



**MISSISSIPPI**  
**LIBRARIES**

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**On the cover:** *Unrelenting Delta Noonday Sun*, by Alice Shands. *Unrelenting Delta Noonday Sun*, acrylic on canvas, is number three in a series of paintings by Alice Shands that capture the light of the Mississippi Delta at different times of the day. It was painted in 2007. Alice Shands is the director of the Sunflower County Library System.

## MISSISSIPPI LIBRARIES

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## PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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*Vote for Libraries* was the theme for the 33rd National Library Legislative Day in Washington, DC this year. Every May this event facilitates meetings with congressional members, discussion of key issues, and requests for legislative support for libraries. I joined other representatives from Mississippi and we had the opportunity to interact with hundreds of librarians and library supporters.



**Jeff Slagell**

MLA sponsored its own version in February with its Library Advocacy Day and Legislative Reception. Approximately two hundred librarians, library staff, friends, trustees, and Mississippi legislators took part in the event hosted by the Mississippi Library Commission. These types of outreach efforts, coordinated and attended by MLA members, are crucial in raising awareness at the local, state, and national level.

Most of us know from firsthand experience the challenges we face in our budget planning process each year. The Mississippi legislature has the unenviable task of attempting to balance budget requests and needs for the entire state. It's essential in this fiscal environment that both the general public and legislators understand the critical role our facilities, resources, and services play.

Raising awareness is a collective responsibility, regardless if your emphasis is public, academic, school, or special libraries. This promotion of our profession also shouldn't be limited to one or two annual events. It should become part of our daily routine and be performed knowing that our persistence can yield mutual benefits for all of us. Despite its extreme importance, becoming an advocate is remarkably simple. It starts with a call, let-

ter, or e-mail to your local or state representative.

One especially effective method is to invite your chosen representative to visit your library so they can see what services you provide to your patrons and community. A tour of your library or attendance at a scheduled program allows elected officials to see a direct correlation with funding and the benefits enjoyed by their constituents. The American Library Association (ALA) has created a Library Visit Packet that is available online at [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org). It includes everything you'll need to set up and organize a successful experience: visit ideas, checklist, frequently asked questions, sample agendas, and draft invitation letters.

We have a wealth of resources and expertise to offer and should never hesitate to promote the educational and economic impact that our profession enjoys. Did you realize that U.S. public library cardholders outnumber Amazon customers worldwide three to one? Libraries see nearly 1.8 billion visits and circulate more than 2 billion items every year. Reference librarians in the nation's public and academic libraries answer more than eight million questions weekly. U.S. libraries purchase an estimated \$14 billion in goods and services annually. These are impressive statistics that demand attention, and many others can be found on ALA's Web site.

Finally, let me express my appreciation to everyone that made our Library Advocacy Day and Legislative Reception and National Library Legislative Day a success. I'd also like to offer special thanks to Glenda Segars who serves as chair of the MLA Legislative Committee. We can make a difference. ■

# Spotlight on Public Libraries

Tisha M. Zelner, Editor,  
Mississippi Libraries

Public libraries are the theme of this issue of *Mississippi Libraries*. According to the Mississippi Library Commission's *Annual Statistical Reports of Mississippi Public Libraries for 2007* (<http://www.mlc.lib.ms.us/docs/2007%20library%20stats.xls>), there are fifty public library systems in the state of Mississippi. The Public Library Section of the Mississippi Library Association (MLA) has some 275 members, making up 53% of the organization's membership. Yet, it is not only those librarians who work in public libraries who care about the issues and challenges community libraries face. Librarians and library staff employed by all types of libraries are, of course, citizens of their localities and thus eligible to use their public libraries. Thus, the future of public libraries matters to all librarians, even more so because the services offered by public libraries have the potential to reach more people than those of any other type of library – academic, school, or special – in the state. So, for this issue of *Mississippi Libraries*, public libraries take center stage for their moment in the spotlight.

It's likely that everyone reading this has a special memory or two associated with a public library. To me, the public library is a vital part of my early summer memories (making it an especially appropriate theme for the summer issue of *Mississippi Libraries*). I remember fondly from childhood my eager participation in the local library's summer reading programs and that habit of summer reading has stayed with me into adulthood. Summer vacations provide a great opportunity for pleasure reading, whether you're an adult looking for book to take to the beach or a child participating in a summer reading program. Long car trips are a perfect occasion to check out audio books from the local public library or, these days, to borrow DVDs to watch in the car or on an airplane. So whether your time spent in a public library

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is related to work or recreation, I hope the articles in this issue will give you a greater appreciation for the resources and services available in public libraries.

In a public library, you never know what the nature of the next reference question will be, from helping to identify a dead snake to determining whether or not tomatoes are ripe. Evan Williamson and Dotsy Fitts share stories of these situations and more as each writes about a career in public libraries. In his article "Innocence and Experience," new librarian Evan Williamson explores why he became a librarian and, hopefully, inspires each of us to pause and consider why we chose this wonderful profession and the satisfaction we get from it. In "Are You Ready?" Dorothy Fitts, a forty-year veteran of public library service, reflects back on her career in public libraries. Many will be amazed how much libraries have changed over the last four decades and reassured to see the core values of librarianship have remained constant. Although the distinction is often lost on library patrons, not everyone who works in a library is a librarian. Jennifer Walker's article, "The Librarianship 101 Institute," describes a program offered by the Mississippi Library Commission specifically to benefit library staff working in public libraries. Programming holds a significant place among the services offered by public libraries. In "Lunch with Books," Ginny Holtcamp describes a successful program that's been in place for years at the Starkville Public Library. Other services provided by public libraries include those targeted to assist immigrant populations. During the Twelfth Public Library Association National Conference held in Minneapolis March 25-29, 2008, the American Library Association announced a new report, "Serving Non-English Speakers in U.S. Public Libraries" (<http://www.ala.org/ala/olos/nonenglishspeakers/>). Sheila Hammond-Todd writes about this topic in her article "Immigrant Services in Public Libraries."

Readers and collection development librarians, take note: this issue features reviews of books for children and young adults. Since the last appearance of "About

Children's Books" in the winter 2004 issue, reviews of non-adult books have been infrequent in *Mississippi Libraries*. The editors of ML recognize that children's books are an integral part of the collection development process for many libraries and, in this issue, provide reviews of five children's books alongside reviews of three adult books. ML readers should expect to see reviews of children's and young adult books featured at least once a year.

As I wrote in the spring issue, *Mississippi Libraries* is beginning to introduce additional online content in an effort to provide timely information to the membership of the Mississippi Library Association, beyond the quarterly publication cycle of the print format. Both the "News Briefs" and "People in the News" sections can serve their purposes more effectively utilizing the immediacy of publication on the Web. Beginning with this issue, the "News Briefs" section will be published both in print and as individual items on the MLA Web site. The blog function of the MLA Web site will allow users to subscribe to the news as an RSS feed. I hope that this new format for publishing news will motivate greater participation from MLA members to share news and events with their colleagues throughout the state. In other words, when news happens in your library, let us know!

"About Books" is also expanding to the Web. Plans are underway to publish book reviews from the pages of ML on the MLA Web site in a blog format, allowing readers to post comments about the review or the book itself. In addition, we are also planning a separate section on the MLA site where user-submitted, Web-only book reviews will appear. These reviews will also be published in blog format to allow for additional comments. This is another way the Web can facilitate timely communication among librarians about recent publications, unrestrained by the quarterly publication cycle of ML. And the ability to post comments makes this more interactive, encouraging greater participation by MLA members.

The next issue of *Mississippi Libraries* will focus on public services, in all its many forms. If you have an idea for an article, please contact me at [tisha.zelner@usm.edu](mailto:tisha.zelner@usm.edu). ■

# Innocence and Experience: Life Before and After Library School

*Evan M. Williamson*

## Abstract

*Three aspects define me as a young professional librarian: how I made the choices to become a librarian, how I felt being taught library theory versus the practical experience I have, and how I personally feel about the library as an institution. Becoming a librarian, the choice that guided my actions, happened long before I enrolled in library school. The theories taught in library school often contradicted or left out important lessons and facts of working in a library, such as basic maintenance lessons about how to keep the library working. Finally, in my view of the library, one can discover serendipitous moment after moment of knowledge and through practice and patience unlock the order in the chaos that is the collective human knowledge.*

## Introduction

I am a librarian. Those words fill me with pride, shock, and awe. Those emotions come from getting something you never knew you wanted, yet always knew you wanted somewhere down deep. I had the same factors growing up that, when polled, most librarians would say they had: liked books, liked information, and liked order (if only for books and not for anything else in my life). The realization that I wanted to be a librarian took time, though. The actual job of being a librarian and what I expected also differ dramatically. I can trace back the beginnings of my choice in professions, explain my understanding of theory versus practical experience, and explain my appreciation of knowledge, for without understanding those three I can not justify being a librarian.

## How I Got Where I Am

There is a moment in every librarian's life when it clicks and they want to make it a career. For some, it comes after years of

service, during which the building they inhabit becomes a comfortable blanket for their lives. For others, it comes the first moment they walk into a library, a glaze falling over their eyes as they wonder at the vast knowledge held in such a small place. For me, it came with a dead snake.

Let me explain. Ten years ago I was working as a library page after school. My main function during the three hours I was there was to shelve all fifty or so books that came in that day. After that, I helped at the desk, did odd jobs, and talked with the reference librarian. One day we were talking when a man entered the library, made a bead straight for us, and asked for every book we had on snakes. After a very short reference interview, he led us outside where his dog sat in the front seat nursing a bite wound. A snake lay coiled in a bucket, beaten and dead. As we looked through the snake books, I remember marveling at this job, this place where I worked, where anyone could come in with any question and have it answered. I was hooked, more to the job now than to the books. I just did not know it yet.

Following high school, I worked a number of odd jobs my first three years of college. From grilling fast food to moving piles of bricks, I toiled and played and picked up a variety of skills. Opening, closing, and maintaining a building became second nature as I locked up tired buildings with grease sunk deep in the walls and called for repairs to deep fryers older and yet more reliable at times than me. I treasure those jobs, not for the work itself (long, tired hours that caused a stink and sweat of grease and bleach that sometimes could not be washed off), but for the experience of knowing exactly what I did not want to do. I look back at those jobs, sometimes through scars made by ovens, knives and other kitchen accidents, and I smile because I know that it was worth it, the time spent was not wasted. I was just looking for something I already had.

