Webcomics often feature storylines that aren’t typically published by mainstream groups.
The Star Power webcomic perfectly fits the 2019 Summer Reading Program theme

Next thing she knows, she's floating in space, somehow not dead, and hostiles are attacking her and the station.

I'm sure you can guess where things go from here. It is a superhero story after all. Star Power has everything you might want in a space adventure and more. Yes, you get the aliens, the futuristic government filled with different species working together, villains, cool fight scenes, and so on. But you also get meaningful relationships, in depth universe building, beautiful artwork, incredible story lines, and so much more. It’s a genuine work of love with so many wonderful messages. It isn’t some dark grim story where authors try to probe the depths of how far humanity can sink. There are no overpowered two dimensional characters that can fix everything with little effort and never do anything personally wrong. Yes, Star Power is a superhero story, yet it is also a story of hope, of what can be accomplished by working together, and the fact that choosing to do the right thing is a choice you have to make over and over again - and it’s one you can make even after you have made a wrong one. That powers aren’t important, but making the choice to make a difference is. Characters make mistakes. They’re goofy. They’re addicted to a crappy tv show. The universe isn’t a perfect utopia, but it’s a good place. It’s dream for the future that I honestly want to believe in.

And it’s online. For free, if anyone wants to check it out. If you’re ok buying from a place that isn’t Amazon or Ingram, you can even buy the first four volumes in print. Going by movie ratings, I’d call it PG-13 and it’s a story all ages can enjoy. It also fits the Summer Reading theme perfectly, which is what started me writing this article in the first place. The author, Michael Terracciano, is an amateur astronomer and his love of the stars is woven throughout the story. It is illustrated by Garth Graham, who does a marvelous job bringing that love to life. Don’t have it in the budget? You can share the link on social media and your website this summer.

Also, I should mention that I’ve contacted Michael, and he’s agreed to do a Skype interview for our library this summer for free (and was fine with being contacted by other libraries as well!) We’re truly excited for the chance to host an event with him as the guest (and are planning on offering an honorarium). The way media is consumed is changing, and this is giving us the chance to step into new realms as we try to provide as much as we can to our patrons. I highly recommend checking out Star Power. I hope it serves as a gateway drug for both you and your library. And if you need more webcomic recommendations, just send me an email at oplprogramming@gmail.com! I’ll be happy to share. There’s really something for everyone out there.
The first two cohorts of the YALSA Pilot “Transforming Youth Services Through Continuing Education” that APLS is a part of. Two upcoming trainings will be held in Gadsden and Athens in March. Directors should be on the lookout for an email from Lance Simpson inviting participation of teen services staff. We will be holding more trainings starting in September. So if we aren’t in your neighborhood now, we will be coming soon!
Finding the Iron in Your Breakfast Cereal

01 Gather Supplies
Two or three flake-type cereals, one of which is fortified with 100 percent daily value (DV) of iron.
Several magnets and plastic or paper bowls

02 Start Searching
Place a handful of each cereal into separate bowls. Have kids wave a strong magnet over each bowl of flakes; see if the magnet picks up any flakes. Have children crush the cereal in the bowls into large crumbs with their hands, and then have the children run the magnets over the cereal crumbs again to see what the magnet picks up this time. They can also touch the magnet directly to the cereal crumbs. Then, talk about the difference in what the magnet picks up in the cereal that is iron-fortified compared to the cereal that is not.

03 A Little Extra
Explore the nutrition labels of the cereal boxes with the kids to see what other nutrients they are fortified with. Discuss DVs, and help kids research why and how cereal and other foods are fortified with iron and other nutrients. Kids can also practice math skills by figuring out DVs if they were to eat half or twice the serving size of their favorite cereal.

Get Pumping
In this simple model, the first bottle is the atrium of the heart, the second bottle is the ventricle, and the third bottle represents the lungs or body. Our fingers function as the valves of the heart. To make your heart model work, start by pinching the straw between the atrium and ventricle bottle. Squeeze the middle bottle only and watch your “blood” squirt out into the body. Keeping the middle bottle “squeezed” move your fingers and pinch the straw between the ventricle and body. Now release the middle bottle and watch your blood move from the atrium into the ventricle. Repeat, repeat, repeat to pump blood from the atrium, into the ventricle then out to the body! Once your blood in the atrium gets too low, you can take blood from the “body” and add it back into the atrium. Then start again.

