

CASLgram

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President's Message

by David Bilmes



It's hard to believe this is my final president's message. The past year has gone by in a blur. As we all get ready for our well-deserved summer vacations, take a few minutes to reflect on the best ways to meet the challenges we all need to meet.

Unfortunately, some of our members will be job-hunting this summer – not by choice, but because their positions were eliminated in budget cuts. At the moment, for example, it looks like Derby is prepared to start the school year without a single certified teacher-librarian in its entire school district.

Other members will be preparing for added responsibilities, without added pay. One of our board members, for example, will have to close his library media center two periods a day to go to a computer lab to teach computer skills after his district eliminated a technology teacher's position.

We also have CASL members who are losing their library clerks for next year, or having to operate on reduced budgets.

We live in an era where our governor has so little regard for the impact our libraries, both public and school, have on the residents of our state that she has proposed draconian budget cuts that include eliminating the funding for iConn and ending the CLC, through which we are able to get incredible discounts of nearly 50 percent on many of the books we purchase.

There were several years where my school library received not a single cent for new library books, and when we did receive limited funds, the huge discounts we received from the CLC were a desperately needed benefit. Without funds available to purchase a subscription database, I have had to rely on iConn to introduce my middle school students to what a database is, and how it is different from going to Google.

These are just some examples of the difficulties we face in making sure we have the resources to teach our students and colleagues the important skills we all will need to succeed in the 21st century.

The new book from the American Association of School Librarians, *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*, gives us a wonderful framework for the goals for our programs and suggestions on how to evaluate them. It is the successor to *Information Power*, which was the guideline for our profession for so many years. If you do nothing else related to work this summer, purchase a copy of "Empowering Learners" and spend a few hours perusing it.

But since I know all of you who are reading this newsletter are lifelong learners, I know all of us will be doing many things to stay current with our profession, ranging from reading books for the age groups we serve to catching up on our professional literature to tuning up on our social networking skills by spending time on Twitter or Facebook or the new CASL Ning.

When you come back to work in the fall, there will be a new group of officers leading CASL. I am confident our new president, Lucia Rafala, will do an outstanding job, with help from vice president Mary Lou Cassotto, vice president intern Jackie Galante, treasurer Martha Djang, recording secretary Chris Barlow and financial secretary Nancy Schwartz.

I want take a moment to acknowledge the incredible amount of work that Sewell Pruchnik has done for CASL. Sewell is stepping down as CASL's treasurer after holding the position for many years.

I also want to thank Irene Kwidzinski for the fantastic job she has done as the editor of CASLgram. Our organization's newsletter has never looked better, nor contained as much interesting and useful information. Of course Irene excels at anything she does, but it's important not to take her hard work for granted.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as your president for the past year. I look forward to remaining an active member of CASL, and to working together with all of you as we strive to meet the never-ending challenges we face.

CASL Executive Board Officers 2009 -2010



Newly elected officers from left: Lucia Rafala, president (New Haven PS); Mary Lou Cassotto, vice president (West Haven PS); Martha Djang, treasurer (Hamden Hall Country Day School); Christopher Barlow, recording secretary (Stratford PS); Jackie Galante, v.p. intern (Fairfield PS).



CECA/CASL 2009 Joint Conference

Monday, October 26

Connecticut Convention Center, Hartford

Teaching and Technology

for 21st Century Learning

(NOTE: Registration includes membership to both associations. Make sure that your BOE business office has CASL & CECA vendor info to avoid processing delays.)

Keynote Speaker

JAMIE MCKENZIE



Featured Presenters

Kathy Schrock

Carol LaRow

Tom Daccord


Conference Strand Descriptions






Sunday, October 25, 2009. Save the Date!


Look for this registration flyer in your email or on the CASL website.




2009 PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP
 Sunday, October 25, 2009
 2 - 5 p.m. .3 CEUs
Marriott Hotel, Salon D,E (w/ wireless access)
 Hartford, CT




This event requires s e p a r a t e registration from the CECA/CASL conference. Registration payable to CASL



Mary Ellen



Katrina



Irene




Implementing the New AASL Standards & Guidelines

with AASL trained implementation coordinators

Join AASL trained coordinators Mary Ellen Minichiello, Katrina Palazzolo and Irene Kwidzinski as they discuss developing customized state-level implementation strategies for your school and district. This is a three-hour, brain-storming session on how we can begin to address the objectives of the new standards and guidelines aligning them with state and local frameworks.

