
SOUTH JERSEY REGIONAL LIBRARY COOPERATIVE

YOUTH NEWS

SPRING | SUMMER 2004

A GROWING POPULATION

Who are the youth that the library serves and how do we serve them? Depending on where your chair is located, you will see boys and girls, fresh-faced and curious, opening that school library door for the first time, just learning how to make sense of those letters and words. Or you might need to brace yourself for the energy of pre-teens rushing in for library period. If you are in a high school media center you probably devote time to helping these young adults use the electronic resources you now have available for some serious research.

If you happen to be in a public library you can see all of these and more! And you never are really sure when that might be!

In Monroe Township our young people are not just growing - strong, educated, cyber-literate - their numbers are growing as well - by leaps and bounds! If you have driven through the township within the past two years you will surely have seen the many new homes under construction and those already occupied. Mom, Dad AND the children are now calling Monroe Township home. And they are expecting and demanding services to match their interests and lifestyle needs! Your community may also be experiencing this boom.

Both the school media centers and the public library are electric with activity! We welcome this hustle and bustle but each, in our own way, must develop strategies to cope with the increasing demands on our already over-extended resources. Many of these strategies involve creative uses of technology.

Last year, the Whitehall Elementary School in Williamstown was the recipient of an ACE+ grant of \$250,000 to improve academic achievement by creating new learning environments that include technology literacy. Subsequently these new learning environments have been expanded to include students' families and more broadly, the community at large.

This has been accomplished through program offerings in the school's ACE Center on a variety of topics pulling resources from the community and from the public library.

In this issue, Williamstown High School Librarian Pat Slemmer reports on two new and creative projects designed to enhance instruction using standard book research as



FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

Thanks to our guest editor, Beth Lillie, Director of the Monroe Township Library, Williamstown. Our Fall edition guest editor will be Carol Bruno, librarian at the Sea Isle City Public School, Cape May County.

We have an adjustment to make in an article written for the winter edition of Youth News. In the article "Juvenile and Young Adult Book Reviews," the book *Freewill* by Chris Lynch is actually suitable for grades 9 and up, not grades 5-8.

Just a reminder - any public or school librarian interested in guest editing an upcoming edition of Youth News, please contact Denise Saia at the Franklin Township Library, ftpl@yahoo.com, 856-694-2833 or fax 856-694-1708.

Have a wonderful summer!

Ann Wodarczyk and
Denise Saia, Co-editors

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well as technology, both with assistance from the library. Also in this issue, Jill Uncyk, Technology Librarian at the Monroe Township Library introduces a new website and a new program encouraging teens to "virtually" gather to express themselves through creative writing while at the same time improving computer skills.

Services include more than instruction and instruction is enhanced when it becomes entertaining. Read about children's librarian Jennifer Schillig's conversation with Chuck Bennett, a.k.a. Mr. Malcolm about storytelling and the use of popular children's and young adult books as the basis for his programs.

From the many libraries and librarians in the South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative region come an abundance of clever and creative new ways to serve young people. As their numbers continue to grow, so will our efforts.

Beth Lillie, Director
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CONNECTING TEENS WITH TECHNOLOGY@THE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF MONROE TOWNSHIP

A focal point for teen library visits is the computer, more specifically, the internet and online forums. It remains a main reason for our young adult patron visits to public libraries. Furthermore, teens want more access to technology and better training in using it. The Free Public Library of Monroe Township is prepared to engage teens in a technology project with an interactive website created specifically for their age group. The library has registered a new domain at <http://teenlibstuff.net>

The goal of the new site is to create a virtual space in which teens, ages 14-19 can get together and express their individuality through technology while increasing computer skills. The website currently features YaBB, an open source Bulletin Board System available to webmasters. With YaBB, young adults can create discussion threads, post responses to existing topics and share ideas about programming. The site's main feature is a Movable Type blog (see references to sites about blogging terms and descriptions at the end of the article) for teens to develop age-specific reading lists, homework guides and use as a forum to post creative writing. The newsfeed (or RSS feed) on the Movable Type page includes headlines from publications such as Rolling Stone, which lists music and pop culture news, a specific interest to the target age group. The site's latest feature is an interactive story program developed by a freelance perl programmer for unix servers. It is a choose your own adventure story entirely written by the page's visitors. Check it out and write a chapter at: <http://teenlibstuff.net/cgi-bin/story/story.pl>