Have a Heart
You will need two bottle caps for this experiment, but keep the third for a back up. In the first cap, drill two holes that are the same size (just big enough to slide the straw through). In the second cap, drill only one hole that is slightly smaller than the two holes you made in the first cap. If you need, you may fill some of the holes in with modeling clay. Next, in a pitcher mix water and food coloring to make the water blood red. The exact amount of water is not important. Then, take two straws and stretch and bend the tips at a 90 degree angle. Pinching one straw to make it smaller, slide one straw into the other and tape it to seal the joint. Repeat this step with the second set of straws. Next, place all three bottles on a table. Fill the first two 3/4 full with colored water. Leave the third bottle empty. On the first bottle, place the cap with one straw hole, and on the second, place the cap with two straw holes. Place the straws into the bottles, make airtight seals with the modeling clay, and get ready to pump!

STEAMing along

Model Heart
courtesy of steampoweredfamily.com

STEAM factor

• Heart rate is affected by many things. It varies by person, but also each person experiences variations in their heart rate every day. Many things can affect heart rate including age, health, activity, caffeine, sugar and more.
• In our heart model we are exploring how blood flows in one direction through the heart chambers. We have four chambers in our heart, the right and left atrium, and right and left ventricle. Blood will flow in only one direction – into the heart, to the lungs to be oxygenated, back into the heart, then back out into the body. The four valves of our heart are important for ensuring this one way blood flow. Watch carefully as you do the work of the valves as you pinch the straws. What happens to the liquid in the straws?
• Many breakfast cereals are fortified with food-grade iron particles (metallic iron) as a mineral supplement. Metallic iron is digested in the stomach and eventually absorbed in the small intestine. If all of the iron from your body was extracted, you’d have enough iron to make only two small nails.
• Iron is found in a component of blood called hemoglobin, the compound in red blood cells that carries oxygen from your lungs so that it can be utilized by your body. It’s the iron in hemoglobin that gives blood its red appearance. A diet deficient in iron can result in fatigue, reduced resistance to diseases, and increased heart and respiratory rates. Food scientists say that a healthy adult requires about 18 mg of iron each day.

STEAM books

Happy Heart (Journey Through the Human Body)
Ogden, Charlie; 978-1786371690

The Heart: All about Our Circulatory System and More!
Simon, Seymour; 978-0060877217

All About Magnetism (All About Science)
Royston, Angela; 978-1484626948

Magnet Max (Learning League)
Hughes, Monica Lozano; 978-1612542249
Thousands of Literacy Opportunities for At-Risk Young Children in Alabama

As Huntsville West Kiwanian Richard Hartz put it, "We can’t take the bad things out of a child’s life, but we can always put good things in." Rich knows about putting "good things in" to a child’s life because he worked at a Food Bank for many years. He also knows the importance of putting books in a child’s life, infusing it with literacy and opportunities to succeed.

Rich and his Kiwanis Club and over 95 percent of the other Kiwanis Clubs across Alabama have been putting top-quality, age-appropriate books into children’s homes across the state for almost 30 years — and enjoying every minute of it.

Jean Dean RIF (Reading Is Fundamental) — the signature service project of the Alabama Kiwanis Foundation, is a grassroots program whose mission is to put quality, age-appropriate books into the hands and homes of children in need in every county in Alabama. It is a way for people who care about children having the opportunity to succeed in school and life to provide tools to help make that possible — books and someone to read them. It is a way to provide a hand up to children and families in need.

Since 1991, through the generosity of Kiwanis Clubs across the state, Community Foundations, local businesses, various other caring civic clubs, churches, individuals, the U.S. Department of Education (through 2011) and the State of Alabama, well over 620,000 children across Alabama have received nearly 2 million books to enjoy with their families, and for many, the first books in their homes. Because of this program, children have learned firsthand from caring adults in their own communities that reading is important. Through this program, these books have made family literacy possible for many homes in Alabama.

When encouraged, these children are much more likely to frequent Alabama’s libraries, and because they receive three books a year from Jean Dean RIF to pique their interest in books and reading, the public library is their next stop for a great reading adventure. A public library offers the opportunity to expand that delight to different genres and a variety well worth the trip! Through their local and/or school libraries, they can enjoy a steady diet of learning and supported growth as a human being from library books.

Every child in every Head Start in Alabama since 1990-91 has received books from Jean Dean RIF. Thousands of state-sponsored daycare children also receive books each year from this program. Jean Dean RIF also produces several reading calendars to encourage reading to children across the state in all sectors. The 2019 Read to Succeed Calendar was published in partnership with the Alabama Bicentennial Committee to encourage reading history and fiction to children.

More households across the state have received Kiwanis RIF books to combat the number of functional illiterate adults in Alabama. Kiwanians are making sure children see the fun in reading early and have the benefit of books in their homes to enjoy. Literacy continues to be an important factor in success in school and life. National research shows putting books in children’s homes greatly impacts their interest in reading and also that of their families. Simply put, books in homes greatly increases the number who learn to read. Early literacy development produces reading successes later in life.