Some people may not be ready yet. Some people might have already begun to integrate the new standards and guidelines into their local curricula. Let's talk. Let's share.

We will take time to examine the library program guidelines, the standards for the 21st-century learner and then break out into grade levels led by table facilitators. We will share a more detailed agenda in September via the CASL website, CASLgram and CASL listserve. Handouts will become available on the CASL website as the conference draws near.

Our a learning environment: The Marriott is wireless so bring your laptop if you wish. Salon D and E are sections of the grand ballroom on the second floor. We will refer to the AASL *Standards for the 21st-Century Learners*, *Standards for the 21st-Century Learners in Action* and *Empowering Learners* publications during the workshop. You will be able to pre-purchase copies of the AASL publications with your pre-conference workshop registration. They will also be available for sale on Monday. Appetizers and beverages will be available.

Parking: The hotel is connected to the Hartford Convention Center and its parking facilities.

Accommodations: We have blocked hotel rooms for CASL for a limited time. Please call the hotel to make your reservations and tell them that you are attending the CECA/CASL conference.

Post-workshop: There are restaurants in the hotel and free shuttle service to Hartford restaurants and other sites of interest.

?????: Email Irene Kwidzinski kwidz@sboglobal.net

CASL Award Winners Announced

by *Chris Barlow, Chair, Advocacy/Public Relations Team*

Please join the CASL Board and the Awards Committee in recognizing the [2009 CASL award winners](#). After much deliberation, all award winners have been chosen and notified. Please see the attached list of the award winners which will also be posted on the CASL web site. All winners will be honored at the CASL Fall Festival to be held Wednesday, October 7 at the Baci Grill in Cromwell. Check the CASL web site for more information to sign up.

2009 CASL Awards, Grants and Scholarship

Administrator Awards: **Fie Budzinski**, Director of Curriculum, Portland Public Schools
Dr. James Collin, Principal, Silas Deane Middle School, Wethersfield
Bryan Luizzi, Principal, Brookfield High School
Judith Theeb, Principal, Southwest School, Torrington
Helen Waldon, Dean of Academics, The Forman School, Litchfield

Bernice “Bunny” Yesner School Library Media Program of the Year:
Karen Fecko and **Mary Metheny** Glastonbury High School

Carlton W. H. Erickson: **Barbara Riordan**, Mitchell Elementary School, Woodbury

Carolyn Biega O’Neill Memorial Scholarship: **Lora Andrada**, Glastonbury, SCSU

Collaboration Grant: LMS: **Jane Martellino**, Consolidated School, New Fairfield
 Teachers: **Robyn Welton**, **Pat Schollar**, **Amy Johnson**, **Melaine Williams**, **Joanne Woodard**, **Lori Wilson**

Follett Creativity: **Jacquelin Devlin**, Highland School, Cheshire

Creative Program: **Sara Kaluzynski** and **Chris Barlow**, Flood Middle School, Stratford
Monica Gardner, Eastbury Elementary School, Glastonbury
Janet Birsch Kenney, Bristol Eastern High School
Janet Roche and **Kari Karp**, Simsbury High School
Lydia Westerberg, Ridge Road School, North Haven
Jacquelin Devlin and **Mary Pagett**, Highland School, Cheshire

Hilda and John Jay: **Irene Kwidzinski**, formerly of Northville School, New Milford

Pellerin Classroom Teacher:

Katrina Aikken, East Hampton Middle School
Sara Kaluzynski, Flood Middle School, Stratford
Christopher Scalise, Brian McMahon High School, Norwalk
Pat Shollar, Consolidated School, New Fairfield

Rheta A. Clark Award: **Julieann Hulten**, Mark T. Sheehan High School, Wallingford

Service: **Christopher Barlow**, Flood Middle School, Stratford

Student Video Award: **“The Style of Film”** Farmington High School
“Stop Motion. :)” Portland Middle School
“Owl News” Ox Ridge Elementary School, Darien

F Y I C T

P21's New White Paper
[21st Century Learning
 Environments](#)



twitter

Tool or Trap

[Teach 21](#) in West Virginia

Check out how WV is implementing 21st-Century skills.