The technology librarian will serve as a moderator and trainer for the teens. The teens can develop their skills in webpage design, creative writing, organizing electronic information and most importantly, learning to navigate through cyberspace in a useful, safe and moderated environment. The tools that teens learn through this site such as webpage design and producing interest related subject guides, will be invaluable to their education and skill-set. Furthermore, they are encouraged to develop a portfolio of individual creative work, which can be displayed for family and friends and hopefully exhibited as a college and career portfolio. With parental permission, teens can set up email accounts on the teenlibstuff.net domain, which includes a "Spam Assassin," a built-in mail filter to identify spam in either the header or body of the message and then blacklist it as well. The accounts also include an option to trace the delivery path of an email address. These email accounts serve as safer options than many of the commercial free email servers that are offered over the web and targeted by spammers to hit a large number of users.

While the site is an ongoing project with a spring launch date, the library encourages teens from the Williamstown community to please come into the library or contact the Technology Librarian to share ideas for content. It is so important that teens feel connected to this project and use it as an outlet not just to connect with other teens in the community or search college scholarship information, but one to express art. The site should depend almost entirely on Williamstown teens to make it an exceptional portal to young adult creativity and age-specific information.

To contact the site's webmaster/librarian for more information, please visit <http://teenlibstuff.net> and click on the link for info@teenlibstuff.net on the left side bar. The librarian will be happy to answer any questions regarding the project's description and goals.

For more information on blogging, please visit the following sites:

- *The Next New Thing: Create, Communicate, and Collaborate with Blogs* by Will Richardson. static.hcrhs.k12.nj.us/gems/centralISP/CILPresentationrevision.ppt or tinyurl.com/ywfhk.
- *Blogging Basics* by Darlene Fichter. library.usask.ca/~fichter/talks04/cil/2004.02.17.cyber.blogging.basics.ppt or tinyurl.com/2c7q6.

For more about teens, technology and public libraries, please visit the following sites:

- *The Coolness Factor: Ten Libraries Listen to Youth*. www.urbanlibraries.org/coolnessfactor.html.
- *Wired for Youth*. www.si.umich.edu/libhelp/toolkit/collectCombinedFAReport.html or tinyurl.com/yrb95

For a model of a teen interests site developed by librarians, please visit: www.ipl.org/div/teen.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE ACE CENTER?

The ACE Center (Access Collaboration Equity) is located in the Whitehall Elementary School, Williamstown. As the recipient of an ACE+ grant to improve academic achievement by creating new learning environments that include technology literacy, many wonderful programs have been offered. Here is what took place in April:

- **Open Times for Students** - students were invited to work on class projects, do homework, research on the internet or practice computer skills. The program was open to all school-age children in Monroe Township.
- **Open Times for Families** - parents were invited to visit the ACE Center with their children and learn new skills, work on a family project together or use the resources for research.
- **Shopping on eBay** - participants learned how to shop on the most popular shopping website on the internet, navigate around the website, search for items for sale and create their own user accounts. An experienced e-bay seller presented this workshop.
- **Poetry Night** - Since April was National Poetry Month, parents and children were invited to celebrate at the ACE Center. Participants shared an appreciation of poetry and poets. The program was presented by local poet, Theresa Moore.
- **Family Literature Night** - parents learned reading strategies that can be used at home with their children as well as learning how to explore websites that will be useful in supporting the reading strategies. This program was presented by the staff from the Monroe Township Library.
- **Open Times for Seniors** - Seniors were invited to join the Center and use the facilities to work on their own projects. Assistance was provided in most common computer applications.
- **Plan Your Dream Vacation** - participants were invited to visit the ACE Center and search their fantasy travel location online. Lessons on how to book hotels, airline flights, and rental cars were provided.

