MUSINGS ON POPULAR NONFICTION FOR TEENS
by Mary Conrad
Sumner Academy

Last year at a Kansas City, Kansas school libraries inservice, the topic of popular nonfiction books was discussed. School library media specialists from various schools were not in agreement as to what is popular in their school libraries.

At the time, I knew some very popular topics in Sumner library. One Sumner eighth grade speech teacher has students think of new products and then requires the students to persuade the rest of the class on the values of the new products. Every semester MANY of the speech students think of some product involving chocolate. Thus I have piles of chocolate books on a table during that assignment. Every time this assignment occurs some students of other grades, both boys and girls, invariably want to check out some of those chocolate books. Rather than say "no, these are reserved for speech classes,” I bought more books on chocolate. Many of these books also go out throughout the year.

Anytime I make a display of some of the newer books on automobiles, many of them will be checked out. The more pictures there are in these "car" books, the more likely they will be checked out. Generally only male students check out these books.

Early in the fall of this year, the ninth grade English teachers brought their classes to the library for students to research the meanings of their own first names. The students then composed essays about themselves. Before the classes came to the library, I had to go to Half Price Books to have enough books to go around, plus I found a few good Internet sites. I required use of the Internet sites that I had found as I ran into many porno/kinky sites when I searched with such terms as "names" and "personal names."

This assignment turned out to be an eye-opener for me. The table of name books became a popular browsing area for students of any grade level, though girls have been the most frequent browsers. Students of all grade levels also wanted to check out the books. I did not shelve the books immediately because so many were looking at the books on the table. December has arrived, and I still have not shelved the books. In November when lots of materials had been pulled and used, the library staff did not have time to shelve all the pulled books as the staff was swamped. I piled many books on top of the table of name books. Thus the name books were out of business. When the extra books were shelved about a week later, the uncovered name books immediately were rediscovered.

I queried a teacher as to why she thinks so many students, particularly girls, are looking at the name books. She speculated that teenagers are curious about themselves and others and are trying to learn about themselves and others through their names.

A number of years ago the most popular nonfiction book in Sumner library for both boys and girls

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Greetings!

The opportunities through KASL are endless! From writing information literacy and technology standards to conducting research and providing district workshops, the list goes on.

Just as quickly as your daily life changes both personally and professionally, so does KASL, your professional organization. It is amazing that there are so many issues—some exciting, some worrisome—that come before the Council each time we meet. The wonderful part of the whole process is that KASL is blessed with talented, bright, and devoted people who selflessly share their time to work towards a better education for students. If you know Council members, please be sure to thank them for their efforts. It is truly a phenomenal experience to work with them!

I am very happy to announce that we now have an advisory council to communicate with our State Librarian, Christie Brandau. Christie comes from Michigan to our state with much experience in providing library services state-wide, and she is very willing to include school librarians in her planning. We are looking forward to collaborating with Christie.

Our mentorship program is up and running! Thanks go to everyone who has volunteered to participate in the Professional Partners program. If you are unfamiliar with the program, please log on to the KASL website for more information and to register to participate. This program should strengthen our profession by providing an avenue for members to share their experiences, expertise, and enthusiasm with others. During Tri-Conference there will be a session for partners and interested members to interact and learn more about the program.

AASL Affiliate Assembly will soon be here. It will be held in San Antonio during January, and Martha and I are looking forward to participating as delegates from Kansas. There is an air of movement and change within AASL, and it is interesting to note that more emphasis is being given to the school division of ALA. Hopefully, many of you will become involved with the national organization to help our libraries by becoming an AASL member, volunteering for a committee, and voting during the ALA elections. With support from ALA, much needed awareness of the importance of school libraries should prevail.

As this newsletter will find you in the midst of the excitement and rush of the holidays, I wish for you quality time with your family and friends. May each of you be blessed with the warmth and hope of the season!

Sincerely,

Linda Roberts
Greetings from your President–Elect . . .

Dear KASL Colleagues:

I’ve been reading SHELF LIFE by Suzanne Strempek Shea. Though it’s about an author working at a small, independent bookstore as she recovers from cancer, librarians will find they relate to many of her observations about writers, books, and people. The love for books shimmers off every page and AYP is not mentioned once.