See RIF continued on page 8
Straw into Gold: 
Fairy Tales Respun

written by Hilary McKay
illustrated by Sarah Gibb
Release date: Feb. 5, 2019

Fairy tales have been told and retold throughout the centuries, with each teller giving their tale a different spin. One might think that there's nothing new to be found in yet another retelling of such a fan favorite as, say, Cinderella, but McKay's Straw into Gold proves that belief false.

One of my favorite tricks McKay uses is a different point of view in most stories. Snow White's chapter is a great example of this. Sophie, a young princess, finds a shard of glass in her home and starts focusing on how pretty she is to a dangerous degree. Family members are confused, and when Sophie gets the chicken pox she is sent to stay with her grandmother. Sophie is disturbed by how ugly the pox makes her look and to help keep her distracted her grandmother starts to tell a story she'd never heard before. As she listens she realizes that appearances can be deceiving, that there are things much more important than her looks, and breaks the spell the mirror shard cast upon her. Finding out that Snow White is her grandmother was a sweet culmination to the tale.

Then we had the Pied Piper, which is one of her retellings that will stick with me for a long time. Hearing the story from the Mayor's perspective was chilling. His logic, his reasoning, and how in the end he reworked things in his mind to remain completely innocent by the end left a deep feeling of unease, purely because it was so realistic and yet horrible.

These were only a couple highlights from tales McKay tackled in Straw into Gold, but honestly I loved every one. Cinderella's determination to stay positive, the introspection in Rumpelstiltskin's tale that birth parents aren't always the best parents, how you can get so trapped into believing there's only one solution in The Princess and the Pea...every tale had some theme to it, but was perfectly woven into a story that could stand on its own while also recognizing and giving homage to its origin.

More than anything, Straw into Gold contains stories I can easily imagine sitting down and reading to children in front of a fireplace. They have a presence, a life of their own that all the good fairy tales have while addressing themes in a way that does not preach, but simply shows. I adore this collection and would be the first in line to buy if she ever publishes another one.

I would also like to add that the simple illustrations in this book are quite lovely, and seem to pay homage to the past and present as much as the stories themselves to. They pair beautifully with the book and add another dimension to the tales.

**Recommended for:** Fans of fantasy and fairy tales of any age.

**Things to watch out for:** These are not as graphic as regular fairy tales. There are some mentions of fairy tale levels of violence, but it is not at all explicit or gory.
WHAT'S UP? Webinars

February 21
Stay Mentally Alert and Sane: Government Resources For Good Mental Health

This webinar will offer information on where to find resources on mental health including the National Institute of Mental Health, PubMed, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Information on how to help patrons who may have mental health issues will also be presented. Resources in other languages about mental health will be included. (Federal Depository Library Program) https://www.fdlp.gov/about-the-fdlp/fdlp-events-calendar

Using Social Media as a Tool to Advocate Diversity and Inclusion

Social media is a great way to start dialogue and conversations about a variety of topics and to meet customers where they are. This webinar will demonstrate how to use humor, pop culture, children’s materials, and more, to advocate for diverse communities, and to speak up when necessary. (Infopeople) https://internal.infopeople.org/training/view/webinar

Youth Titles Guaranteed to Jump Off Your Shelves

Check out wonderful offerings new this spring from Cavendish Square Publishing, Enslow Publishing, Gareth Stevens Publishing, Kidhaven Publishing, and Rosen Digital. Topics sure to be covered include STEM resources, news literacy, current events, social and emotional learning, and so much more! K-12 series nonfiction is what it’s all about during this must-see webinar. Booklist Books for Youth Editor Sarah Hunter will moderate. (Booklist) https://bit.ly/PRYSz2p

February 26
Stellar Youth Series Nonfiction: Spring 2019


Early Childhood Expertise Beyond Libraryland: Reading Life Between the Lines: Using Children's Literature for Tough Conversations About Diversity

We all know that diversity and inclusion are vital topics for our libraries and our democracy, but it can be hard to know how to approach this topic with young children and their families. In this workshop, Dr. Michelle H. Martin will provide attendees with strategies for using children’s literature to engage readers of all ages with questions of identity and difference. Dr. Martin will help participants increase their cultural competence for work with young people. (Association of Library Service to Children) http://www.ala.org/aslc/elearning/live-webinars

Help Teens Build Financial Wellbeing at Your Library

Join us to learn how to help your teen patrons become empowered to navigate their financial futures. As children grow, their potential to manage money and understand financial concepts grows as well. The knowledge, skills, and behaviors kids learn when they are young lay the groundwork for their financial well-being as adults, and libraries can play a role in building these important financial literacy skills. (WebJunction) https://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction.html

What’s New in Children’s Literature - 2019

Join us for our annual review of what’s new in children’s literature, both new authors and old favorites, that you can recommend to a child – especially when you are busy! This webinar can help you discover new books that you can offer to children who use your library, including books that reflect the diversity of the children we serve. (Infopeople) https://internal.infopeople.org/training/view/webinar