At just the right time, I happened upon not one, but two library positions. One was

a job as the archivist's assistant in the university archives and one was a librarian's assistant at the public library. The archives provided me with not only the practical experience of maintaining and collecting information, but an appreciation for the past, the collected memories of individuals. Sorting and labeling photographs, transcribing journals, and endless photocopying put me in touch with those long dead, spoke for them while they no longer could. I gained perspective, not only on the scope of why we as a civilization should hold onto these items, but also on the need to preserve these items for the sake of the future and the memories of the past. As I was a student worker, after I graduated the job was no longer mine, but I still visit from time to time those that preserve and are preserved.

Reentering the world of the public library came naturally. Within two weeks I relearned all my old shelving tricks, could man the desk by myself, and almost always knew if there was a new Danielle Steele novel on the shelf or not (some things only take a little pride). Then one day I looked up and three years had passed. Some of the librarians began suggesting I return to school for my master's in library science. Similar to what I have done above, I took stock of my life up until that point and decided that I did want to be a librarian, to make this my life's work. With a little help from a lot of Stafford loans, I began the master's program and began to learn the differences between library theory and real world library skills.

## Practice and Theory

Everyone should agree there is a great difference between talking about doing something and doing it. Both have their benefits and disadvantages; without one, the other does not work. If no one formed theories about library collections and instead formed their own classification schemes, every collection would be different. On the reverse side, if all librarians did was talk about their craft, nothing would

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get done. Library school prepared me to be a professional by teaching tools and techniques, but the eight years I spent working in libraries has taught me just as much (if not more) in the ways of people, computers, and general library knowledge.

The point of earning a master's degree in library science is to gather a background of theory and information about the career so as to prepare the student for the work force so he or she may effectively contribute back to the career. No amount of mock reference interviews in the world can prepare that new professional for a snake in a bucket, though. As long as the librarian has contact with the patrons, he or she constantly will be learning new and interesting facts about the human condition as he or she attempts to help the patrons in whatever it is they are looking for. Class discussions about handling problem patrons can often be forgotten when the problem patron is waiting for an answer, whether the problem is genuine or not. After conducting countless reference interviews, some from script and some simply a discussion of a topic, I have come to the conclusion that the only way to effectively manage patrons is to constantly manage patrons. The same goes for staff. Being knowledgeable about the staff, their likes and dislikes, their strengths and weaknesses, both individually and as a whole, can lead to better policy writing. All that knowledge cannot be learned from a book or theory, but by talking and being active with the people who live and breathe in the library.

Computers are becoming almost as common as people, especially in the library. With word processing, databases, and the Internet, computers are becoming an important part of daily life for recreation and information. Library school effectively taught database research, basic HTML (HyperText Markup Language) coding, ethical situations involving computers, and several other tools for judging and maintaining computer services inside the library. The school did not effectively teach how to maintain the actual hardware and software of the computer, though. The fact is some libraries have a technical support person, either on staff or outsourced, and those people keep the computers running smoothly. Most libraries do not have twenty-four hour access to such support and

must rely either on high priced computer companies or product technical support, both of which may take days to fix a simple problem. The actual hardware of a computer can be generally identified and replaced easily in most cases, a fact I have learned on the job. The software of a computer can be infinitely complex, also, especially for the patron who has never used it. Classes can wax forever about how and why patrons can not use basic computer programs such as word processors, but that means little to the librarian sitting next to the patron as they type. Some may claim teaching computer maintenance and repair in library school would be akin to teaching how to rebuild the engine of a bookmobile, but most libraries do not have thirty different bookmobiles needing maintenance at all times. Simple computer hardware and software instruction may soften the blow for any new librarian having to deal with a bank of silent, black screens.

As a new professional drawing on a wealth of knowledge, both practical and theoretical, general library management generates a wealth of concerns. The school taught a great deal about collection development and policy management, but without practical knowledge of the library's demographic and goals, most of that information is lost. Budgeting and staff management are key topics for class discussion, but without knowing the current collection and staff, both are hard to implement in a real world setting. As with computers, practical information is invaluable when dealing with the building itself: knowing how old it is, how to repair it, and how to solve simple maintenance problems. In short, day-to-day library operations can only be solved by being there day-to-day.

### **Knowledge and Hope**

I know now I was meant provide knowledge to anyone who wants it. I was meant to give that kind of power to others and help them along their path, either by helping with a school paper or just some small inquiry such as a telephone number. This fascination with learning, not educating, is what drives me. A school is a place where people go to be taught, to have others push knowledge on them and tell them how to use it. A library is a place where people go to teach themselves, to have

knowledge given or earned. As poet John Ciardi said, "The public library is the most dangerous place in town." The library reserves the right to contain within its walls all the massed knowledge of the world and does not always give direct guidance on how it is used. How this does not create shock and awe in every library patron astounds me. Just walking through the stacks one can discover a thirst for knowledge, serendipitous moment after moment of knowledge found, and through practice and patience unlock the order in the chaos that is human existence.

Even after years of public service, of library school, and finally becoming a professional, I sometimes forget where I am and what I am doing. I treat this like any other job. I complain. I gripe. I joke about tasks that have to be done and patrons who need help. Then come moments that surprise me. Everyone who has visited a library has had this type of experience (or should have, and I apologize to those who have not). I am walking down the stacks or leafing through a book and see something I have never seen before. Some call it serendipitous knowledge, some call it found knowledge, but whatever it is called it simply can be incredible. Sometimes it brings a smile, a laugh, a "wow" or just a really good recipe for oatmeal cookies. It is knowledge that invokes an emotion, something I never found at any other job. That I can find that on a daily basis proves to me that I belong here.

When thinking of the whole of human knowledge, thousands of years of men and women thinking and writing, the output is daunting. Librarians have stepped up to take that knowledge, catalog it, store it, and offer it to others, often free of charge. There is nothing nobler than connecting the past to the present while looking to the future. The library itself is a perfect model where order is taken from chaos, where everything has a place. This is all idealistic theory, of course, as on its smoothest days no library is perfect. But the library strives to be perfect, and this is its perfection, a hope for a civilization that order can come from chaos, that everything will have a place. It is the hope I find in the library that makes me proud to come everyday. It is this ideal that fills me with pride, shock, and awe. I am a librarian. ■



# Are You Ready?

*Dorothy Fitts*

## Abstract

*Dorothy Fitts reflects back on her forty-year career in public librarianship at the Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library and the evolving role of the library as a community resource center.*

Little did I know forty years ago that my stock as a public librarian would depend someday on whether I knew if the tomatoes looked ripe, the price per pound of squash, or if the egg man had shown up. Old time residents (and these days in Oxford old time has new meaning) will remember the Farmers' Market was ten feet from the front door of the Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library in the municipal parking lot on Monroe Street. And you know what? We answered all those questions. Anybody who worked at the library then was an expert on produce. It was the beginning of the library's future as a community resource center, only I didn't know it then.



*Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library. Photo by Phillip Levy*

## How I Got My Start

I arrived in Oxford in 1967 as the wife of a veteran returning to college. Although I had a college degree and had worked for the United States government in Germany, for months I was unable to find a job. (The job situation here hasn't really changed

much in forty years.) However, in February 1968 an ad appeared in our local paper announcing a testing date for applicants to become the librarian and assistant at the local library. The test was about twenty-one pages long, filled with questions on a variety of literary topics, current events, and "what would you do if" situations. (Even today, while interviewing prospective employees, I still throw out a few "what would you do" questions.) The result: I became the librarian with not too much of a clue what that meant. My family was so happy I had a job and I thought, this won't be too difficult for a year or two.

Thankfully, as a liberal arts major you learn to navigate libraries, so I was well aware of the Dewey Decimal System. And that was fortuitous because the library had no card catalog – just a wall of small drawers with little white index cards listing titles (no author, subject, or call number headings) of all the books owned by the Oxford branch of the First Regional Library System filed in alphabetical order. I don't ever remember Gwyneth Coleman, who was my assistant for many years, and I ever discussing how strange this was. We just proceeded to memorize the Dewey Decimal system and the title of every book in the library. We had no other option if we were going to be helpful and efficient. We checked out the books, we shelved all the books ourselves, and, since we didn't have pages then, it was a quick learning curve. That's why I always insist that every employee spend some time sorting carts for pages and shelving books – because there is no better way to learn the collection. When the computers go down and the card catalog and Internet are not available, our patrons are astounded that we can quickly go to the shelf and find them what they need. It's because we know Dewey. It's our finest hour.

## Circulation and Reader's Advisory

Each patron's registration information was kept on a little orange index card in a drawer at the circulation desk. When anyone checked out a book, they just signed their name and phone number on the book card, and then we filed the card in another

little drawer. Sometimes a patron would look for names of people they knew on the book cards, saying, if Sally so-and-so read this, I probably will, too. Perhaps not surprisingly, patrons often wanted their name erased from a book card out of fear someone might find out that they read something a little racy. So, we were very pleased when we eventually got a Gaylord charging machine with the little metal numbers on the library cards and we no longer had to deal with any privacy issues. When patron items were overdue, we called them up to gently remind them. We had no fines. We dropped off books to elderly patrons, so sometimes we even picked up the overdue books from patrons' front porches.

At one of the earliest Mississippi Library Association conventions I attended in the late sixties, I remember there being a fierce discussion of what constituted good literature for children. Many of the librarians at the time didn't see any redeeming value in reading the Nancy Drew or Hardy Boys series. They didn't feel the books were good literature and thought children needed to be steered away from them. The River Heights crew kept me coming back to the library time and again. I think it's fascinating that Nancy Drew has managed to keep in favor with each generation. Just last week, a new title arrived in anime. Old Nancy Drew has great marketing and demographic strategies that we could learn a good bit from in the library. Some advice I received early on from older librarians was to be careful of boys who read science fiction (fantasy wasn't even a genre then) because they might be up to something. Years later I read an article that said students who enjoyed science fiction generally scored the highest on the SAT's. So much for the well-intentioned but misguided advice.

## More Than Just Books

The library on Monroe Street was essentially one big room with two small bathrooms and a tiny workroom that served as the back entrance. There were book cases all around the walls and row upon row of them in the interior of one side of the room. The entire area would fit

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inside the children's area at our present location. We were open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., closed for dinner, and then open again from 6 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Oxford had no traffic in those days and you could zip across town in five minutes to eat at your home. Even with limited space, we still had story times, class visits, film showings, and rearranged the chairs in the reading and reference area for book reviews. We even had art exhibits with the paintings displayed on top of the book cases that lined the walls of the room. Theora Hamblett was one of our early exhibitors. It didn't seem unusual to anybody then that people would come in and check out items while all this activity was going on, even in the dark while films clicked along. I don't miss the old cinematic era, though. Inevitably, you would have a film with ripped sprockets that made it jump and get stuck in the machine. Something was always being repaired. Many years ago our state had a film cooperative that member systems contributed a set amount to each year. Films of general interest for both children and adults were then purchased and we shared the films throughout the state. We had a film showing each week after school for children and during the day for adults. Our patrons loved it.

