Thoughts on Diverse Books and Programs in time for Thanksgiving

by Dr. Jamie Campbell Naidoo

We need diverse books for the children and teens in our libraries. In her TEDtalk, *The Danger of a Single Story* ([https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)), Nigerian author Ngozi Adichie explains the problem of one story creating stereotypes or only telling part of history. As librarians, we want to provide opportunities for our patrons to see representations of their cultures on library shelves. But not just any representation – authentic, accurate depictions of everyday lives and experiences. Children’s author and illustrator Grace Lin further explains this in her Tedtalk entitled *The Windows and Mirrors of Your Child’s Bookshelf* ([https://ed.ted.com/on/aOoOBODb](https://ed.ted.com/on/aOoOBODb)). She mentions that a child’s success in school is related to how well they embrace their cultural heritage. Lin further reinforces the importance of children hearing stories about other cultures too.

We also need to plan library programs that celebrate our differences while highlighting the commonality of shared experiences. Too often, it is easy to only talk about diverse cultures during specific heritage months or on holidays. While celebrating African American accomplishments during Black History Month or Latino culture during a Day of the Dead program is not wrong, we have to go beyond festivals, folklore, foods, famous people, and fashion/costumes when designing programs meant to celebrate diversity. Otherwise, we risk perpetuating stereotypes or creating situations that create a sense of “otherness” rather than building bridges of understanding.

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Thanksgiving is almost upon us. What books do you read or display in your children’s department during this time of the year? Do your books honor Native Americans and their accomplishments? Are they accurate? Do you ever read or display books about native or indigenous cultures outside the month of November? Do you have any contemporary stories about Native Americans in your collection? If you don’t know anything about a particular native tribe or culture, how can you know if the book is accurate? Fortunately, multiple resources are available to help you select authentic stories about Native Americans. These include Dr. Debbie Reese’s American Indians in Children’s Literature blog (https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/), the American Indian Library Association’s American Indian Youth Literature Award (http://ailanet.org/activities/american-indian-youth-literature-award/), or Doris Seale and Beverly Slapin’s A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children.

Speaking of Thanksgiving, what types of crafts do you plan for story times? Are children creating an Indian vest or headband that they will later model to transform into a Native American character in the story? While I know many of us have engaged in this type of craft as children, dressing up as someone from another culture does not promote understanding of another culture. It perpetuates stereotypes and reinforces “otherness.” Before you say I am taking the joy out of your program, stop and answer this question: Is it okay for someone to dress up as a person with a disability or as an African American? No. This holds true for all cultures. We can celebrate cultures by highlighting unique traits of a culture and the ways that we are the same - same but different. An excellent book to start the conversation in young children is Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw’s Same, Same But Different. It is a story about two children that are very different but have similar traits too.

Going back to the idea of a library program for Thanksgiving, I recommend reading a picture book such as Gracias/Thanks by Pat Mora and John Parra. This short book introduces children to a boy who talks about all the things he is thankful for. After the story, children can engage in any number of craft ideas to either list things for which they give thanks or to create a thank you present for someone. Another humorous alternative for a Thanksgiving story time is Gracias The Thanksgiving Turkey by Joy Cowley and Joe Cepeda. In this unique pet story, Miguel struggles with how to get his pet turkey Gracias off the Thanksgiving menu. The focus of the book is family and community, an aspect of Thanksgiving that could easily lead to crafts related to thankfulness.

While my examples and suggestions have mostly focused on children’s picture books, numerous other resources are available to assist in selecting diverse books for children’s and young adult books.