For information on ACE, check the Monroe Township Library's link on the District website:
<http://www.monroetwp.k12.nj.us> or email: ace@monroetwp.k12.nj.us or call 856-629-6400, x-1049

A BRIDGE BETWEEN SCHOOL AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES: MR. MALCOLM BRINGS LITERATURE TO LIFE

Many schools and libraries in the South Jersey area have enjoyed the performances of Chuck Bennett, a.k.a. Mr. Malcolm. Since 2001, Bennett has delighted many audiences of all ages with his enactments of children's stories, either as a one-man show or with partners. One of his most popular entertainments is "Mr. Malcolm and his Amazing Hat Rack," in which Bennett, with little more than different hats (and considerable help from chosen audience members), re-enacts famous stories such as *The Jungle Book*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

"I was always involved in theater in some way or other," Bennett says. "I found children's theater to be particularly rewarding because of the nature of my audience. They are so honest; if you are not good they will let you know it!"

Bennett is flexible with the stories and books he chooses to adapt for performance. "You name it, I will do it," he explains. "My programming is always expanding. I started with the basics at the beginning. Some of my first stories were *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Aesop's Fables*, *The Three Little Pigs*, (and) *Rumpelstiltskin*. As I got better at telling the stories, especially by myself, I added *Thomas the Tank Engine*, *Tacky the Penguin*, *Jungle Book*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and so many others. I then branched into older entertainment with *Harry Potter* (Books 1 and 2), *The Hobbit*, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and so on."

For the future, Bennett is already planning a show based on *How the Cat Swallowed Thunder*, the One Book New Jersey selection for young readers, and *A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning* for older audiences, as well as an adaptation of *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

When he chooses stories to perform, Bennett says he looks for characters that match his own "animated personality." "I like vivid, colorful characters," he says. "I am of the opinion that virtually any book can be turned into a story. One must possess imagination!"

Bennett's audiences have ranged from as young as eighteen months (who like *Thomas the Tank Engine* and "any book with animals that they can make sounds") to young teenagers in middle and high school (who have requested *Lord of the Rings* adaptations). "I have found that most... (of the older groups) have not forgotten how to play 'cowboys and Indians,' which is basically what I do," he says. "Only I set it to popular fiction."

His largest group was a school assembly of nearly 400 people, for his Dr. Seuss show of *The Cat in the Hat/Horton Hears a Who/Green Eggs and Ham*.

To find out more about Chuck Bennett, a.k.a. Mr. Malcolm, visit his website at www.twiprod.com.

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TECHNOLOGY AND THE BOOKS

One of the effects of technology on the school library has been to directly impact how students do research. Many of our students are acclimated to the immediate gratification that computer access affords and students seem to prefer using the computer to replace book research.

Lessons designed in cooperation with the classroom teacher provide the much-needed input for requiring book, database, and web resources. It is incumbent on the school librarian to make sure that students realize that databases are simply another format for accessing materials that might already be available in book form, and that this material is presented in a controlled, handpicked environment that is updated more frequently than the book material.

Students also need to realize that every source available to them from their library's shelves has been selected specifically to support patron needs. The same cannot be said for information coming across the worldwide web, where sources are varied and not all are reliable. Cooperative instruction should include search strategies for evaluating web sources for authority, accuracy, and currency.

Technology also affects how school libraries spend money. For some, databases may be purchased to replace a book order. Databases provided at free or reduced subscription rates from our regional cooperatives often allow us to spend those released funds for another database purchase or a book order to augment the library collection.

While most school librarians do not foresee future libraries without books, we may need to meet our patrons in the middle, by not only providing, but also becoming, savvy with the internet.

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WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

Students in Miss Henhaffer's sophomore language arts classes at Williamstown High School are experiencing world literature through a newly developed instructional unit. These students have an opportunity to study the works of traditional classic world authors including Homer, Cervantes, Dante, and Virgil. The works of several contemporary, award-winning authors, representing other world cultures, have been added to include Achebe, Allende, Fuentes, Markandaya, and others. Each student is researching an author's biography and writings to develop a better understanding of how the author's life and surroundings have directly impacted that author's writings.

The school librarian, Mrs. Slemmer, and the classroom teacher, Miss Henhaffer, worked collaboratively to develop the unit. Instruction occurs in the classroom and the library media center, demonstrating a true team effort that can only benefit our students. The students have approached this new project with inquisitive enthusiasm.

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South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative

YOUTH NEWS

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