Trends That Will Impact Us

- Push to digital and mobile
- Participation
- Innovate

[source](#)

 **WolframAlpha**™ computational...
 knowledge engine

In May, a new [search tool](#) was launched that does not mine the Web, but a vast collection of data.

CASL

Connecticut Association of School Librarians

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Join the discussion
 on [CASLning](#)
 w/ blogs from
 NECC & ALA

Google Wave a new communication tool will become available late 2009. Read the NY Times [article](#).



State Budget Cuts?

Electronic databases and state services in [jeopardy](#). Contact your representatives.



Region 1 - New England



AASL Election Winners

On May 1st, AASL announced the [election](#) results. Sylvia K. Norton, School Library/Technology Planning Coordinator, Maine Department of Education, has been elected AASL Division Councilor. Valerie B. Diggs, Chelmsford MA Public Schools' Director of Libraries K-12, has been elected AASL Director-Elect for Region 1.



Sylvia K. Norton



Valerie B. Diggs

NESLA Board Meeting May 30, 2009



From left, Ann Perham MA; Valerie Diggs MA;



From left, Past President Susan Ballard; secretary Katrina Palazollo; president Merlyn Miller; and treasurer Doug Maitland.



From left, Andrea Ange NH; Charlie White, AECT rep.; Carolyn Markuson MA; and Teri Caouette ME.

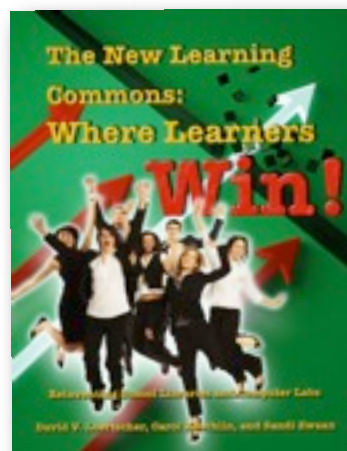
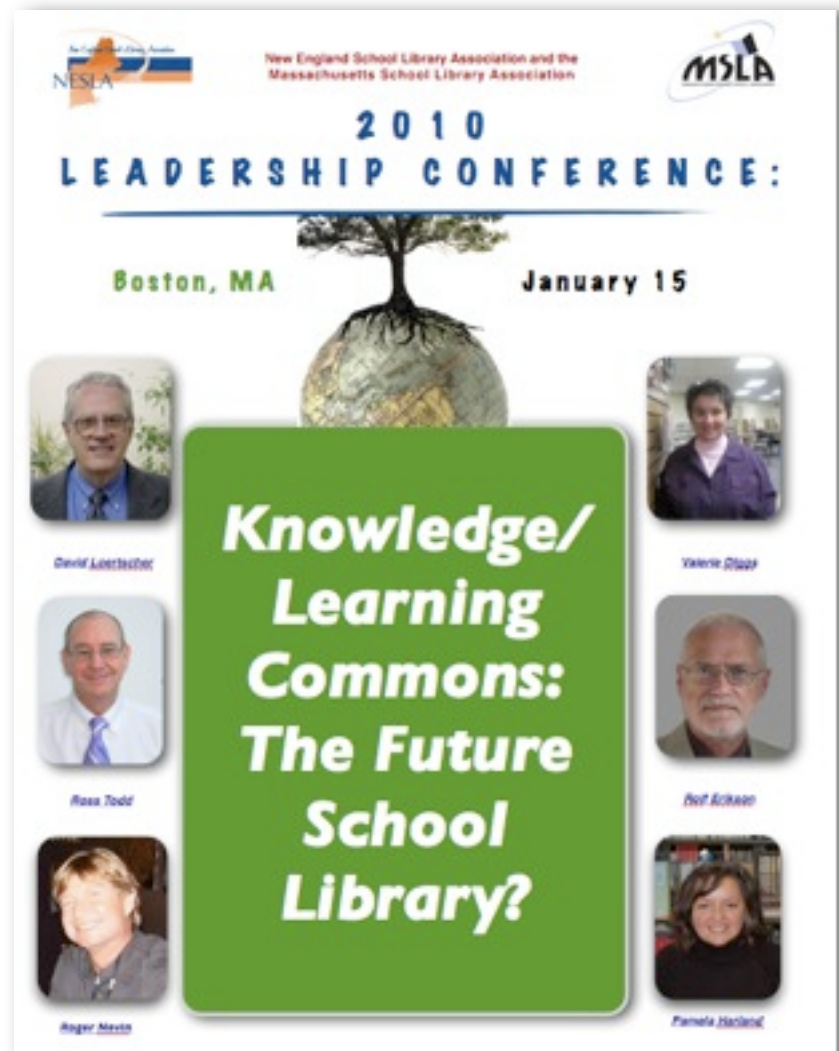


Mark Your Calendar!