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**Webinars**

**Nov. 7: Picture This! Great New Picture Books.** Join us and publishers from Sterling Books, Albert Whitman, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Tundra Books, and Owlkids for a first look at terrific new books. Titles discussed will range from board books for ages 0 – 3 to picture books for up to age 8. BookList: [https://www.booklistonline.com/webinars](https://www.booklistonline.com/webinars)

**NOV 8: Big Ideas for Small Libraries.** American Fork Library has felt similar challenges but they don’t let being a small library stop them from having Big ideas! Join Erin Warnick and Lori Bonner as they talk about how to make small library programs successful. Syrsi Dynix: [http://www.sirsidynix.com/events/all-webinars](http://www.sirsidynix.com/events/all-webinars)

**NOV. 8: Hands on Fun with STAR Net.** Whether you are new to STEM programming or are already a “STEM Superstar”, we hope you will join us for tips, techniques, and loads of fun! [http://www.starnetlibraries.org/resources/webinars/](http://www.starnetlibraries.org/resources/webinars/)

**NOV. 14: New Youth Nonfiction for Winter and Beyond.** This free, one-hour webinar will explore new nonfiction titles for preschool to young adult readers. You’ll hear about new picture books, STEAM titles, and online resources for educators from Books on Tape/Listening Library, Simon & Schuster, DK, Holiday House, and IPG. BookList: [https://www.booklistonline.com/webinars](https://www.booklistonline.com/webinars)

**NOV. 15: Social Media Tips from NASA.** STAR Net is thrilled to host Jason Townsend, NASA’s Deputy Social Media Manager to pilot you through the universe of social media and share tips, advice, and lessons that he has learned from his experience directing some of the most-followed Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat accounts in the world. You will surely learn a few tips to help your library’s social media presence blast off! [http://www.starnetlibraries.org/resources/webinars/](http://www.starnetlibraries.org/resources/webinars/)

**NOV. 16: Take the Plunge: STREAM.** Add an “R,” Reading, to STEAM and ramp up student learning. In this free session, you’ll glean insight from STREAM practitioners and tips on integrating science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, and math. School Library Journal: [http://www.slj.com/webcasts/](http://www.slj.com/webcasts/)

**NOV. 16: Holiday Stressbusters.** What should be a season of love and joy often turns instead to tiring weeks of overspending, overindulging, disappointment and STRESS! Join facilitator Jane Bozarth for a look at common causes of holiday stress and ways to combat them. InSync Training: [https://www.insynctraining.com/complimentary-programs/](https://www.insynctraining.com/complimentary-programs/)

**DEC. 13: STEM Events for Your Library's 2018 Programming.** Join the STAR Net team as we provide background information on 2018’s high-profile STEM events and unique ideas and helpful resources for integrating them into your programming schedule. [http://www.starnetlibraries.org/resources/webinars/](http://www.starnetlibraries.org/resources/webinars/)

**DEC. 14: From Tots to Teens: STE(A)M-powered Ideas for Programming.** In this webinar, learn how to create engaging and skill-building STE(A)M programs for kids from preschool age to teenage. WebJunction: [http://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/from-tots-to-teens-STEAM-powered.html](http://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/from-tots-to-teens-STEAM-powered.html)
STEAMing Along

Since we talked about diversity, I thought some “Rainbow” experiments would fit in just fine!

Walking Water Rainbow
Content & pictures from http://thestemlaboratory.com/walking-water-rainbow/

This experiment is a great way to teach about color mixing and capillary action and it is easy-peasy, too! Results can be relatively fast if set up correctly.

Materials needed:
6 clear wide mouth jars or glasses (make sure they are all the same size and shape)
Paper towels (the select-a-size type)
Food dye or liquid water colors (red, yellow, and blue)

Gather your glasses first. If someone you know cans, ½ pint jelly jars would be great. Just remember, the bigger the glasses, the more food dye you will need.

Rip off six sheets of paper towel and fold each sheet in thirds lengthwise. You may have to cut off your paper towel to fit properly. The paper towel should be able to go from the bottom of one glass to the bottom of the next without sticking up in the air too much. Look at the picture here – the paper towel on the left shows just the right height.