Oxford's elementary school used to be uptown about three blocks from the library, before being torn down for a new federal building. Kids would pass through the library on their way home in the afternoon to meet friends and hang out, just as they do now. High school kids would come in the evening, just as I did when I was a teenager – the library was about the only place any parent would let kids go to on a school night. Then, students would actually check out a book, as if that were the main reason for their visit. Today's high school students who come to the library are impatient with even a five-minute wait for a computer, stay glued to the screen, and make no pretense of checking out a book. They do come. Maybe they don't come for what I think are the right reasons, but they are here. So, I consider that a plus.

### A New Building

With the help of a wonderful volunteer group called LOCAL, Lafayette Oxford

Citizens Acting for the Library, we secured city, county, and state bond money to construct a 16,300-square foot building, the building we presently occupy on Bramlett Boulevard. We officially opened our new facility in March 1977, and the Farmers' Market came with us to the little street right outside our new front door. LOCAL also garnered private funds to outfit the new library with everything from a baby grand piano, beautiful art, and furniture, to the cups and saucers we still use today. Almost every community organization and club in Oxford and Lafayette County contributed something the library needed or could use. The new facility included a meeting room with a built-in picture ledge for art exhibits, a room large enough to hold recitals with our piano, book reviews, children's programs, and city and county

meetings all open to the public. We engaged in an internship program with the Library Science Department at the University of Mississippi and had students for a semester. The students brought fresh ideas and, thankfully, were there to try them out with our patrons. We even managed to survive the economic downturn experienced by our state in the early 1980s. Most people don't remember libraries losing hours and staff and freezing positions. Faculty at our universities left the state in droves for higher salaries elsewhere. You couldn't sell a house in Oxford. Eventually, the economy recovered and the library was able to hire a children's librarian who ran a full gamut of activities and worked closely with the local schools. We began doing outreach with Head Start. The new building provided



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the room we needed to make the library a destination for children to visit.

### **Automation Comes to Oxford**

The Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library is part of the First Regional Library System. In 1988, our system became one of the first in the state to automate its collection and circulation system. Our library life became both easier and busier. With a few clicks we could now put patrons on hold for items, not only at our own branch, but at every other branch in the system – and with an estimate of when they would actually receive their request. We could also see the progress of the books we had ordered, an ability we never had before.

### **Attracting New Demographics**

Although the library had been showing films for years, we didn't have a media collection to speak of until one of our staff suggested we develop a video collection to attract the twenty-somethings and young professionals who tended not to be heavy users of the library. He based the collection on award-winning titles; books made into film, especially from regional novels; and highly recommended documentaries. To this day, we still use his guidelines for purchasing. The difference is, now we only buy DVDs. This same staff member also urged us to start buying music CDs, which we did. One of our regional staff members thought Oxford patrons would really like graphic novels and encouraged us to provide them. He was right. They fly out the door. We market DVDs, CDs and graphic novels, not only to our young professionals, but also to Ole Miss college students. In fact, we show up at move-in day when

the students get their dorm keys and sign them up for a card at their public library away from home. By sponsoring a public relations intern from the journalism school, we pitch what we have to offer besides all the media stuff – things like free GRE, LSAT, MCAT, and GMAT tests from Learn a Test through articles in the Daily Mississippian student newspaper. Quite a few students sign up for the library card service. Many of these students move off campus and register to vote in city elections. And, if anything ever comes up concerning the library, we want them to know we are here and we want to be heard.

### **Expanding Space and Technology**

In 1997, we opened an expanded addition and refurbished interior adding 10,000 square feet to our location. We now have an auditorium with theatre seating, a stage, and a complete projection system for all kinds of media with surround sound. We moved interior walls and floored two atriums giving us more interior space that we needed for public computers and an expanded media collection. We now have wireless Internet and laptops for in-house public use.

To keep up with the new and ever-changing technology, our system offers e-books, downloadable books, and Playaway digital audiobooks. Recently, a seventh grader asked me to help him find some books he couldn't locate on the shelves. I asked what the call numbers were and he flipped open his cell phone and let me look down his list of books – he didn't need a scrap of paper. Within fifteen minutes he brought the books back to me and said they were too heavy to carry home and he

had taken notes. Since he didn't have any visible paper or notebook, I cautioned him to make sure he had all the information. He then opened his phone and made me scroll over paragraphs of notes complete with citations. I know there are folks in Japan who write novels on their cell phones, but this student accomplished in a short time something that would have taken me at least an hour to write. I had another occasion that surprised me not too long ago when a college student asked me to explain the origin of the phrase "catch 22." He was shocked that it came from a book with the same title. These things make me feel strongly that today's younger generations' cultural literacy is actually technology.

### **An Uncertain Future**

Most of my children are grown and live in different parts of the country. They all have cards at their local public libraries and use the services provided. One of my daughters gives her college students extra credit for producing a public library card and more points if they show her something they've checked out. However, most of my children's friends never visit or think about their public library. They buy their books, DVDs, and CDs. These are the potential voters for bond issues and tax increases needed to continue the present and future existence of good library services. We librarians haven't gotten through to this generation of voters. A library can no longer thrive or hold its own just because we librarians know libraries are intrinsically tolerant, good, and needed in each community. Libraries need the support of their communities to continue to exist and to thrive. ■

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# The Librarianship 101 Institute: Continuing Education for Mississippi Public Library Paraprofessionals

Jennifer Wann Walker

## Abstract

*The Librarianship 101 Institute is a four-day, in-residence workshop designed as an intensive skill- and knowledge-building experience for public library staff without master's degrees in library science. Held annually by the Mississippi Library Commission (MLC), the institute celebrates its fifth anniversary in August 2008. In this article, library consultant Jennifer Walker describes what the Librarianship 101 Institute is, how it is conducted, and the lessons MLC has learned through Librarianship 101.*

## Introduction

This summer the Mississippi Library Commission will host its fifth annual Librarianship 101 Institute. A four-day, in-residence workshop, the institute provides paraprofessionals working in Mississippi's public libraries with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the theory and practice of librarianship and to meet other public library staff from across the state. The workshop also provides MLC with the opportunity to formally recognize public library staff for their service.

In August 2004 the first Librarianship 101 Institute was held by the Mississippi Library Commission. Since that time 114 public library staff have attended the institute. The institute was born out of a need among Mississippi's public library systems to provide training and continuing education for their employees.

In 2006, less than 10 percent of public library personnel in Mississippi held master's degrees in library science (Mississippi Library Commission, 2006, online). Public

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library systems spent an average of \$176.73 per person on training. Continuing education plays a key role in developing library staff and librarians, but limited travel and training budgets provide few opportunities for new and paraprofessional staff to attend national or regional conferences.

In an effort to enhance local training efforts, the library commission began exploring ideas for improving its continuing education program. The notion of a "boot-camp" type training program was born, and in early 2004 the library commission contracted with the Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET) to create the first Librarianship 101 Institute.

The Librarianship 101 Institute is supported with federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds. Training, meals, and lodging are all provided to participants at no cost to the public library system or the participant.

Up to thirty participants are selected to participate in the institute each year in a competitive application process. Because MLC staff are frequently acquainted with potential applicants, the application process is handled entirely by SOLINET. Library system directors nominate applicants who then fill out applications detailing their interest and commitment to librarianship.

The curriculum of Librarianship 101 is designed to meet the needs of new and paraprofessional public library staff. Staples of the curriculum include collection development and management, interlibrary loan, cataloging, customer service, readers' advisory and reference. In 2007,

a session on Library 2.0 was added to the curriculum. Discussions on library ethics, the history of public libraries, and public library governance provide context for many of the daily activities performed by paraprofessional staff.

To evaluate the success of the institute, participants are given both pre- and post-tests measuring their knowledge of librarianship. Six months after the institute, SOLINET contacts each participant's director to measure any changes in skills, behavior, and attitude. Furthermore, the participants are given the opportunity to evaluate the workshop content, presenters, facilities, and overall experience. Over the last four years, the Mississippi Library Commission has learned a number of lessons through these evaluations and MLC continues to refine and implement changes in the institute.



*Librarianship 101, Class of 2007. Photo by Alice Lusk*

## Lessons Learned – Best Practices

**Easing participants a little way out of their comfort zones can be a good thing.** Participants are assigned seats that change throughout the week and encouraged to socialize and interact with others they may not already know. Ses-

sions are interactive and require participation from attendees. However, we have discovered that learning breaks down when participants are pushed too far beyond their comfort zone. Different learning styles and personality types (introvert & extrovert) are recognized and accommodated. For example, participation is coaxed rather than bullied from those who are shy or introverted. Conversely, presenters are trained to manage those individuals who tend to dominate during participatory exercises. Presenters work to ensure that enthusiasm is properly channeled, but not dampened. Accommodating and moderating the different levels of extroversion allows all participants to make the most of Librarianship 101.

**The physical environment is pivotal to learning and to program success.** The participants' perceptions of the cleanliness of lodging, the venue location, and time spent in the same location all affect learning and satisfaction. In 2007, the Librarianship 101 Institute was transitioned from a rural retreat atmosphere to an urban hotel and convention center in Jackson. By moving the program to Jackson, participants were able to experience the agency's state-of-the-art facility during all-day reference training. The "field trip" to the library commission kept participants excited at the end of an intense week. Additionally, the move to Jackson provided participants, many of whom are from rural areas, with the opportunity to take advantage of big city amenities such as shopping and eclectic dining during the evening hours.

**Hands-on learning experiences and excellent speakers are essential components of a successful program.** During the first year, sessions at the institute tended towards the pedantic. Although it can be easy to drift into lecturing, MLC actively strives to incorporate participation in each and every session held at Librarianship 101. Sessions are continually under review and adjustments made on the fly throughout the institute. Content is adjusted annually based on participant feedback and national trends in librarianship. Presenters must not only be knowledgeable, but also motivational. The roster of presenters continues to evolve

based on observations, participant evaluations, and individual strengths. Learning also has time limits. Participants remain more engaged longer when there are frequent breaks and free time for mingling, socializing, and digesting what they are learning.