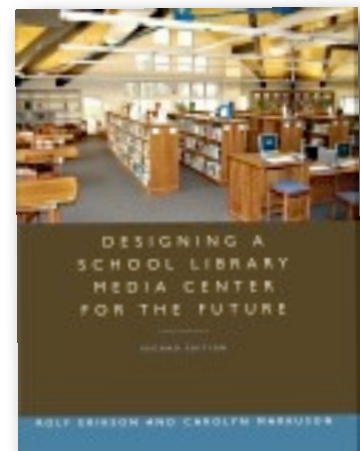
Check the [NESLA website](#) for the full brochure and registration information.

Stay the weekend and participate in the ALA Midwinter National Conference.

Network with colleagues from around the USA and the world.



by David Loertscher



by Rolf Erikson

AASL NEWS & LINKS



Nancy Everheart AASL President-Elect

On May 1st, AASL announced the [election](#) results. Nancy is currently an associate professor at Florida State University. She will begin her term at the end of the ALA annual conference in July.



From the National Conference Co-Chairs

Are you ready to “Rev Up” learning?

In the pages that follow, we hope you will see that the [conference planning committee](#) is focused on designing a conference to help all school library media specialists with the implementation of the new standards, to raise the level of learning in our school library media programs, and to address the needs of a new generation of students. We are excited about the opportunities and experiences that await us all in Charlotte!

This conference promises to provide you with thought-provoking sessions; discussions with colleagues and friends, both in person and virtually; time to investigate new materials and resources in the exhibit hall; and the opportunity to get “revved up” with a big dose of energy that will reinvigorate you and your program. Whether this is your first year or your thirtieth year as a school library media professional, the AASL 14th National Conference & Exhibition will have something to meet your needs. A whirlwind of opportunities await you during these four short days—[preconferences](#), [general session speaker](#), the [Exploratorium](#), [author events](#), concurrent sessions, exhibit hall, and much more.

As you read these pages, we hope you will see that attending the 2009 conference in Charlotte, North Carolina from November 5-8, 2009 will help you as you begin to plan for the future of your school library media program.

Act now to take advantage of the discounted rates for early registration!

Race you to Charlotte! We’re looking forward to seeing you there!

Sincerely,
Ann Marie Pipkin and Jay Bansbach

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

AASLforum ...

a list "52 Great Books About Great Places" highlighted this book set in Canterbury, CT for Grades 7 up.



From School Library Journal

Grade 7 Up—Twenty-four sonnets tell the story of Prudence Crandall and her efforts to educate young African-American women in Canterbury, CT, 1833-1834. The school began as a boarding school for white girls; when two black women inquired about taking classes and Crandall agreed, the townspeople withdrew their daughters. As she accepted more black students, the town became more vocal in its resistance, poisoning the school water supply, refusing to sell it supplies, and charging Miss Crandall and others with a variety of "crimes." The sonnet format is challenging but compelling. Each poem addresses an individual aspect of the story; therefore, the tone and cadence change depending upon the person speaking or the event being depicted. The introduction gives essential information, but readers with no background will still need help understanding the political, social, and historical context. Cooper's pastel mixed-media illustrations sometimes illuminate the poems, but at other times seem solely decorative. His portraits for "Tao of the Trial" and "Miss Ann Eliza Hammond" are powerfully rendered, while the nature scenes add little to the poetic experience. The art's sketchiness, however, does suit the poetic form. There are empty spaces in the pictures just as the language of the poetry leaves openness for readers' interpretation. A heartfelt, unusual presentation, this book rewards patient readers.—*Lucinda Snyder Whitehurst, St. Christopher's School, Richmond, VA*
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Libraries lend a hand in tough times



Watch the [VIDEO](#)
of the
Today Show report.