Line up the water glasses and put a good squirt of red watercolor or food dye in the first glass, yellow in the third glass, and blue in the fifth glass. Then add water to ONLY those glasses with color until it almost reaches the top.

Move the glasses into a circle and starting at the red glass add a paper towel, placing the other end in the empty glass next to it. Continue around, until the last paper towel is placed in the red glass. The color will start to wick up right away. After several minutes, the colored water will have traveled almost the whole length of each paper towel. In another five minutes or so, the water should start dripping into the empty glasses. As time passes, the water will continue to travel from the full glasses to the less full glasses. VOILA! You should have a rainbow of color! *

The science: The colored water travels up the paper towel by a process called capillary action. Capillary action is the ability of a liquid to flow upward, against gravity, in narrow spaces. This is the same thing that helps water climb from a plant’s roots to the leaves in the tree tops.

Paper towels, and all paper products, are made from fibers found in plants called cellulose. In this
demonstration, the water flowed upwards through the tiny gaps between the cellulose fibers. The gaps in the towel acted like capillary tubes, pulling the water upwards.

The water is able to defy gravity as it travels upward due to the attractive forces between the water and the cellulose fibers. The water molecules tend to cling to the cellulose fibers in the paper towel. This is called adhesion.

The water molecules are also attracted to each other and stick close together, a process called cohesion. So as the water slowly moves up the tiny gaps in the paper towel fibers, the cohesive forces help to draw more water upwards.

At some point, the adhesive forces between the water and cellulose and the cohesive forces between the water molecules will be overcome by the gravitational forces on the weight of the water in the paper towel. When this happens, the water will not travel up the paper towel anymore. That is why it helps to shorten the length that colored water has to travel by making sure your paper towel isn’t too tall and making sure you fill your colored liquid to the top of the glass.

* If you have not seen much movement, you may not have added enough water. It should be close to the top of the glass. Also the absorbency of the paper towels can have an effect.
During the last month I was asked for information about partnering with school media specialists. Some youth librarians are having a difficult time with that. In my own personal experience as a library director, it was difficult for me to establish relationships with any media specialists I did not know prior to being a librarian. I was curious, too. I sought out your ideas as well as those of media specialists I knew personally, either from my days as a director, fellow MLIS students, and personal friends. I got more information than I can place in one issue, so I will continue the topic next month as well.

I start with the first two responses were received from readers:

“I’ve been reading to Kindergarten through second grade classes at Blount Elementary for four years now and I have yet to meet their school librarian.

“Conversely, the former school librarian at Wilson Elementary invited me to present on our resources to some fifth grade classes while they were visiting her library, but I have never visited a single class at Wilson.

“I’ve found my working relationships with teachers, both at Blount and at Pike Road Elementary, to be more beneficial than a relationship with a school librarian.” -Matt Williams, MCCPL Pike Road Branch

“I personally emailed all Library Media Specialists and Librarians within the school systems asking for recommended book lists that they might have a need for us to purchase for the students to utilize. I also explained that how I knew that the schools budgets were limited and wanted to see how I could help. I also, made sure that the teachers knew of the e-book options for their book lists as well. This allowed me to purchase several copies of books that were on the lists therefore opening a path of communication with us.” -Melissa Moncrief, Mamie’s Place Children’s Library

I next received responses to questions I asked of friends who were media specialists. Some agreed to having their name used, others did not.

Editor: Would you help me with some tips about public librarians partnering with school media specialists? Most of my public librarians struggle with this even when they have offered to work with them [media specialists]. We don’t understand. Can you help?

Media Specialist: I would say it is mostly a lack of time. We have so many initiatives, extra jobs, clubs to sponsor, etc. that the thought of doing one more thing puts us over the edge.

Editor: What if we wanted to do something to make your job easier? What would it be?

Media Specialist: Maybe go to the school media center and do something fun with the students.

Editor: That’s good. Anything else? I have had school media specialists be downright rude to me when all I wanted to do was help. Pretty much got a negative, don’t bother me response.