**Participants need ongoing support from the library commission after the institute.** Annual "alumni" meetings are held at the Mississippi Library Association Annual Conference for participants to talk about how the lessons learned at the institute have been used locally, to share reflections on the institute experience, and to discuss individual professional changes. Yet, these annual meetings provide an inadequate amount of

feedback and support to participants. In 2008, participant commitments to changing local library services will be institutionalized through a contract committing the participant to accomplishing a specific service task in their local library. This contract will require the implementation of knowledge gained at the institute. Guidance and ongoing support will be provided by agency consultants as institute graduates begin implementation.

### **Lessons Learned – MLC Service to Public Libraries**

**The need for training and retraining provided by the agency is constant.** Librarianship 101 has clearly illustrated that continuing education is one of

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the most important services the library commission can provide Mississippi public libraries. Public libraries are hungry for programs such as Librarianship 101. Public library administrators value the program and every year express the desire that Librarianship 101 continue.

**Developing personal relationships with librarians in the field cannot be overvalued.** The interaction with participants allows the agency to evaluate the services we provide to public library systems and to better meet the specific needs of Mississippi public libraries. We have adapted our CE program to meet the expressed needs of participants. An example of one such outcome is the technology fair to be held later this year. Institute participants develop a direct connection to the agency and are comfortable contacting the agency for assistance.

**Many paraprofessional public library staff are unaware of the services that MLC provides to public libraries, including interlibrary loan, long-term large type loans, and OCLC cataloging.** Through exposure at the institute and the comfort level that is developed, many of these public libraries are now taking advantage of the wealth of agency services available to them and their patrons. We are working to improve delivery of such information to the library community.

**Paraprofessional public library staff are not always aware of the value of their work in delivering quality public library service to the people of Mississippi.** Building confidence and self-worth is an essential part of the Librarianship 101 Institute. Librarianship 101 is an opportunity not only to increase knowledge, but also to instill self-confidence and pride in the library profession. Inspired by her experiences with the participants at Librarianship 101, senior library consultant Kathy Buntin worked with past MLA president Susan Cassagne on the development of the Mary Julia Anderson Award recognizing a paraprofessional member of MLA for contributions in the field of librarianship. Unfortunately, not all participants come to the institute feeling

their job is valuable. It is a key goal of the institute to instill a sense of value in public library staff in Mississippi.

**Many paraprofessional staff in public libraries in Mississippi feel they work in a vacuum.** The majority of Mississippi public library staff work in isolation in small, rural branches. Often participants are the only individuals in their communities who are librarians. Librarianship 101 helps establish peer relationships throughout the state. Furthermore, participants learn librarianship is more than what is happening on the local level. Through exposure to the wider world of librarianship, participants learn to see librarianship in a broader context. Participants gain knowledge from the sessions, but also from one another. Sharing local experiences with one another gives participants "permission" to try new things locally. In particular, these discussions have spurred growth in young adult services and programs across the state.

**Librarianship 101 "primes the pump" for those paraprofessionals who might already be inclined towards library school.** Eight institute graduates have chosen to pursue master's degrees in library science. Many more have expressed interest in graduate study, but also express frustration with the cost of tuition in relation to future earnings potential. Seeing these frustrations in such an obviously talented group of paraprofessionals inspired MLC to create the Public Librarian Scholarship Program. In fiscal year 2008, the library commission awarded three scholarships cumulatively worth \$20,000. Eligible applicants must have worked in a public library for at least one year, commit to work in a Mississippi public library at least two years following graduation, and be enrolled in a master's degree program accredited by the American Library Association. In fiscal year 2009 MLC anticipates awarding up to \$30,000 in the Public Librarian Scholarship Program.

#### Conclusion

Librarianship 101 motivates library commission staff who have been practicing librarianship for a number of years and

keeps MLC staff from getting stale. Participants remind MLC and SOLINET staff of the reasons we chose librarianship as a profession. As more individuals participate in Librarianship 101, demand for the program increases. Not only have the number of applications each year increased, but the caliber of applications has made the review process more competitive. The library commission anticipates a long and healthy life for the Librarianship 101 Institute.

In August 2008, the fifth annual session of Librarianship 101 will be held in Jackson. The application process is by nomination only. Public library paraprofessional staff interested in attending the Librarianship 101 Institute should speak with their director about their interest in the institute. ■

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# Lunch with Books

Ginny Holtcamp

## Early Development

"Lunch with Books" is staple fare for the Friends of the Starkville Public Library. In 1990, when programming at public libraries was still in its infancy, a group of dedicated library Friends decided it was time to become part and parcel of the libraries' programming initiatives. Dr. Joe Stockwell took up the mantra and created several "Series Programs." These programs centered around one author and featured a detailed study and discussion of one or two books by the chosen author. Each session was an hour-long event in the afternoon. Eventually, the program evolved to a noon-time program, which led participants to bring a small snack to munch on during the session. Great program discussions featured Jane Austen's works, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and several series on the Shakespearian plays. These programs drew lots of participants and generated rave reviews. The Friends of the Library knew this was something it wanted to continue to support.

Initially, the project rested squarely on the shoulders of its creator, Dr. Stockwell. He led the programs for five years with steadily increasing attendance. The Friends also supported the program by purchasing copies of the books to be discussed, ensuring participants would be able to check out the books from the library.

After many years of building these programs, Dr. Stockwell decided to take a breather. Designing and preparing for the yearly series project was labor intensive – although a labor of love for Dr. Stockwell. Not wanting to let the momentum of these programs die, the Friends of the Library created an eighteen-member board to oversee the activities of the Friends group as a whole. Within this group, officers were elected and committee chairs appointed. The vice president was given the task of designing and developing a "Lunch with Books" program. Ideas began to pop up to

make this program less labor intensive. "Brownbag Lunch" was born with the Friends vice president scheduling monthly programs and seeking local authors and presenters to participate. Each summer, a menu is created for the upcoming year. The program is "kicked off" each September and the third Wednesday of each month is reserved for "Lunch with Books."

## The Program Today

From these early beginnings, the Friends of the Starkville Public Library now have a permanent, ongoing Lunch with Books program. According to Brenda Harden, current vice president of the Friends of the Library, "The primary objective in the choice of our speakers is to have variety. Most of the selected speakers have published books or have a connection to books, but sometimes the speaker is someone who will just generate local interest and bring people to the library." A typical example of the latter was one of the most successful programs this year – a group of five local ladies who presented a program on their recent trip to an "Antiques Roadshow" taping event.

Some of the speakers have been selected from the Mississippi Humanities Council Speakers Bureau (<http://mshumanities.org/speaker/defaultsb.asp>). In 2007, Dr. Jack White from Columbus made a presentation on *Shiloh*, and Humanities Chair Award winner Dr. Henry Outlaw spoke about his research in the recently reopened Emmett Till case. This year, speakers who were funded by the Mississippi Humanities Council were food writer and cookbook author Courtney Taylor, who revealed her "love affair with the sweet potato," and southern gardening expert and author Felder Rushing.

"Many of our speakers are acquired by word of mouth or by reading about them in the newspaper," said vice president Harden. One of these was James Perry Walker who shared the back-story of his impressive book of photography called *The Reverend*. After reading about his work in the *The Clarion Ledger*, his publicist was contacted and the event set up. Margaret Gratz, author

and wildflower expert from Tupelo, presented a program in February 2008. In March, Deborah Johnson, former translator at the Vatican and writer of African-American romance novels, developed a program describing her writing life and signed her latest book, *The Air Between Us*. Children's book author and illustrator Louis Rowles has been another featured presenter. These are just a few examples of the variety of presentations, all of which meet the goals of the Friends group. In a community where there are many who love good books and those who write them, Lunch with Books provides a great venue for the public to be introduced to new books and to meet the authors who wrote them.

## Advice to Others

Experience has taught us that early planning and publicity are crucial to the development of a successful Lunch with Books program. Starting early allows for the development of a publicity package for a year's worth of events. Publicity may take the form of a menu or a brochure, something tangible that patrons can take home as a reminder of upcoming programs. For instance, one year all the programs were listed on an actual small brown bag and this was a real attention getter. Once the dates are set, plan a schedule to inform and write for the local newspaper. Also, plan to develop an e-mail list for those that want notification. If your library's Friends group has a newsletter, make sure the year's programs are included. The library Web site is another key factor in getting the word out. The first page of our library Web site always features the current "Lunch with Books" offering. Good publicity is vital to the program's success.

## Conclusion

Good books are eternal in the library setting. Programs with authors spark interest and provide a way to feature trendy material while being substantial in nature. Lunch with Books is a great venue for bringing people and books together. After all is said and done, that is what libraries are all about. ■

# Immigrant Services in Public Libraries

Sheila Hammond-Todd

## Abstract

*Public libraries have a long history of providing services to immigrants, founded on the ideals of self-improvement, the uplifting of the human condition, and the support of a healthy democracy. This article provides an overview of this history, including the establishment of basic services to the foreign-born, which continue today. Examples of commonly provided programs are included, as well as innovative programs that have met with success in some public libraries. It ends with a discussion of the need for more and innovative outreach services if libraries are to continue to provide information access to the neediest members of our society.*

## Introduction

While debate over the role of immigration in American society has swirled around public forums over recent months, public libraries have continued to do what they have always done: provide services to all, without regard to “origin, age, background, or views” (ALA 2007), based on community need, and in keeping with the founding principles of the early American public libraries: those of self-education, uplifting the human condition, and supporting healthy democracy. As a nation founded on and sustained by immigration, our public libraries will continue to provide necessary services to newcomers well into the future.

## Emergence of Services

Although services to immigrants have long been integral to public libraries, they were not part of the original mission. At the time of the establishment of the Boston Public Library in 1852 – the event which, according to McCook (2004), fueled the

establishment of nationwide public libraries – libraries generally saw their mission as one of “opening to all the means of self culture through books” (McCook 2004, p. 39). It was near the end of the nineteenth century, as librarianship began to develop as a profession, that the needs of communities were taken into consideration beyond the perceived public good of a well-informed citizenry. During this time, the American Library Association was established, and programs to educate people as professional librarians were founded. Melvil Dewey’s decision to allow women into the first of these programs (McCook 2004) proved a turning point in library service. According to McCook (2004), studies have shown that the entrance of women into the profession may have had a strong influence on “the shift from library service shaped for cultural uplift to one of community-based service” (p. 49), including meeting the needs of immigrants.

Providing services to the foreign-born population began to take hold as nearly nine million immigrants arrived in the United States between 1880 and 1900 (Ellis Island Immigrants). By 1890, the issue had arisen in the professional literature when *Library Journal* published an article by librarian Frederick M. Crunden arguing libraries represented “the most promising of all measures for social integration” of immigrants because of their commitment to self-education (Clay 2006, p. 10). Four years later, *Library Journal* ran an editorial against providing foreign-language collections for native speakers of those languages, an opinion that appeared to have been unpopular among respondents (Pokorny 2003). These divergent opinions reflect the historical nature of issues related to service provision to immigrants.