HOTlinks:

Information for Indispensable
Educational Leaders



ESSENTIAL LINKS:

Resources for School Library Media Program Development

AASL
hosted by MediaWiki

Have you visited these resources? This wiki is a working bibliography with a table of contents arranged alphabetically by frequently used topic., such as standards, evaluation, etc. All may contribute to this wiki.

Melanie Goffen Horowitz
Principal

Central Elementary School

910 Central Avenue
Wilmette Illinois
847-251-3252
safe phone: 847-256-3444

Rebecca Littmann
Assistant Principal

Melanie Goffen Horowitz wins 2009 AASL Distinguished Administrator's Award. Visit her school's [website](#).

100 Useful [Tips and Tools](#) to
Research the Deep Web

[Archived](#) Versions of L4L
Webinars

On [Teacher Librarian NIng](#) :

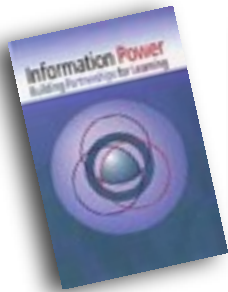
“Keep Stories.... Share Stories.... Make Stories.”

Erik Boekesteijn of the [DOK](#) Library Concept Center in Delft, Netherlands

“Be an explorer. Be innovative. Look for connections. Be fearless.

Be a problem-solver. Make change. Watch trends. Be curious.”

DOK director Eppo van Nispen



Reflections on the 1998 and 2009 AASL Standards & Guidelines

by Irene Kwidzinski

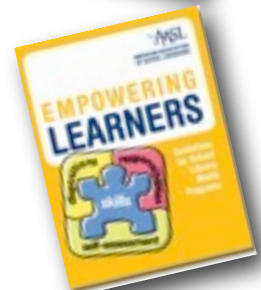
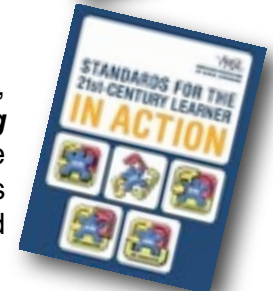


The AASL standards have been endorsed by NCTE, NAESP, and NEA.

Two years ago when the ***Standards for the 21st-Century Learner*** came out, we began the transition from ***Information Power*** toward ***Empowering Learners***. We continued to acknowledge the need to empower, but the spotlight became concentrated on the learner. Of course, that has always been the intent, but the keyword in the title that was kept, *Power*, and the word that was changed, *Information Learners*, makes the focus absolutely clear.

The learner is at the center of it all. The essential question: *What does the learner need to thrive and succeed independently in the 21st-century?* The answer: *They need to use the appropriate skills, to have the right attitude, to be responsible, to self-evaluate, and to produce.*

Empowering *all* learners is our mission. The first sentence of our mission statement remains the same, *“to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information.”* I was relieved since that essential mission is timeless and of course, includes library staff. The second sentence defines student expectations, although I wish it said learners which to me is more all-encompassing. The five bullets that follow delineate how the program will accomplish that mission.



“The Trilogy”

What do library media programs need? First and foremost, they need library media specialists that are strong leaders of learning in the school community to build an inviting, learning environment; that actively collaborate and provide “engaging learning experiences”; that “develop and strengthen a love of reading”; and that model lifelong learning so that they can “anticipate changes in technology and education.” The program needs to develop a learning lifestyle.

I think that our new standards and guidelines successfully anticipate 21st-century needs and change. I have compared them to the ISTE and Partnership for 21st-Century Skills standards, and I know that the committee that formulated them examined those standards and others during the standards & guidelines revision process.

Now to the hard part, implementing them successfully. Will we accept this mission? For the sake of all learners, I hope so.

Do you want to continue the discussion? Share your thoughts on the [CASL Ning](#) social network.

