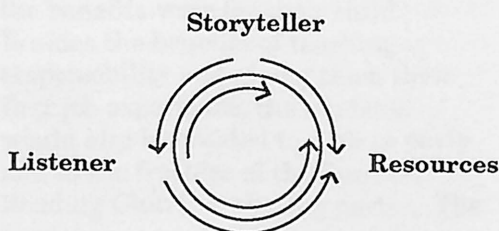


We Are All Storytellers: Continuing the Tradition through the Public Library

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Storytelling is enjoying a welcome resurgence, and the public library can play a large part in furthering this oral tradition which brings the true magic and imagination of literature before an audience. The children's librarian can play an especially important part in this type of cultural experience since the daily contacts this professional makes reach all age levels. An enthusiasm for storytelling can be contagious to all who come in contact with it.

Storytelling perpetuates a circle of resources and people. They are actually several points around a circumference and eventually each may affect and interact with the others.



The librarian can be included at each of the three points on the circle—as a teller, as a listener, and as a resource person.

As a resource person, the librarian has in her workplace access to the many folktales, fairy tales, and even fantasies which provide the inspiration and written page that may become the spoken word. Many librarians are already using some of these resources to present storytelling on a regular basis even though it is not always in the 'purest' form of storyteller and audience alone. The easiest type of storytelling includes the use of props whether they be puppets, flannel board characters, or musical instruments. The attention of the audience is brought to the voice of the person. If you are already doing this type of simple storytelling the next step is to learn and tell a story. For suggestions on developing your talents try the following books for practical suggestions on selecting and learning stories:

- Baker, Augusta. *Storytelling: Art and Technique*. New York: Bowker, 1977
- Barton, Bob. *Tell Me Another: Storytelling and Reading Aloud at Home, at School, and in the Community*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers, 1986
- Bauer, Caroline. *Handbook for Storytellers*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1977

- Sawyer, Ruth. *The Way of the Storyteller*. New York: Penguin Books, 1976

A children's librarian who has regularly scheduled story times already has an audience with which to practice. Programming! A powerful word to librarians. It can represent the positive communication of library talent to the public through the librarian herself or other programs she brings to her library, and programming at its best reaches all levels. From the smallest toddler to the preschooler, to the school age child, to the adult who transports to the library and may also attend a program, the use of storytelling can represent a whole new side to literature. It can be a wonderful discovery for the teller and the listener. Once the discovery is made it can develop into a new interest or pursuit for both sides. Although programming at its best may incorporate more than just the reading of a book, the children who are involved in storytimes and in listening situations may become as they grow older the biggest supporters of storytellers. Listening for enjoyment is a great concept!

In order to practice our own storytelling the staff of the children's department have found different ways to present stories. Sometimes schools are looking for storytellers, and, although they are first referred to "professional tellers," we mention that we are available for programs also. Twice a year we schedule programs devoted to storytelling—during October an evening of scary stories precedes Halloween, and another evening is scheduled in the spring during the vacation time of the community school system. Stories are learned for special programs, for example, Christmas. During the summer two of the children's librarians become 'traveling' tellers as they

travel to other area libraries as part of a Program Caravan sponsored by the Children's Services committee of the Central Indiana ALSA. Storytelling has even been done in the community at a senior citizens' meeting. The idea is to find many different ways to practice this craft, and the search is always on to find the right story—that right story being the one that is right for the teller. Some titles that may help you find the right story are listed here.

- MacDonald, Margaret. *Twenty Tellable Tales*. New York: H.W. Wilson, 1986
- MacDonald, Margaret. *When the Lights Go Out*. New York: H.W. Wilson, 1988
- Miller, Teresa, comp. *Joining In: An Anthology of Audience Participation Stories and How to Tell Them*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Yellow Moon Press, 1988
- Pellowski, Anne. *The Family Storytelling Handbook*. New York: Macmillan, 1988
- Pellowski, Anne. *The Story Vine*. New York: Macmillan, 1984

The best way to get excited about storytelling is to go wherever professional tellers are performing and just listen! For an interesting account of how two storytellers began their career and have since become world renowned read Barbara Stewart's "The Mountain Sweet Sound of Success" in *School Library Journal* (January 1989): 17-23.

To find out more about the world of professional storytellers and their concerns and interests read any issue of the *The National Storytelling Journal* published quarterly by NAPPS, the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling, Box 309, Jonesborough, Tennessee, 37659.

Indiana can claim its own part in the continuation of this oral tradition.

Stories, Inc. was organized in the summer of 1987 to help revitalize the art of storytelling in our state. The first annual Hoosier Storytelling Festival was held August 17, 1988 at the historic Conner Prairie Settlement north of Indianapolis. Storytellers from out-of-state and from Indiana performed for a large and enthusiastic crowd. For more information contact Stories, Inc., P.O. Box 20743, Indian-

apolis, Indiana, 46220.

Whether we are relating the events of the day to a co-worker, speaking about the importance of books before an audience of parents, or telling tales to children, we are all storytellers in some way. Through practice and encouragement we can keep this tradition a strong one among ourselves and our community.