Services during this time involved some of the same ones immigrants depend on today: reading materials in their native languages, community resources, and information on U.S. history and government. While libraries, even in the provision of these services, did so from a rather pater-

nalistic point of view, this was no different from the way in which they approached services to all residents from a less than privileged background. One specific aspect of this paternalism was the drive to “Americanize” newcomers through English language and civics instruction. An interesting side effect of the effort was that librarians gained a “greater appreciation of, and respect for, cultural differences” (Novotny 2003, p. 345). By 1910, services to immigrants were such a well-established part of libraries that they had become, in the words of Josepha Kudlicka, “a place where help and information of all kinds is asked and received” (Novotny 2003, p. 345).

## Services Offered

Libraries continue to serve immigrants in a number of ways, both in a continuation of traditional services and through new programs reflecting the ways in which libraries are attempting to configure their programming to meet the new needs of their service communities. Some of the most common are as follows:

**ESL:** English as a Second Language – sometimes referred to as English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) – services continue to be one of the most essential services libraries provide to non-native speakers. While some library governing boards may not feel that English language assistance is within the scope of a public library mandate, most professionals feel it fits in closely with their dictate to provide access to information. Since most of the information available through American libraries is in English, competence in the language is essential to accessing materials.

Many libraries’ ESL services are offered through their general literacy programs. While in some ways language ability is a separate issue from literacy, there is often an overlap. Many immigrants have limited literacy skills in their native language, requiring dual instructional focuses. This also means these ESL services tend to focus on reading and writing.

In order to provide speaking and listening practice, libraries frequently offer con-

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versation groups run by staff or volunteers to allow the opportunity to improve students' comfort levels, oral fluencies, and accents in English.

**Multilingual computer access:**

This is an area that would appear to be lacking in many public libraries. Google and other such popular, high volume, Internet sites include the option to select from a large number of languages, but using a standard English keyboard for this can be awkward, or even a serious handicap for anyone using a non-Latin alphabet. The Central Rappahannock Regional Library in Virginia has Spanish keyboards available at some workstations (Buck 2006), and the Glendale Branch of the Arapahoe Library District in Colorado "provide[s] an easy way to change keyboard mapping" so their many Russian patrons can work using the Cyrillic alphabet (Choszczyk 2003, p. 10). If these solutions are available to the aforementioned libraries, they should not be so difficult for most others, since they are not expensive.

**Family support:** Within the mission of supporting literacy, family-based programming is essential to library service to immigrants. According to Melody Porter (2003) of the DeKalb County Public Library in Georgia, four components are necessary for a true family literacy program: "parent education, child education, parent and child-together time, and parenting skills education" (Porter 2003, p. 47). Her library conducts a program called Project REAP, which combines a program for young children run by the children's librarians with an English class for parents taught by a community college instructor (Porter 2003). Programs involving children and their caregivers can meet several needs critical to future literacy and educational success.

**Community information:** Libraries in the early part of the twentieth century provided pamphlets to immigrants in various languages "describing community rules and laws, prevailing wages, cost of living, health codes, and other information" (Clay 2006, p. 11). As one of the earliest forms of immigrant services, support in these areas continues to be greatly needed. Communities seldom have one government office that serves as a clearing-

house for information for all the services a new immigrant may need. The public library often is the only place in a community to find information on health and legal services, English language classes – whether they are held at the library or through another organization – tax information, obtaining a driver's license, and many other public services.

**Citizenship & Immigration:** During the early days of public libraries, immigration was a much simpler process. As immigration law has become more complex, libraries have become essential in the provision of books and other materials to assist immigrants in maneuvering through the steps necessary to acquire desired documents, including attaining citizenship. Many libraries conduct citizenship classes, or provide tutoring, usually with the aid of volunteers, in preparing for the citizenship test and interview.

**Foreign-language materials:** Last, but not least, libraries provide an array of reading materials in other languages, with a focus on languages spoken by a critical mass of community members.

### **Immigrants in Community**

Many programs involve other members of the community besides the library staff. Probably the most common of these are those that use volunteer tutors to teach English language skills or help immigrants study for their citizenship tests. Volunteers are necessary to such programs because funding is not available in the vast majority of cases to meet demand, but the relationships that are established between immigrants and members of the community bring even more value. Often immigrants, because of their limited language skills, schedules, and living situations have little face-to-face contact with English speakers, so a tutor may be their first personal contact with an English speaker. This can be the first step to becoming an active member of one's community.

In addition to these basic survival services, cultural programming has become increasingly popular in libraries. Libraries have successfully implemented various programs involving an exchange of information about and between cultures. One example is MetLife's Reading America program, which has supplied grants to

libraries to bring "multiple generations to libraries for book and film discussions and cultural-exchange projects" (Sonenberg 2005, p. 73). These programs were meant to help immigrant adults and teens bridge cultural gaps in ways individualized to a particular community's needs. A public library in Plano, Texas for instance, brought together Chinese teens with older relatives for a book study and research project in which teens researched Chinese food, music, etc, and their parents researched the American counterparts. The result was a stronger sense of understanding of each others' cultural perspectives and interests. Another library recruited middle school students from an ESL program to interview older immigrants in the community, then created multimedia "culture kits" (Sonenberg 2005, p. 74) for circulation based on the interviews and the students' own research into that culture (Sonenberg 2005).

### **Successes and Rewards**

Creating and sustaining successful library services is never easy. There are many hurdles to clear in providing services for new arrivals. Some involve logistical difficulties, such as transportation, childcare, and an inability to communicate in English (Linhoff & Holden 2004), while others are more complex and require a deeper understanding on the part of staff to overcome. These can include a mistrust of government agencies, a lack of understanding of what a public library can offer, and lack of first-language literacy skills (Hilyard 2004).

A library must first overcome these barriers if it is to provide effective services. While a range of solutions can lead to a successful program in any given community, there are a few that are hallmarks of most. In response to the logistical problems, libraries can solve those through such means as offering programming in locations like churches, schools, branch libraries, or other community centers; providing parallel programming for various ages; and having staff or volunteers available as translators.

The more complex barriers naturally require more complex solutions. Persistent outreach is the best way to build the relationships necessary to gain the trust of

understandably intimidated community members. Limited first-language literacy can be mediated by trained staff and first-language volunteer tutors.

A successful program must also meet the actual needs of the target participants. One important way to do that is to solicit input from them, by way of casual conversations, formal interviews, surveys, or a combination of methods. Follow up is also necessary in measuring success.

Another key is flexibility. Personalizing services to meet a specific user's needs is often not complicated, as in the case of an electrician from Bolivia who needed to improve his English in order to pass a U.S. licensing exam. His English tutor at the Rappahannock Regional Library utilized electrician's manuals as an instructional tool (Buck 2006).

Finally, a large number of successful programs involve collaborations with other organizations and agencies that can share knowledge, space, and expenses.

The rewards of successful service provision to immigrants are manifold, but the common thread running through them all is the ties they create, both personal and communal; the value of a cohesive community with strong families and interdependent personal relationships can not be overstated.

### Future Services

Bruce Jensen (2002), in an article in *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, makes a case to libraries for reaching out to meet the information needs of day laborers in their communities. These workers congregate in formal or informal locations waiting for employers to drive by and hire them for the day to do manual labor. Many are transient, some are undocumented. They will wait hours for work, yet leave at a moment's notice if a job comes up. Service provision to this group would arguably be more difficult than to any other; yet Jensen takes libraries to task for overlooking these people, because their information need is great, and libraries have a duty to respond.

Maybe he is right: some of the most successful recent approaches to library services to immigrants – as well as other underserved populations – have involved new and increased outreach services. One such program that has seen inspiring

results over several years is a summer bookmobile program providing service to over 1200 seasonal workers and their families at a racetrack in Arlington Heights, Illinois (Voss 2005). The program has grown and evolved through the years, as the bookmobile has become a more established part of this migrant community. The library was willing to make the effort to meet the need where and how it was need-

ed. Immigrants will continue to need services, in many locations and of many varieties. If libraries are to remain true to their mission of providing resources “for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves” (ALA 2007), they will need to go out and find a way to bring those services to the users, and bring the users to the library. ■

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# News Briefs

Tina Harry, Editor

## MLA National Library Week Observation

This year marked the fiftieth anniversary of National Library Week observance, which is sponsored by the American Library Association and libraries across the country. For many years, the Mississippi Library Association has used National Library Week as an opportunity to promote and celebrate libraries in the state.

This year the MLA committee picked "Life Long Learning" as the theme. We chose this theme because Governor Haley Barbour often speaks to the need for lifelong learning opportunities and resources in the state. We feel libraries in Mississippi are uniquely capable of providing the opportunities and resources for all citizens in the state to have access to lifelong learning. Public libraries are available in every county providing books and information in a variety of formats, public access computers, and programming to satisfy the need to know for people of all ages. School libraries support the curriculum and recreational reading needs of children in public and private elementary, middle and high schools. Colleges and universities in Mississippi are research centers for students and faculty, as well as repositories of history. Our state's special libraries support agricultural research, health and medical institutions, the courts and attorneys, theological institutions, military institutions, government agencies, historical societies and museums. Mississippi libraries provide opportunities and resources for life long learning.

David Brown, of First Regional Library, designed the poster celebrating Life Long Learning through Mississippi libraries. These posters were sent to libraries throughout the state to be displayed during National Library Week. The committee sent fifty newspapers in the state a press release announcing National Library Week. – Submitted by Alice Shands, director, Sunflower County Library

Tina Harry is assistant professor and catalog and assistant automation librarian at the University of Mississippi; e-mail: tharry@olemiss.edu.

## Hancock County Library System Celebrates National Library Week

The Hancock County Library System (HCLS) hosts a luncheon each year to celebrate National Library Week. This year, more than fifty county, city, and state officials attended the event. In the accompanying photograph, Louie St. Louis, mascot for the Hancock County Library System, greets officials attending the annual luncheon. Pictured from left are Toni Larroux, Chairman, HCLS Board of Trustees; David Woodburn, HCLS Executive Director; Dolly Lundberg, Vice Chairman, HCLS Board of Trustees; Suzi R. Lee, HCLS Board of Trustees; Louie St. Louis, mascot; Eddie Favre, Mayor of Bay St. Louis; Paul Eddy, HCLS Deputy Director; and Scott Walker, representing U.S. Senator Roger Wicker.