I thoroughly enjoyed the District V and VI workshops in Kismet and Brewster I was able to attend this fall. My mom enthusiastically accompanied me on the long drives, and it was interesting to listen to her observations as an “outsider” to the field. People who don’t know my mom wouldn’t necessarily expect a retired farmer to be interested in school library workshops, but she pretty much defines the term “lifelong learner,” and is a living demonstration of the power of reading to transform lives.

As a victim of an unholy alliance between the stomach flu and an ear infection, I was disappointed to miss District IV. Mary Harmon sent me pictures from the event, so I feel almost as if I was able to participate. They are posted on the website under the District Workshop link.

It’s not too early to begin planning to attend Tri-Conference in Wichita, April 5-7, 2006. The KASL Showcase and luncheon will feature Angela Johnson, author of The First Part Last, winner of the 2004 Printz award. She is the author of several picture books and highly acclaimed novels for young readers, including Maniac Monkeys on Magnolia Street and two Coretta Scott King Award winners: Heaven and Toning the Sweep. The General Session speaker will be Alan November, author of Empowering Students With Technology. You can find links to more information on the KASL website at http://www.kasl.ws. Costs will be $65 for the entire conference if you pre-register before mid-March. The conference hotel is the Hyatt Regency: single occupancy, $105; double occupancy, $105; triple occupancy, $125; and quadruple occupancy, $125. Also plan on a 13.3% tax. The Tri-Conference mailing will be small this year, most likely postcard sized, so keep your eyes open for it. The postcard will direct you to the web where you can register or download a .pdf registration form.

As Tri-Conference Program Planner, I am excited about the forty quality program proposals I received this fall. Nancy Polette will present a pre-conference on Tuesday afternoon on Research without Copying aimed toward librarians working with third through eighth graders. Nancy will demonstrate strategies for involving students in research with NO MORE COPYING guaranteed! Skills in critical and creative thinking for reading in the content areas are presented along with numerous product models that require students to read and evaluate information and to show understanding of the data by encoding it in a variety of ways. Participants will see the best in nonfiction and discover formats professional writers use to capture and keep readers. Jackie Lakin plans to present a review of revised Library Media and Technology standards on Tuesday morning that will include release of guidelines for a locally administered 8th grade technology assessment.

Nancy Polette will be presenting three additional regular sessions on Wednesday and Thursday on diverse topics ranging from Historical Mysteries and Hoaxes to Strategies for Any Novel. Mary Peace Finley, author of Meadow Lark, winner of the Colorado Book Award, plans to present two sessions on Thursday. Many of our own local experts are conducting presentations on everything from programming to technology so there should be something to interest everybody.

In the meantime, I hope you are able to enjoy the holiday season with friends and family.

Best wishes,

Martha House
mhouse@cgrove417.org
Empowered Desktop
Nancy McFarlin
Wamego High School

Empowered Desktop (ED) is a one-stop-shopping web utility for schools from Learning Station®, offered to Kansas students by way of Kan-Ed, and it’s FREE. ED offers many wonderful advantages for students and teachers. For librarians, this could also be your opportunity to gain some ground with your faculty with regard to technology training and classroom collaboration activities! To learn more about this wonderful resource and how to get it, read on!

Some of the great features available include:

- **KSDE Formative Test Builder** - If you haven’t heard of this yet, you will! The KSDE has developed a test builder program available EXCLUSIVELY via the Empowered Desktop that allows teachers to create sample Kansas state reading and math assessment tests for students based on specific indicators. This is BIG!

- **Online Databases** - All the databases currently available through the Kansas State Library and Kan-Ed are also available through ED!

- **Education Backpack** - This is a really nice feature: it allows students to upload documents from their network files at school to a secure web account, then download the document to work on at home. They can then reverse the process to download the product to their school account, format it, then print it to hand in. Documents can also be uploaded (handed in) to designated teacher folders!

- **NetTrekker** - This wonderful subscription web search directory and engine is available on the Empowered Desktop!

- **Videoconferencing and Web Casting Tools** - this section offers Kan-Ed Live! archives as well as Mar-ratech online videoconferencing utilities!

- **Kansas Historical Archives** - these are digital library initiatives from Kansas and Colorado. Some really great stuff here for teaching Kansas history!

- **Productivity Tools** - this section includes access to the High Plains Regional Technology Consortium and the many teaching and learning tools available through them (RubiStar, NoteStar, QuizStar, etc.).

