable and supportive of the school library?
- Does the school provide ongoing training to support teachers and staff in learning about new technologies?
- Are teachers encouraged to work with the school librarian to extend learning opportunities beyond the textbook and classroom?
- Is there a process for ongoing evaluation of the school library program?

## How You Can Support School Libraries in Massachusetts

1. Visit your school library. Is there a qualified librarian available to work with students? Are the books and resources up to date? Let your principal and school board know of your concerns.
2. Get to know your school librarian. Ask what the needs are and how you can help. Offer to volunteer your time.
3. Ask the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) commit to placing an individual in the DESE who has school library experience and expertise to oversee school library programs, assess the current state of school libraries in Massachusetts, develop state standards for school library programs, staffing and instruction, and carry out a long-range plan to implement school library standards equitably in all schools in Massachusetts.
4. Join the Friends of the MSLA (<http://www.regonline.com/mslafriends>), a group of parents and other citizen supporters of school libraries, and subscribe to the MSLA Friends email list (<http://MSLAFriends-subscribe@yahoogroups.com>).

### Additional information about Massachusetts School Library Programs is available at:

The Massachusetts School Library Association (MSLA) website: <http://www.maschoollibraries.org>

MSLA Advocacy Initiatives: <http://mslaplanning.pbwiki.com/>

### Sources:

<sup>1</sup>School Libraries Work! Scholastic Library Publishing, 2008. Available at [http://www2.scholastic.com/content/collateral\\_resources/pdf/s/slw3\\_2008.pdf](http://www2.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/s/slw3_2008.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>The Status of Public and Private School Library Media Centers in the United States: 1999-2000. NCES, 2004. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2004313>

## From the Editors: Writing for the Forum....Join the Forum Staff, Earn PDPs

Do you enjoy writing? Are you collecting PDPs for the next round of Teacher Licensure? Here is an opportunity for you. MSLA offers PDPs for all articles published in the MSLA Forum. For each published article of 800-1000 words, MSLA awards 2.5 PDPs.

We consider any article that is of interest to MSLA members and that supports our mission. Tell us about your library program, best practices, special projects, etc.

Most of us are the only Library Teacher at our school; by writing an article, you can share your successes with colleagues who understand and support the profession.

Next year, we'd like to expand our **Editorial Staff** and include some special columnists. Ideas we've had, and would love to expand, include...

- "Hot Hits on the Listserv/For Further Discussion"
- Great Grants to Explore
- New Web 2.0 tools in the Library (YouTube, Wikis)
- Helpful Advice (getting along with your staff/admins/teachers)
- What's New in Your School Library?

If you find you'd be interested in writing an article or a column, please get in touch!



Patsy Divver & Jan Kolezsar, co-editors, MSLA Forum

*Patsy Divver is Library Teacher at the Millis Senior/Middle School;*

*Jan Kolezsar is a retired LibraryTeacher*