Larroux, Woodburn, Lundberg, Lee, St. Louis, Favre, Eddy, Walker. Photo by Mary Perkins

Kiln Public Library reached a milestone event – the five hundred thousandth checkout – during National Library Week 2008. Joe Pettigrew of Kiln, Mississippi was recognized as the 500,000th checkout transaction on April 14 as part of the Hancock County Library System's National Library Week celebration. Pettigrew was honored with a gift basket given by Louie St. Louis, the library system's mascot. The accompanying photograph shows Pettigrew, center, holding the gift basket and flanked by, from left, Sandra Ladner, Kiln Public Library Branch Manager; Paul Eddy, Hancock County Library System Deputy Director; Louie St. Louis, mascot; David Woodburn HCLS Executive Director; and Jamie Elston, HCLS Assistant

Director of Public Services.

– Submitted by Mary M. Perkins, public affairs/development officer, Hancock County Library System



Lander, Eddy, St. Louis, Pettigrew, Woodburn, Elston. Photo by Mary Perkins

## Ragtime Melodies at Mississippi State University Libraries

The 2nd Annual Charles Templeton Ragtime Music Festival was held March 28-30, 2008, in the John Grisham Room and the Charles Templeton, Sr. Music Museum of Mitchell Memorial Library and in the newly renovated Lee Hall Auditorium. The festival provided three days and nights filled with the glorious sounds of ragtime music. Featuring concerts showcasing the talents of eight brilliant artists, informative guided tours of MSU Libraries' Templeton Museum, seminars, and interviews, the festival proved even more successful than its inaugural event in 2007.

The festival, hosted by Mississippi State University's Mitchell Memorial Library, revolves around and was inspired by the Charles H. Templeton, Sr. Music Museum and Collection housed at the library. By bringing ragtime and jazz musicians, scholars, and enthusiasts to see the museum and collection, the festival continues to bring more attention to and use of these exquisite primary resources.

Artists who brought their amazing talents to the MSU campus for the 2008 festival included: the new Queen of Ragtime, Montreal's Mimi Blais; a veritable walking encyclopedia of ragtime and early jazz, Marty Eggers; the stride piano genius, Brian Holland; classically-trained concert pianist, Frederick Hodges; host of the San

Francisco-based "Ragtime Machine," David Reffkin; the man hailed as America's greatest living boogie woogie pianist, Bob Seeley; West Coast ragtime music scene mainstay, Virginia Tichenor; and musicologist, collector, author, and authority on all areas of American popular music, David Jasen. The artists shared their expertise and their passion, their insights and their experiences throughout each day of the festival via intimate and enlightening interviews, short and informative talks-at-the-piano, and high-energy concerts each evening.



California ragtime couple Marty Eggers (on bass) and Virginia Tichenor perform during the 2008 Charles Templeton Ragtime Music Festival in Starkville, MS.

College and high school students, university employees, community members, and followers of ragtime festivals across the country attended the festival's events and rated MSU's festival as one of the best of its kind. "We were thrilled to have our campus and community friends back for our second Charles Templeton Ragtime Music Festival," said festival coordinator Stephen Cunetto. "Additionally, we were ecstatic over the number of attendees who came from all across the country for the festival." Cunetto said the festival drew to Starkville, Mississippi, visitors from Tennessee, Texas, Illinois, Arizona, Alabama, California, Florida, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and other states.

As a means of taking the music and excitement of ragtime into the community, the incomparable Mimi Blais visited with and played for area elementary schools, a youth theatre guild, and a local bookstore and coffee house during the week leading up to the festival. "Being able to see the love of this music on the kids' faces," said Blais, "not only makes your day, it makes your life."



Montreal's Mimi Blais visits with and performs for area students during the festival.

Plans are already underway for the 3rd Annual Charles Templeton Ragtime Music Festival to be held March 27-29, 2009. For more information on the Charles Templeton Ragtime Music Festival, the Templeton Museum, and Mississippi State University Libraries, please visit <http://library.msstate.edu/templeton>.

– Submitted by Lyle Tate, special events coordinator, Mississippi State University Libraries

### Judy Blume at next Year's Children's Book Festival

Judy Blume will be the forty-first Southern Miss Medallion Winner at the Forty-second Annual Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival, to be held March 25-27, 2009. The festival will be held in the Thad Cochran



Judy Blume. Photo by Mary Lee Shalvoy

Center at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. It will also feature Arthur Yorinks and a special program titled "Three Legends, Three Friends" with Eloise Greenfield, Jan Spivey Gilchrist, and Ashley Bryan. More speakers will be announced. For more information, please e-mail [childrensbookfestival@gmail.com](mailto:childrensbookfestival@gmail.com) or phone Karen Rowell at 601-266-4228.

– Submitted by Karen Rowell, special events coordinator, University of Southern Mississippi Libraries

### Letters About Literature

Tracy Carr Seabold, Reference Services Director for the Mississippi Library Commission recently announced the state winners in 2008 Letters About Literature competition. Letters About Literature is a national reading-writing contest, sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in partnership with Target Stores and state Center for the Book affiliates. Readers in grades 4-12 wrote a letter to their favorite author, living or dead, explaining how that author's work changed their way of thinking about the world or themselves. National winners received a \$500 Target gift card and their community or school library received a \$10,000 reading promotion grant.

Mississippi's first year of participation in this competition was wonderful. Nearly 150 student entries, sponsored by public libraries, public school libraries, private school libraries, and parents were received. State judges for 2007/08 were: Chris Carey, Director of Mississippi Troops to Teachers Program in the Governor's Office; Kathy Sparkman, Director of Children and Youth Services, Central Mississippi Regional Library System; Joy Garretson, eighth grade English teacher at Chastain Middles School; and Rita Karn, President of Friends of Mississippi Libraries.

Awards were made in three categories: grades 4-6, grades 7-8, and grades 9-12. State first place winners received a \$50 Target gift card, a \$100 cash prize through the Friends of Mississippi Libraries, and advanced to the national competition. Second place winners received \$75 and third place winners received \$50 also provided by the Friends of Mississippi Libraries. A list of all state and national winners can be viewed at <http://www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/letters.html>.

The 2009 Letters About Literature competition begins in September 2008. For more information on how your library can participate, contact the Mississippi Library Commission at [mlcref@mlc.lib.ms.us](mailto:mlcref@mlc.lib.ms.us).

– Submitted by Glenda Tilson, Library Services Division Director, Mississippi Library Commission ■

# People in the News

Tina Harry, Editor

**Nell Branch** was promoted to librarian at McMorrough Library on the Goodman Campus of Holmes Community College. She was an assistant librarian there for five years. She earned her AA degree at Holmes Junior College, a BS in elementary education at Delta State University, an MS in education at Mississippi State University, and LIS graduate hours at the University of Southern Mississippi.

tiative designed to introduce library paraprofessionals to all aspects of professional librarianship. In addition, she has attended several workshops through the Mississippi Baptist Church Library Ministry, as well as extensive computer training at East Mississippi Community College. She is a Columbus native and a member of the Xi Alpha Xi chapter of the Beta Sigma Phi Sorority.

Emanuel's timely survey of Parisian resource centers will provide valuable guidance for librarians and for the students and faculty they serve," said award committee Chair Bryan Skib, collection development officer at the University of Michigan Libraries.

Emanuel earned her PhD in French and her MLIS from the University of Alabama.

**Brenda Durrett**, a long-time employee of the Columbus-Lowndes Public Library, was recently promoted to public services librarian. Durrett, a graduate of Mississippi University for Women's College of Business with a BS in business administration, has served for the past nine years as circulation librarian and takes over the position from Oscar T. Smith, who recently became library director at the Bessemer Public Library in Bessemer, Alabama.

As public services librarian, Durrett is in charge of how the library delivers customer service including circulation, public programming, reference services, and children's



**Brenda Durrett**

services. "I look forward to the challenge this new position brings, and I am excited about the possibilities ahead," said Durrett. "It is nice to be a team player in a library that offers a wide variety of services to our community. It takes everyone working together to be successful at anything. I enjoy people and helping them."

Durrett is a recent graduate of the Mississippi Library Commission's Librarianship 101 Institute, a weeklong training ini-

**Michelle Emanuel**, catalog librarian and assistant professor at the University of Mississippi Libraries, has been selected to receive the 2008 Association of College and Research Libraries Western European Studies Section (WESS) Coutts Nijhoff International West European Specialist Study Grant. This grant covers airfare to and from Europe, transportation in Europe, and lodging and board for up to fourteen days. The primary criterion for awarding the grant is the significance and utility of the proposed project as a contribution to the study of the acquisition, organization, or use of library materials from or relating to Western Europe.

Emanuel will receive her plaque and \$3,000 award check on June 30, 2008 at the WESS general membership meeting during the American Library Association Annual Conference in Anaheim, California.

Emanuel's proposal aims to survey major film libraries in the Paris region in order to analyze and evaluate the collections and services provided to visiting scholars, with particular focus on the films of Francis Veber.

"The growing importance of film studies in many academic fields, as well as the challenges of identifying and accessing a full range of relevant primary and secondary research materials, suggest that Ms.

On January 17, 2008, **Tiwari McLain Goins**, a native of Heidelberg, Mississippi and a graduate of Alcorn State University, became the first librarian in Canton Public School District's history to be named District Teacher of the Year. Certified in library media through the alternate route in 2004, Goins has been a librarian with Canton Public School District since August 2004. Goins is slated to receive her Master of Science in Library and Information Science from the University of Southern Mississippi in May 2008.

Columbus-Lowndes Public Library director, **Ben Petersen**, resigned effective June 20, 2008. He accepted the position of head of the southern history and literature department at the Birmingham (Alabama) Public Library. Petersen joined the Columbus-Lowndes Public Library as the archivist in September 2004 and has served as director for the past three years.

Under his leadership, the library replaced and increased the number of public computers, increased the number of visits to the library from 125,000 to over 231,000, doubled computer use, secured the first increase in local funding in five years, and received a Public Relations Award from the Mississippi Library Association. "We have made some major strides forward in providing quality library services to the citizens of Lowndes County," said Petersen. "None of which would have been possible without the top notch

staff at the library and the superb community support we have. I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish."

At the Birmingham Public Library, Petersen will be in charge of the Tutwiler Collection of Southern History and Literature, one of the premier collections on the subject and listed as one of the top ten public library collections for genealogists by *Family Tree Magazine*. "This position allows me the chance to pursue my interests in librarianship, grow as a professional, and relocate closer to family," said Petersen, "I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to serve as the director of the library. I have learned a great deal about public librarianship and will certainly miss the community."