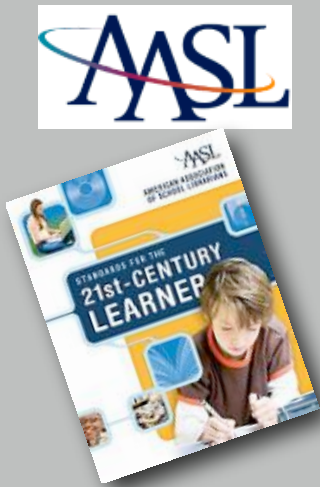

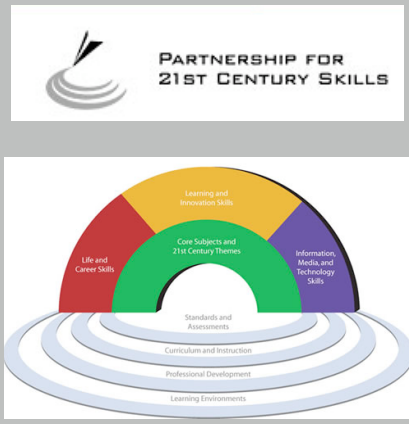
 <p>www.ala.org/aasl/learning4life</p>	 <p>www.iste.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=NETS</p>	 <p>www.21stcenturyskills.org/route21/</p>
<p>1. Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge</p>	<p>1. Creativity and Innovation</p>	<p>1. Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes</p>
<p>2. Draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge.</p>	<p>2. Communication and Collaboration</p>	<p>2. Learning and Innovation Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and Innovation • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Communication and Collaboration
<p>3. Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society.</p>	<p>3. Research and Information Fluency</p>	<p>3. Information, Media and Technology Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Literacy • Media Literacy • ICT Literacy
<p>4. Pursue personal and aesthetic growth.</p>	<p>4. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making</p>	<p>4. Life and Career Skills</p>
	<p>5. Digital Citizenship</p>	
	<p>6. Technology Operations and Concepts</p>	

Chart by Irene Kwidzinski

Connecticut LMSs Attend National Conferences

by Irene Kwidzinski

Several library media specialists from Connecticut were able to attend the two national conferences. I was lucky enough to be one of them.

The National Educational Computer Conference (NECC) offers a wealth of information about technology use in education. It is a fabulous opportunity to tweak your tech skills and learn new tech tools.

The annual American Library Association conference offers a wealth of information about all types of libraries and library tools. Each division offers sessions on their specialty. AASL officially launched its Learning 4 Life initiative with a special pre-conference training session for state coordinators and a celebration before the AASL president's program.

Of course, each conference had hundreds of exhibitors and thousands of participants. They are great opportunities to network, recharge and update your professional skills and knowledge.

Go to the [CASL Ning](#) to view the photos and blogs from Connecticut LMSs attending the conferences. There are fabulous hyperlinks to valuable information. Join the discussion on the CASL Ning. It is a great interactive place for professional development and discussion.



ISTE's annual NECC conference took place in Washington DC this year. Next year it's in Denver June 27-30.



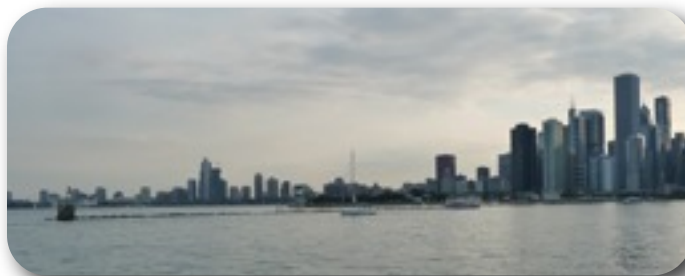
ALA's annual conference was in Chicago this year. Next year it will be in Washington D.C. June 24-29.



Sue Ballard leads a PR session on AASL's L4L initiative in the membership pavilion.

ALA Chicago

by Mary Lou Cassotto
CASL vice-president



Chicago is the hub; it is halfway between East and West, where the past meets the present and the future. This was my first trip to Chicago and I was not disappointed. It had to be the cleanest city I've ever been to, the friendliest, and one of the only I would ever consider living in. They say that when one travels, one carries oneself with him/her, that every journey is an inner and an outer one, so here are my thoughts as I reminisce about my feelings and experiences about Chicago.

ALA Affiliate and Irene: National Concerns and Commendations

What's In a Name?

All things connect and this is definitely the situation at an ALA Convention. Thanks to a lot of pre-planning on the part of our own Irene Kwidzinski, this year's Chair of Affiliate (the Legislative Branch of the ALA), the delegates from all parts of the country met to discuss the concerns and commendations of all school librarians, and to effectively decide how to handle them in record time. Irene had sent everyone copies of what concerns and commendations had been sent from member state school librarian groups earlier in the week and grouped them according to topics, so everyone had time to brainstorm solutions and even comment and discuss them ahead of time.