February 27
Social-Emotional Learning in the Library

In this edWebinar, Michelle Luhtala, Library Department Chair at New Canaan High School, CT, will explore the many ways in which school librarians can support their learning communities through co-teaching, making, reading, and more. (edWeb) https://www.edweb.net/emergingtech

March 5
Supercharge Your Storytime Assessment: Using Data to Tell Your Story

We know that Supercharged Storytimes DO make a difference in building early literacy skills and giving children an early start on reading readiness. But do the administrators and decision makers in your library community know this? It’s critical to keep telling the story of your impact and advocating for the value of storytimes for early learning, and having data to back it up will reinforce your message. In this webinar, you’ll hear from practitioners who have overcome their hesitancy around storyline assessment and have discovered the power of data to tell their library story. Get answers to how the Project Outcome early learning assessment tools can make data collection and reporting easy. With feedback from your storyline families, you can improve your services and gather stories that give life to the impact you and your library are having. (WebJunction) https://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/supercharge-your-storytime-assessment.html

March 8
Spring Picture Books

Is there anything more enticing than picture books to foster a child’s love of reading? In this free one-hour webinar, you’ll discover new titles from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Lee & Low, and North South that get children excited about reading. You’ll learn about trends we are seeing in we are seeing picture books today. Moderated by Books for Youth Editor Sarah Hunter. (Booklist) https://bit.ly/2GGKLu4

Early Childhood Expertise Beyond Libraryland: Early Childhood Development

The way children learn and develop affects everything we do in the library. From collection development to program planning, it is vital that we understand how our children learn and grow in order to provide the best possible programs and services for them. Attendees will learn about the different stages and phases of early childhood development from an expert and then explore ways to put that knowledge into practice. (Association of Library Services to Children) http://www.ala.org/aslc/early-childhood-expertise-beyond-libraryland-early-childhood-development

March 21
School Readiness Webinar Series, Part 3: Re-imagining School Readiness: Practical Implications from Research

How can research findings impact early learning experiences directly? During this 90 minute webinar, we will discuss practical tips and implementation strategies aimed at making the research on school readiness actionable for library staff. The Reimagining School Readiness Toolkit is a suite of research-backed resources created for librarians to help families prepare children from birth to 8 for success in school and in life. (InfoPeople) https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5930127298180944387
The book distributions (which includes new selections being read to the children) not only show children that adults in their communities care about reading, but also care about them. Kiwanians want to help children have every opportunity to succeed. The in-kind donation from the books and time given reading also increases grant eligibility in the sites served and greatly enhances other benefits which can be made available to the children and their families.

Jean Dean RIF was started in 1990-91 by then-Alabama District of Kiwanis Governor Joe Dean in support of the newly started Kiwanis International Service Initiative Young Child Priority One.

Kiwanians wanted to help young children since it was known that humans learn and retain the most information—both physically and mentally—from birth to five. In Alabama, the Jean Dean RIF program was founded to help our children develop mentally and to instill in them the hope of being able to perform well in school and life.

Because of careful purchasing direct from publishers, $12 covers the cost of three books each child receives, a savings of more than 50 percent of the retail price. This active program serves about 25,000 children each year in nearly 500 locations throughout the state. It also provides an in-kind donation of about half a million dollars annually to programs where the books are distributed to the children. That donation helps these programs justify about four times that amount — another $2 million in grants to benefit the children and families in their communities. Plus, each child served selects three books to keep and enjoy at home.

Partners in this statewide early literacy effort are always welcomed and can connect with the program by emailing Cathy Gafford, Executive Director, Jean Dean RIF at jeandeanrif@gmail.com.

Tax deductible donations are also needed and appreciated at Jean Dean RIF, 1105 Fitzpatrick Avenue, Opelika, AL 36801.
If you haven’t heard, the Alabama Public Library Service has been selected as one of 14 state library agencies to receive resources, training, and support through NASA@ My Library, a STEM education initiative that will increase and enhance learning opportunities for library patrons throughout the nation! NASA@ My Library aims to engage diverse communities in STEM learning, including communities that are underrepresented in STEM fields. The educational support materials and outreach opportunities provided are a part of STAR Library Network (STAR Net), a hands-on learning program for libraries and their communities (www.starnetlibraries.org). The Alabama Public Library Service is currently organizing a circulation plan for two project kits that may be checked out and used as a part of Alabama public libraries’ space science programming for 2019, including this summer’s learning event “Universe of Stories.” As we are putting the final touches on this new addition to the APLS website, stay tuned for updates and announcements as we are nearing the completion of a custom online reservation form that will allow libraries to see the circulation schedule and make their requests accordingly. For questions or additional information, email Melinda Smith at msmith@apls.state.al.us.