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**June Schmidt**, associate dean of technical services and professor, will retire June 30, 2008, after thirty-six years of service with Mississippi State University Libraries. After working three years as a school librarian, Schmidt began her career in academic librarianship at MSU where she was appointed to positions of ever-increasing responsibility and authority. Her efforts were focused in technical services, except for a seven-year stint as the branch

librarian for the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine.

Schmidt was tapped for service to numerous campus committees and organizations. She served six years on the faculty senate, was elected as vice chair for two of those years, and appointed as parliamentarian for an additional two. She chaired the Fringe Benefits Committee and the President's Commission on the Status of Women.

She has been an active member of the Mississippi Library Association (MLA) since 1972 and is now a Legacy Member. Offices and other distinctions include being elected as MLA Secretary, Vice President, President, and ALA Councilor. She served on the executive board at various times for a total of ten years. She chaired the Association of College and Research Libraries section (formerly the College and University Section) on two separate years. She served on or chaired many committees, including nine years as the chair of the Peggy May Scholarship Committee. During that time she coordi-



**June Schmidt**

nated the fundraising efforts to help provide opportunities for individuals to further their library education.

Schmidt has been an active member of the American Library Association since 1975. She served on various committees of the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services, Library Administration and Management Association, Library Instruction Round Table, Association of College and Research Libraries, Government Documents Round Table, and Resources and Technical Services Division. She was elected as the president of the Junior Members Round Table and served as a member of the ALA Council from 1991-1995.

University colleagues and family members honored Schmidt with a reception in the library on May 30.

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**Lauren M. Young**, assistant librarian for Holmes Community College on the Ridgeland campus, was awarded the Medical Library Association's Consumer Health Information Specialization in December 2007. She has been appointed to a three-year term on the *Journal of the Medical Library Association* Editorial Board beginning May 2008. ■

## MLA Officers for 2009

The results are in for the election to fill two positions on the Mississippi Library Association Executive Board in beginning in 2009. **Ann Branton** was elected to serve as Vice President/President-elect and **Marsha Case** was elected as Secretary.



**Ann Branton – Vice President/President-elect**



**Marsha A. Case – Secretary**



# About Books

Christina Torbert, Editor

## BOOKS FOR ADULTS

**Dougherty, Kevin.** *Civil War Leadership and Mexican War Experience.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. 207 pp. \$50.00 (hardback)

This book presents a biographical analysis of the effect that serving in the Mexican War, 1846-1848, had on the behavior, tactics, and decisions made by twenty-six men during their Civil War service. The author selected thirteen soldiers who served in the Union army and thirteen soldiers who served in the Confederate army and examined the influence of the Mexican War on their conduct in the Civil War. For those who are interested in military history, this book illuminates many puzzling actions taken during military engagements by both sides of the conflict. It reveals interesting incidents that occurred during the Mexican War and, then, were later repeated during the Civil War. For example, one of the twenty-six profiled in the book, Brigadier General Jefferson Davis, U.S. Army (not the Confederate president) witnessed an argument between a general and colonel during the Mexican War that almost led to bullets being exchanged between the two. Later during the Civil War, General Davis experienced a similar incident with his commanding officer in which he shot and killed his superior. The two incidents are remarkably similar. According to Dougherty, even "Davis's biographers, Nathaniel Hughes and Gordon Whitney noted: '...The similarity of the incidents cannot be dismissed.'"

The book was fascinating to read, and it is recommended to anyone interested in military history or the Civil War. It would be an excellent addition to the history collections of academic libraries and public libraries. Historical societies that maintain libraries would also find it to be a valuable addition to their collection.

*Christina Torbert is assistant professor and head of serials at the University of Mississippi; e-mail: ctortbert@olemiss.edu.*

*Sandra Freeman*  
Library Media Specialist  
Earl Travillion Attendance Center

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**Nash, Jere and Andy Taggart.** *Mississippi Politics: The Struggle for Power, 1976-2006.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006. 403 pp. \$20.80 (hardcover)

Nash and Taggart started out to tell the story of the quest for political power and the use of justice to govern the state of Mississippi. The authors readily admitted their goal was too narrow to deal with the reality of political change in Mississippi between 1976 and 2006, and they recognized the need to expand on that original purpose. What resulted is a comprehensive, well-documented political history of that period.

As early as 1890, white Democrats began actively pushing a wedge between the white and black citizens of Mississippi and effectively allowing the Democratic party to hold control of state offices. *Mississippi Politics* documents the shift in political power from the Democrats to the Republicans beginning in 1976 when the state gave its last electoral votes to a Democratic presidential candidate. Until the shift of power away from Democratic control, Republicans and African-Americans held little political power in Mississippi. After seventy years, the Democratic stronghold began to weaken. Now, under Governor Haley Barbour, Republican elected officials at both the state and federal levels far outnumber elected Democrats.

Nash and Taggart explore numerous issues associated with the shift in political affiliation in Mississippi, including educational commitment, the creation of jobs, protection and conservation of the environment, maintenance and expansion of the state's roads and bridges, criminal prosecution, assistance to residents below the poverty line, casino gambling, health-care, the tobacco industry, and the insurance industry.

While this book is scholarly in its treatment of the subjects covered, it is intended for a general audience with an interest in politics and history. The book offers well-written coverage of the stated issues of the acquisition and exercise of power, the growth of the Republican Party, the legislative struggle for power, the influence of voting rights on these power struggles, and the empowering of African-American Mississippians. The authors have been successful in their efforts to encompass these issues and to present them in a way for a general audience to explore.

*Mississippi Politics* is well written and well documented. The authors have cited numerous sources from other written works, court documents, newspaper articles, and government reports. Quotes are used carefully and effectively throughout the work. This book is highly recommended for university, college, community college, and larger public libraries.

*Elizabeth M. Doolittle*  
Public Services Librarian  
University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Park

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**Pfister, Sally, ed.** *Katrina: Mississippi Women Remember.* Photographs by Melody Golding. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. 164 pp. \$32.00 (hardcover)

This book presents very personal experiences of Hurricane Katrina shared by members of the Mississippi State Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. These women tell their stories of life on the Mississippi Gulf Coast forever changed by Hurricane Katrina. Included in their accounts are tales of weathering the storm, the hardships of a life without so many of the amenities we take for granted, the heartbreak of losing homes and treasures, and rebuilding in the face of so much destruction.

A diversity of perspectives are represented in the book, related by more than

fifty women sharing this life-altering period of their lives. Women of various economical backgrounds and ethnicities have their own unique tales, which are beautifully recounted for future generations. Their anecdotes sometimes bring smiles and other times tears.

The abundant black and white photographs by Melody Golding provide a glimpse of the destruction, but also share the beauty of humanity in the faces of the volunteer relief workers from all over America, the soldiers who came to protect and aid the needy, and scenes of the victims working to salvage and rebuild.

This book is a worthy addition for all Mississippi libraries.

*Beth Richard*

Assistant Librarian and Continuing Education Coordinator

Copiah-Lincoln Community College

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### BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

**Jennings, Richard W.** *Ferret Island*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007. 227 pp. \$16.00

Like its prototype, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, this book is hard to categorize. Is it an outrageous adventure story for boys, a coming-of-age novel for teenagers, or an allegory for adults? In a word, yes; it is all three and more. Take equal parts Huck Finn and Candide, add a dash of Sam Spade, and a generous dollop of *Roget's Thesaurus* and the result might be something like the book's protagonist, Will Finn.

At first I found both plot and vocabulary off-putting. Like students in a bad creative writing class, both the main character and the narrator pile adjectives onto every noun resulting in an astoundingly stilted authorial voice. The premise, a teenage boy castaway on an island in the Mississippi River populated by giant ferrets and a reclusive famous author, seemed too preposterous to be believed or to be humorous. Only when the Helen Reddy-esque

description of the odor of the ferrets, "I am weasel; smell me more," hit me between the eyes did I discern the subtle network of parody underlying the entire work.

For well-read adults the book is an elaborate puzzle of allusions, not least of all the chapter headings, which paraphrase the titles of literary and musical icons. Will the presumed target audience, young teenage boys, like it? Possibly. It has the exaggerated outlines of a graphic novel without the pictures. Given its origin as a weekly serial published in the Sunday magazine of the *Kansas City Star*, this would be a good novel for reading aloud as a family. At very least, it will appeal to readers in the Kansas City and Arkansas-Memphis-Mississippi Delta area with references to familiar places and practices. This book is recommended for school and public libraries.

*Olivia H. McIntyre*

Collection Development Librarian

Northeast Regional Library, Corinth, MS

— ◆ —

**McMullan, Margaret.** *When I Crossed No-Bob*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007. 209 pp. \$16.00 (hardcover)

This story is set ten years after the Civil War, with Mississippi in the throes of Reconstruction. A new identity is being shaped in a union that no longer supports an economy fueled by the enslavement of humans. Addy is a young, white girl who only knows life within the bounds of her small community in Smith County, Mississippi. This hand-to-mouth existence and Addy's attempts to make a name for herself outside the confines of her infamous family parallel Mississippi's struggles.

McMullan's descriptions are vivid and easily bring to mind images of the reality of life in this era, which is too often neglected in fiction. Addy's struggles with morality delve deeply. They take on not only the awareness of what is right and what is wrong, but the whys of things, and at times have a marked spiritual bent. A deep love of Mississippi is apparent in descriptions of its people and environment, but this doesn't keep McMullan from exploring tough

issues. Incidents dealing with racism and accepted norms of the day may be difficult for some to comprehend.

Programming developed around this time period would enhance children's understanding of the material. Some of the historical references have a strained tone, but as a whole, children will learn Mississippi history without even realizing it. Reading about the Cherokee's Kwanokasha was especially enjoyable. Recommended for mature middle school and young adult collections.

*Elisabeth Scott*

Reference Librarian

Mississippi Library Commission

— ◆ —

**Rodman, Mary Ann.** *My Best Friend*. Illustrated by E. B. Lewis. New York: Viking/Penguin Group, 2007. 32pp. \$15.99 (hardback)

Wednesday is playgroup day at the pool and Lily, a typical six-year-old, is there with her mom. Lily chooses Tamika to be her best friend, but Tamika, who is seven, has other plans. Tamika already has a best friend, Shanice, who is also seven. Lily does what she can to make Tamika her best friend, but things just don't work out. There is, however, another six-year-old at the pool, Keesha. It seems Keesha has chosen Lily to be her best friend, despite Lily being smitten with Tamika. The story progresses and eventually Keesha and Lily become friends.