Media Specialist: Really? Wow! We’re not THAT busy. I would say just come up with something fun for the students that they don’t have to put that much work into. I think if you totally plan the first thing, and then do it, they [media specialists] will help out once they see there is value in it. -Alabama Middle School Media Specialist
After some of the same description to a friend who works in another state here is what followed:

Editor: I think that all public librarians really want to do is help you help your students and to help your students succeed. We think it would be most helpful to work as a team. What are your suggestions?

Emily: I have heard that a lot [media specialists being non-responsive to public librarians], and my best guess is just that the media specialists are overwhelmed...? There are so many working parts in a school system (and of course there are in other library systems as well) that I feel like a multi-headed octopus trying to keep up with everything. One other possibility is that media specialists are worried about their jobs. It’s been a trend for districts to cut media specialists and staff school libraries with aides or volunteers instead, maybe keeping one MLIS to oversee the whole shebang. Perhaps they are concerned about reminding their administrators that there is a public option?

I definitely agree that teamwork is a good approach. I have been lucky with our township library - I worked with the director and branch manager on some projects while earning my MLIS, so I had those connections coming into the high school. I promote their teen events (they send me flyers to put on our bulletin board), they come into our schools in May to promote summer reading, and we have talked about collaborating on an event or two in the future.

I think the first step for partnerships is to establish a good relationship. Have a networking meeting, share some food, and just build trust. As the only high school media specialist in my building, district, and region, I often feel isolated, so I really enjoy getting together with other library professionals. Also, rather than offering to help, maybe ask a small favor - in his autobiography, Ben Franklin wrote that, although counter-intuitive, people like you better when you ask them to help you. And aren’t most of us in this business because we want to help people (and have a hard time saying no)?

Aside from that, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. Just like each of our communities have different needs, so do our schools & our media specialists. I think once relationships are established, those needs will be made known, and people can move forward in partnership from there.

-Emily Wilt, Chesterton High School (IN) Media Specialist

Next month I will include some ideas and photos from our readers.
Similarly, there are many examples online planning library programs that celebrate cultural diversity. Below are a few suggestions for you to gobble up. Enjoy!


**Importance of Diversity in Library Programs and Material Collections for Children – Whitepaper** published by the Association for Library Service to Children about why libraries should provide diversity in the services, programs, and collections they offer. Available: [http://www.ala.org/alsc/importance-diversity](http://www.ala.org/alsc/importance-diversity)

**Reading While White** – Critical blog by four white children’s librarians that examines cultural diversity in children’s and YA literature and how white culture influences interactions with diverse books. Available: [http://readingwhilewhite.blogspot.com](http://readingwhilewhite.blogspot.com)

**Embracing Diversity: Sharing Our Songs and Rhymes** by Burnaby Public Library (Canada). Suggests many songs and story time ideas for promoting cultural understanding in multiple languages. Available: [http://bpl.bc.ca/kids/embracing-diversity/program-ideas](http://bpl.bc.ca/kids/embracing-diversity/program-ideas)

**Día: Celebrating Diversity in Action** – Provides recommended book lists to celebrate diversity as well as step-by-step information on how to plan culturally diverse programs for children. Available: [http://dia.ala.org](http://dia.ala.org)


This picture was taken of the “PRIDE” display in the YA section of the main branch of the Charleston (SC) County Library in April 2017. -photo by G. Sheldon
More STEAMing Along

**Make your Own Spectroscope**

Content & pictures from: [https://buggyandbuddy.com/homemade-spectroscope/](https://buggyandbuddy.com/homemade-spectroscope/)

Make a homemade spectroscope with a few simple materials and explore the spectrum of different light sources. You’ll see all kinds of rainbows! Light experiments are always fun, especially when they involve rainbows!