In this year of budget cuts and heightened need for advocacy, one of the minor topics first discussed again, was what we should be calling ourselves. Everyone, including myself in Connecticut, had had a harder time talking to legislators because they hadn't a clue what a "Library Media Specialist" was, although they quickly responded to the title "Librarian", so I supported the motion that this concern be further addressed. A suggestion was made again to call ourselves "Teacher-Librarian"; then maybe Librarians would not be lumped with others as "Support Staff" by state agencies and others as well. That subject was approved and referred to National for further discussion and consideration.

Need to Contact NEASC for Further Clarification as to Certification and Staffing Requirements

The next topic on the agenda was the need to contact NEASC to have them clarify what they consider the requirements for staffing and for certification requirements for LMS's. I know that I encountered difficulty with CEA and other state agencies when I talked to them this year about passing a law requirement to have at least one LMS in each school. I was told that there was no law and not even an agency regulation that directly addressed school librarians. Instead the hiring of school librarians came under some broad agency regulation calling for Principals and Superintendents to hire "others as needed". This was why schools had been able to put paraprofessionals in some situations. Again, I indicated for our state that we believe this matter should be forwarded on to NEASC. However, as NEASC only really has power as to high school accreditation, our state and National have to think of further ways of ensuring that the law is on our side. Other avenues were discussed to ensure that only certified Library Media Specialists fill library positions in elementary and middle schools, that there be at least one Library Media Specialist per school, and in an ideal world, that he/she have tech help.

This discussion led to more discussion on the need for AASL to research staff requirements, training, staffing and certification in each state as applying to LMS's. It was voted for by membership and sent on to National.

I always enjoy Affiliate, and meeting with other Region I Representatives, like those from New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Maine. It reminds me of the 60's and the days I used to fly down to places like Dallas to find money to help women run for Congress, and to help set a National Women's Political Agenda. My time was limited at Affiliate; however, Irene attended meetings for days.

Workshops We Attended

Each of us, Lucia Rafala, Irene Kwidzinski and Jackie Galante, also spent a lot of time attending workshops as our needs

and the needs of our districts required. I attended a workshop presented by those that prepare Chicago inner city schools for literacy. Parents and their children are handed out very detailed agendas on books to read together that teach certain literacy skills, and there is a lot of demonstrating of reading and discussing methods. Local businesses donate books. Lucia attended meetings of vendors like Follett. This was Jackie's first representation for CASL, and she had her own schedule.

Highlights of the Conference: the Authors and the Awards Dinners

Everyone has his/her own favorite memories, but lots of mine were meeting some of authors. I had a chance to meet Walter Dean Myers and tell him that his books are the first, and sometimes the only books some of my students (kicked out for drugs and weapons) have read. He just completed his first elementary book, illustrated by his son. It is a book about self-esteem. Mr. Myers, Sr. is a very gentle and humble man. CASL has tried to have him speak at our Conference this Fall, but he no longer does Conferences.

Mo Willems (of *Knuffle Bunny* fame) was there to sign as well as Jon Scieszka. They both also were the Masters of Ceremonies for the Olympics of Librarians, the Book Cart Drill. They were hilarious. Jackie Galante wrote to Mo Willems as well to appear at our conference, but he is not available.

Kate DiCamillo was there, of *Because of Winn Dixie*. She is a tiny young woman, or at least, she looks young.

I was lucky enough to meet the author and illustrator of the Caldecott this year, *Inside a Night House*, a book done only in black and white with gold trim, and whose theme and illustrations hark back to Margaret Wise Brown's *Goodnight Moon*. The story itself is about a young child who goes from the dark of the night world into the comforting lights within a house, by way of a gold key. That evening at the Caldecott Dinner, the illustrator discussed how she chose the objects and people in the book, with tears in her eyes, as a lot of the authors, and I have during the famous Caldecott

Speech. The dog in the book was her childhood dog, the child, herself, the teddy bear, one owned by her sister.

Later, after looking at other books by this illustrator, which were good and one of which was an ASPCA Henry Berg Award winner, I believe the author's sparse words as well as the illustrations were an important part in making this book what it is. The illustrator had developed her own unique way of making illustration, using scratch board, this is true. The final product looks like a woodcut but takes less time to produce. (This is my Art and English teacher background coming out). But, it was the author's few words which make the reader have to interject himself/herself into the book with one's own memories.