We've all seen it and/or lived it. The younger kid tries to impress the older kid into friendship. Younger children do and say all types of things to try to win over older children. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't. This is a cute story filled with beautiful illustrations to describe each scene. It will generate much needed discussions about what constitutes friendship. Recommended for libraries with juvenile collections.

*Crystal Giles*

Technical Services Librarian

Northwest MS Community College



**Sugg, Nan.** *Erin and Katrina*. Illustrated by Becca Huber and Lauren Pope. Jackson, MS: Acorn Hill Press, 2006. 29 pp. \$19.90 (hardback)

Many young children around the country heard adults discussing the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, and children can read worry and fear in adults' faces and voices. Even children who did not live in the areas hardest hit by the storm felt its effects. *Erin and Katrina* tells about one little girl living in an area far enough from the Gulf Coast that she didn't lose her home, but close enough to the mammoth storm to be made afraid by the howling winds, the horizontal rain, the downed power lines, the temporary loss of electricity, and some downed trees. But Erin is safe with her parents, in a snug house, with food and water and emergency supplies. She goes to sleep that night in her own bed and wakes up in that bed the next morning to sunshine, neighborhood picnics while the power is out, and enough power tools among the neighbors to clean up the downed trees. Her main concern is for the birds and squirrels that have been displaced from their homes in the trees. Her parents gently guide her concern to the humans who also have been displaced, and involve her in gathering supplies to take to a shelter for storm refugees opened in their church building. She faces some hard sharing choices, but grows in making those choices.

This book makes no age-inappropriate references to the horrendous death and

destruction wrought by Katrina, but does introduce, at a young child's level, some concept of the loss involved for those on the Gulf Coast. The emphasis is on sharing what one has with those who have less and on acting to do what one can in an emergency.

I recommend *Erin and Katrina* for addition to public libraries serving a population that includes families with children aged four to eight. The tone and style of the story will not appeal to all readers, but for families who rely on their religious faith in times of stress, it will be a good addition to a read-aloud collection. Only very proficient beginning readers could manage it alone, but it would provide good discussion ideas for parent-and-child, or teacher-and-small-group sharing. Some of the illustrations are a bit cartoonish, but those that zoom in on the wildlife and the power of the storm are very effective. All illustrations are bright and colorful and would probably capture the attention of young children.

*Diane Schule*  
Director  
Marshall County Library System



**Tingle, Tim.** *Crossing Bok Chitto: A Choctaw Tale of Friendship & Freedom*. El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos Press, 2006. 39 pp. (unnumbered). \$17.95 (hardback)

Set in Mississippi, this story is about a small tribe of Choctaw Indians who help a

family of runaway slaves escape to freedom. The courage and kindness of the main character, Martha Tom, gives hope to those in need and allows the family to attempt the impossible. Although fictional, this story illustrates that many slaves did not rely only on themselves and the kindness of a few white families to help them to freedom, but also on the help of many Native Americans. The author spent much time with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and their tribal elder, Archie Mingo, to better understand the history of the Choctaws and how important oral tradition is to them.

The illustrations, created by Cherokee artist Jeanne Rorex Bridges, are comprised of full-page landscapes and prominent portraits. Through her illustrations, she was able to make this story come alive. The author's skill as a storyteller and the illustrator's talent of portraying Native Americans in their cultural life created a wonderful story based on history and stories of old.

I thoroughly enjoyed this story and found myself wanting to know more about the lives of the characters. This would be a good book to read before a history lesson dealing with this time period. I recommend this book for all Mississippi libraries. Not only is it a well written and illustrated picture book, but it also highlights an important aspect of both Choctaw and Mississippi history.

*Justine B. Willey*  
Library Media Specialist  
Moss Point High School ■

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# MLA Executive Board Meeting Minutes

**February 12, 2008, 10:30 a.m.**  
**Mississippi Library Commission**  
**Jackson, MS**

## **Executive Board members present:**

President – Jeff Slagell  
 Vice President – Jan Willis  
 Immediate Past President – Catherine Nathan  
 Secretary – Judy Card  
 ALA Councilor – Sherry Laughlin  
 MLA Executive Secretary – Mary Julia  
 Anderson (ex officio member)

## **Others present:**

Public Library Section Chair – Madonna May  
 Trustee Section Chair – Randy Sherard  
 Legislative Committee – Jennifer A. Smith  
 Friends of Mississippi Libraries – Rita A.  
 Karn  
 Editor, *Mississippi Libraries* – Tisha Zelner  
 Mississippi Library Commission – Sharman  
 B. Smith  
 Past Past President – Susan Cassagne  
 Visitor – Victoria Penny

President Jeff Slagell called the meeting to order at 10:45 a.m.

Secretary Judy Card called the roll.

Minutes from the 2007 board's final meeting of December 14, 2007, were read. Catherine Nathan moved that the minutes be approved. Sherry Laughlin seconded. Motion passed.

Minutes from the 2008 board's first meeting of December 14, 2007, were read. Catherine Nathan moved that the minutes be approved. Sherry Laughlin seconded. Motion passed.

## **Officer and Staff Reports**

**Treasurer's Report:** Amanda Powers was absent due to illness. In her absence, President Jeff Slagell distributed an MLA

balance sheet as of January 31, 2008. He noted that receipts from the 2007 conference are still being settled. Randy Sherard moved that the January 31, 2008, balance sheet be accepted for information purposes. Jan Willis seconded. Motion passed.

**President's Report:** Jeff Slagell reported that on March 26 he will speak to a meeting of school librarians and media specialists. This is in keeping with his presidential goal of increasing their involvement in MLA. Mary Julia Anderson reported that MLA membership is 163. Jeff reminded everyone that March 1 is the date by which members must renew or join in order to be able to vote in this year's MLA election. He announced that Alice Shands has agreed to again chair the National Library Week Committee.

**Vice President's Report:** Conference 2008. Vice president Jan Willis passed out several possible conference themes. With input from the board, Jan announced that this year's theme will be "Libraries: At the Center of Everything." Jan has been checking on possible speakers. Both Nancy Pearl and Mary Boykan are unavailable this year. Library Journal 2005 Librarian of the Year Louise Shafer is a good speaker and is available. The board felt that she would be a good choice for a public library program. Michael Casey from Gwinnett County Library in Georgia may be available to speak on Library 2.0. Rheta Grimsley Johnson is an excellent speaker and has been confirmed for the conference. She has most recently written a biography of Charles Schulz.

Sharman Smith said that MLC hopes to provide a speaker's grant for this year's conference. This will be discussed at the next MLC board meeting.

**ALA Councilor's Report:** Sherry Laughlin reported on the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Boston. A proposal for a graduated dues structure was discussed by council. Council will not approve a \$500,000 study to examine this issue. Instead the group approved \$45,000 to conduct a membership survey. A motion for member "read only" access to the ALA Web site was sent back to committee for further review. Official ALA groups are not allowed to endorse presidential candidates. Council barely passed a resolution regarding the political situation in Kenya. A resolution concerning the destruction of Iraqi archives was passed. Sherry asked direction concerning MLA councilor's vote concerning political issues. After discussion, the board directed Sherry to vote "absent" on issues not directly related to the mission of ALA or MLA.

Past President Catherine Nathan, Executive Secretary Mary Julia Anderson and MLA Secretary Judy Card had nothing to report.

**Section Reports:** None

**Roundtable Reports:** None

## **Other Reports**

**Mississippi Library Commission:** Executive Director Sharman Smith said that MLC is pleased to host the MLA Legislative Reception.

Sharman attended a hearing with the new Education Appropriations Committee chaired by Videt Carhmichael. MLC has been told to prepare for a \$327,000 cut to the FY 09 budget. Sharman was also told to prepare to cut six staff positions, which would reduce the number of MLC staff from fifty-two to forty-six. The cut could only be from operations and

salaries, with \$300,000 from salaries. After a \$300,000 cut, there would not be enough money to pay current staff. The rest of the money would come from contractual services such as utilities, etc. The cut would not be a bottom-line cut. Instead, MLC would be told what cuts to make. There is no recommended increase for salaries. Minimum wage and retirement costs would be impacted. MLC surveyed fifty libraries. Twenty-six responded. The response indicated that \$200,000 would be needed just to meet the first year's raise of the minimum wage. No new money in effect means a cut, so this year's legislative discussion needs to be about keeping what we have.

On January 29, MLC had an exhibit at the state capitol. The other group exhibiting that day was the Mississippi Hospitality and Restaurant Association (MHRA). The MHRA provided legislators with wonderful breakfast foods. Thanks to the Friends of Mississippi Libraries, MLC offered water and trail mix. The pairing pulled such a unique group of legislators that MHRA wants to be paired with MLC again next year.

**Legislative Committee's Report:** Legislative Committee Chair Glenda Segars was unable to attend the board meeting. In her absence, Jeff Slagell announced that National Library Legislative Day 2008 is set for May 13-14. Catherine Nathan and Randy Sherard expressed interest in attending. Others who would like to attend should contact Glenda Segars or Jeff Slagell.

MLA Executive Secretary Mary Julia Anderson reported that 130 have registered for MLA's annual Library Advocacy Day/Legislative Reception.

Jennifer Smith represented the committee and passed out the legislative goals for 2008. Catherine Nathan moved that the goals be accepted. Jan Willis seconded. The motion passed.

Brochures with talking points for this evening's reception were distributed.

Sharman suggested using the following tactics when speaking with legislators who say, "We don't have any money," or "I love libraries. We'll take care of libraries." Respond with something like, "I understand that you have your job and we have ours, which is to tell you what your constituents need from libraries. We explain the need and you set priorities." She reminded everyone to not give up.

Jeff thanked the committee for its work.

**Old business:** None

**New business:** Jeff introduced Tisha Zelter, the new editor of *Mississippi Libraries*. Tisha reported that the editorial staff is the same but that the magazine has a new copy editor, Gabe Morley.

**Announcements:** Jennifer reported that the Vicksburg conference caterers now use the library. Jeff agreed that the Vicksburg conference staff was very helpful. Vicksburg was a good location and should be used again.

Next Board Meeting: Tuesday, May 6, 10:30 a.m., at the Mississippi Library Commission. (The Board meeting has been rescheduled for May 1.)

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Judy Card ■

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Position \_\_\_\_\_

Library \_\_\_\_\_

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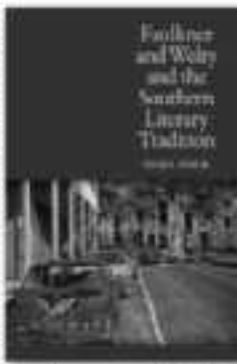


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