**Materials needed:**

- Empty paper towel roll
- Craft knife and/or scissors
- Old CD
- Pencil
- Small piece of cardboard or cardstock
- Tape
- Paint (optional, but fun)

1. If you’ll be painting your paper towel roll, you’ll want to do that first and let it dry. (This step isn’t necessary, but it’s hard for us to pass up an opportunity to paint something!)
2. Use a craft knife (an adult should do this) to cut a thin slit at a 45° angle toward the bottom of the cardboard tube.
3. Directly across from the slit, make a small peephole or viewing hole using your craft knife (another step for an adult).
4. Trace one end of your paper towel roll onto your small scrap of cardboard or cardstock. Cut it out.
5. Cut a straight slit right across the center of your cardboard circle.
6. Tape the circle to the top of your spectroscope.
7. Insert the CD into your 45° angled slit with the shiny side facing up.

**Using The Spectroscope**

Start by taking your spectroscope outside. Point the top slit up at the sky (NOT directly at the sun). Look through the peephole. You will see a rainbow inside!

Now try your spectroscope with other light sources like fluorescent light, neon light and candle light. Compare what you see!

**The science:** A CD is a mirrored surface with spiral tracks or pits. These tracks are evenly spaced and diffract light (separating the colors). Because the CD’s surface is mirrored, the light is reflected to your eye.
YUM! Homewood Public Library recently celebrated National Apple Day with a caramel apples event for teens. Teens got to dip and decorate sliced and whole apples.

Stories, fun, and TREATS! It doesn’t get any better than that! The kids in Lawrence County found that out when they attended the Public Library’s Halloween Story Time.

The Albert L. Scott Library’s Costume Capers Party entertained children who love magic and laughter before going out to trick-or-treat. The star of the show was comic magician Russell Davis who tickled and mystified the crowd of dragon queens, policemen, superheroes, unicorns, snacks, and dinosaurs.
The Winfield Public Library’s Zombie Walk started around 5 years ago. We saw that the interest in zombies was rising and we brainstormed ideas to accommodate this interest. So we went to Google. We saw that a lot of libraries put on Zombie Walks for their town. Some were huge towns, some very small! So we all got together and planned the first Zombie Walk. Our first year we only had a handful of people attend. By our 3rd and 4th year attendance was 60-70 people! Each year it has become more and more popular! We have been able to add games and contests as the attendance has grown. Each year the Winfield Public Library staff gets together to see how we can make it even bigger and better!

Oneonta Public Library held two fun Halloween events. On the left is their first Horror Makeup Tips and Tricks Teen Program. Grace, a 15-year-old from Blountsville, Alabama, showcases her immense talent for the macabre. The photo on the right shows what happens when you have a Stuffed Animal Sleepover at the library on the night before Halloween. The program was supposed to be called Sleeps & Treats, but it looks like there was more exploring done after library hours than sleeping.
Title: Women Who Dared: 52 Stories of Fearless Daredevils, Adventurers, & Rebels

Author: Linda Skeers    Illustrator: Livi Gosling

Release Date: September 5th, 2017

Annie Edson Taylor was a teacher thinking about retirement. After years of teaching dancing and etiquette lessons, she was having a hard time finding students who were interested and she was in her sixties. Unfortunately, she didn’t have any money saved up. And she was tired of a boring life—she wanted to do something fun! So for her 63rd birthday she decided to celebrate with a splash! She spread the word far and wide that she planned to go over the Niagara Falls in a barrel! She did and became the first person to successfully go over the falls and survive.

Libby Riddles loved the outdoors as a child, so as soon as she was old enough she made the move to Alaska. But building a cabin and living out in the woods wasn’t enough for her! In 1973 she became fascinated with dog mushing. She built her own team and trained with them constantly. She entered her first race in 1978 and she won! But she didn’t stop there. She decided to take on one of the toughest dog sledding races there is—the Iditarod. It took multiple tries, but the third time was the charm and she became the first woman to ever win the Iditarod despite the horrible conditions that year.