Judy Blume and Neil Gaimon were there, but I missed them. I later heard Mr. Gaimon speak at the Newbery Awards, however.



He looks like an English waif, which is how he described himself as a child. He called himself "a feral child" practically raised in libraries, and spoke about the importance of that quiet place and books as an escape for him. He said that he thought that "children's books are the most important books" because of their ability to help children survive the realities they sometimes cannot face. His *The Graveyard Book* is the story of a two year old whose parents have been killed, and who then lives in a graveyard, the only "safe" place for him. The book, he said, had been twenty years in his mind, and was prompted by the memory of his two year old son, now 29, and how his own son once bicycled in a graveyard, as it was the only "safe" place. (Earlier I had heard Laurie Halse Anderson, the author of *Speak*,

the book about date rape and a new book about anorexia, the winner of the Margaret Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement, also speak about graveyards as quiet places where she read books as a youngster.).

A Newbery Honor Book Award winner I enjoyed seeing was Jacqueline Woodson, the author of *Coming on Home*, the story of African American women who worked traditional men's jobs during World War II, and *Locomotion*, the story in poem form about a young boy in foster care. She was a very young looking African-American woman, whose latest book is *After Tupac and D Foster*. The music of the graffiti artist Tupac Shakur, and his attempted assassinations, form an important background for the book.

The Importance of Relevance

One of my vivid memories, however, was on hearing young author Alan Lawrence Sitomer speak. Mr. Sitomer is a teacher at a Los Angeles inner city school, and was named California Teacher of the Year last year. Effected by the drive-by shooting of one of his students, he often writes books about drive-by incidents as well. *Homeboyz* is one of them. He said that with the backgrounds his students have and their everyday life, he sometimes does not understand why some of his students still come to school at all. As he reiterated, it is not for the tests, or the textbooks, but often it is just for the relevant books. He was such an inspirational speaker, I felt he should be a speaker at every state's Administrators' Breakfasts.

What's In

Not surprisingly, Vampire books are in. They were handed out at the vendor booths like prescription drugs to super-stars. Dog books were big as well. My favorite was the Henry Berg Award (ASPCA), *The Two Bobbies*, a true story about a blind cat and a dog who was chained to a house in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and who helped each other and refused to be separated. They were later adopted together. *My Buddy Butch* is a Mom's Choice Award Winner, about how a divorced

man developed parenting skills by parenting a dog.

What to See in the City

I was lucky enough to sit next to an award winning architect during a tour of the architecture of the city. Having been an art student myself, and having always wanted to see the art deco skyscrapers, the tour and discussion was a dream come true.



I loved the surrealistic Bean and the spitting fountains in Millennium Park. The abstract sculpture, the "Bean" looks like a huge silver mirrored jelly bean which reflects the surrounding buildings' images and the people walking under it. The fountains are paired thin buildings, with 1500 different changing faces projected on them, which sporadically spit water out of their faces' smiling mouths. The kids of Chicago play in the water which results. The Scholarship Bash, held at the Art Institute of Chicago, which houses the largest collection of the Impressionists outside of France, gave me chance to see that neoclassical museum.

Of course, the bus tour of the city covered a tour of Obama's neighborhood, an affluent neighborhood near the University of Chicago.

Chicago is a place where libraries, politics, art, and architecture all meet, where I met fascinating people from all parts of the country, and where I remembered parts of myself. It was a great time! Chicago really is the hub, and "where it's at!"

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DATES of INTEREST

June 28 – July 1, 2009

[NECC annual conference](#)

Washington, D.C.

July 9 – 15, 2009

[ALA Annual](#)

Chicago, IL

October 7, 2009

[CASL](#) Fall Festival

Baci Grill, Cromwell

5 – 7:30 p.m.

October 25, 2009

[CASL](#) Pre-Conference Workshop

2 – 5 p.m. Marriott Hotel, Hartford, CT

October 26, 2009

[CECA/CASL](#) Biannual Joint Conference

Hartford, CT

November 5–8, 2009

14th Annual AASL National Conference

[Rev Up Learning @ your library](#)

Charlotte, NC

January 13 –20, 2010

[ALA](#) Midwinter Conference

Boston, MA

January 15, 2010

[NESLA](#) Leadership Conference

Sheraton Boston, MA

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