Ella Hattan had a mother who taught her how to fence from an early age, and she fell in love with the sport. When she was 18, she managed to become enrolled in the School of Arms and trained in fighting with anything that had a blade on it, from daggers to broadswords to bayonets! She toured the country performing in front of crowds and challenged man after man to a duel. To their dismay, she beat them all! By 1890 she had beaten over 60 men and had come to be known as the Queen of the Sword. Despite offering $5,000 as a reward, no one wanted to fight her anymore, so she decided to share her skills with any women who were interested.

Women Who Dared is a great read for those wanting to learn about the sorts of women that don’t make it into the history books (more the pity, because I would have enjoyed history a lot more if they had!) The format of the book is one page telling the woman’s story, with a full page illustration on the next. I really loved paging through it, but I definitely wouldn’t recommend reading it straight through. It’s a little too much to just sit down and read. Not because the writing is dry, it is just a lot of condensed information that you’ll want to savor instead of devour. I actually really enjoyed both the writing style and the illustrations. Highly recommended addition to any library!

Recommended for: Anyone who likes history, but especially those of the feminine persuasion whether they are big history fans or not. It’s fun to read about the adventurous women of our past!

Things to watch out for: This book was geared for children, so I didn’t really see anything I would label as inappropriate. There were some women who were involved in various wars, but nothing graphic was mentioned.
Grants

**ALSC/Candlewick Press "Light the Way" Grant:** The ALSC/Candlewick Press "Light the Way" Grant is sponsored by Candlewick Press in honor of author Kate DiCamillo and the themes represented in her books. The award consists of a $3,000 grant to assist a library in conducting exemplary and replicable outreach to underserved populations through a new and innovative program or an expansion of work already being done. Applicants must be members of the American Library Association. Visit: [http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/profawards/candlewicklighttheway](http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/profawards/candlewicklighttheway).

**Libraries and Autism Grant:** The “Autism Welcome Here: Library Programs, Services and More” grant is sponsored by Libraries and Autism: We’re Connected. Applications open: September 1, 2017; Deadline for submissions is December 1, 2017. For more information: [http://librariesandautism.org/grant/](http://librariesandautism.org/grant/)

Other Stuff

**2018 Programming Opportunities from STAR Net:** From Engineers Week to the launch of the NASA’s InSight Mars Lander, 2018 has an abundance of high-profile events that could tie into your library’s programming... and the time to start planning is now! Be sure to register for our December 13th webinar which will provide background information on the events below.

- Engineers Week (February 18-24, 2018)
- Earth Day (April 22, 2018)
- InSight Mars Lander Launch (May 5, 2018)
- Parker Solar Probe Launch (July/August, 2018)
- Lights On Afterschool (October, 2018)
- International Observe the Moon Night (October, 2018)

**New Exhibition Opportunity from NCIL:** The National Center for Interactive Learning (NCIL) at the Space Science Institute (SSI) is seeking eight library and museum partner sites to host the inaugural national tour of the interactive traveling exhibition Discover Exoplanets: the Search for Alien Earths. Public libraries and small museum partners in rural areas and those serving rural populations and underrepresented groups are especially invited to apply. Applications must be completed and received by no later than 11:59 pm on January 5, 2018. Also, stay tuned for a registration announcement for the pre-application webinar which will be held on December 6, 2017. For Guidelines: [http://www.starnetlibraries.org/portfolio-items/discover-exoplanets/](http://www.starnetlibraries.org/portfolio-items/discover-exoplanets/)

Yakety-YAK Needs YOU!

Do you have youth program pictures you’d like to share? Do you have a specialty or topic that you would like to write an article about? Have you had a successful youth program that can easily be scaled for small libraries with few $$ and staff? If so, please send your step-by-step of why you did it, how you did it, and any special information. Please include several pictures. Email ideas to gsheldon@apls.state.al.us.