So, how do you get all these wonderful services on your desktop and get your students and faculty using it?

**First**, your school/district needs to be a member of Kan-Ed (this is also FREE). Check the Kan-Ed web site at [http://www.kan-ed.org](http://www.kan-ed.org), look under the Members section to see if your school/district is a member. If they are not, find the online membership registration form and send it in (checking with your administrators first, however).

**Second**, students and faculty need to be "signed-up," but don’t panic, it's really easy. The good news about this initial process is that once students are signed up (from whatever building, whatever grade), their login will work until they graduate from your district - their login will move with them all through school! Be sure to sign yourself up as an Administrator so you can design the desktop and better assist teachers with instructional goals.

**Third**, get familiar with it yourself! Learning Station and Kan-Ed offer some great help guides and fact sheets (Kansas Implementation Packet) available from the initial login screen.

**Fourth**, you need to communicate the fact that everyone is signed up (Learning Station provides login cards for each person signed up) and has access to this wonderful resource. Plan some "quickie" after-school teacher technology training sessions - create a flyer and attach it to an email invitation. Then, **KEEP DOING THEM**! Once will not pick up all faculty, so schedule one as often as you can and get some teachers excited about it so that they can rally others to the cause!

Alright, enough already! Here’s how you can get a look at it without being a member. Go to [http://kportal.learningstation.com](http://kportal.learningstation.com) - login as (guest), subscription ID (kaneddemo), password (guest12 - this password is for December only). Before logging in, be sure to check out the Kansas Implementation Packet link on the login screen for useful .pdf and text documents!

Enjoy getting to know the Empowered Desktop and collaborating with your teachers!
Lori Franklin, LMS at Prairie Trail Middle School, was named the secondary Master Teacher of the Year for the Olathe District Schools. Congratulations, Lori!!!

ATTENTION, ATTENTION, ATTENTION

KASL Award Nomination Deadlines

Do you want to recognize someone special in the area of library media services? Well here’s your chance. Nominate them for one of the following awards.

Distinguished Library Media Specialist Award

This award is used to recognize an individual of the library media profession who has made an outstanding contribution to school librarianship and school library media development in Kansas. Nominations due by January 1, 2006.

President’s Award

This award is used to recognize an individual working on the building level of the library media profession who has developed an outstanding library media program for his/her school, and has made a notable contribution to school librarianship. Nominations due by January 1, 2006.

Distinguished Service Award

This award is to recognize one or more state legislators, school administrators, or community leaders who have made a distinguished contribution to school library media services. Nominations due by January 1, 2006.

KASL Vision Award

This award is used to recognize individuals in or out of the profession who have contributed to the vision of Kansas school library media centers. Nominations due by February 1, 2006.
Professional Development Literature

Betsy Losey
Hays, Kansas


Much of the library research that is available today addresses rather broad, generic issues, e.g. “Is flexible scheduling the best way to meet classes?” In order to find answers to such a question that will help bring the wider, generally accepted theory down to your particular circumstance you need to know how to do action research. This title will give you the step-by-step instructions and an outline of the processes necessary to carry out a valid and reliable project that will support your request for change.

Nine chapters cover such topics as:
- Selecting a topic and conducting a literature review
- Developing the problem statement and creating the search questions
- Tools and methods for collecting data
- Analyzing the interpreting data.
- Finalizing the research
- Sharing with colleagues

Several indexes give professional journals that accept research projects for publication, a sample action research project and a list of websites and additional resources.

This title can help you work with classroom teachers to build projects at the school level, testing a range of ideas that influence student achievement.

These ladies did a presentation at the 2005 Tri-Conference in Overland Park, so you may have seen them demonstrate their action research model.

Hurray for YA!

Terri Snethen
Blue Valley North High School


Liz Hall awakens on a cruise ship traveling to an unknown destination. Is this a dream? Actually, Liz has died in a hit and run accident and is on her way to Elsewhere. Upon arriving at Elsewhere she finds herself in a world that is strangely similar to Earth but also very different. On Elsewhere, there is no sickness or death, the weather is surprisingly mild, and people age backwards until they become babies and are sent back to Earth. Liz is miserable because it means she will never turn 16, get her driver’s license, graduate from high school, go to college and fall in love. At first she spends all her time watching her friends and family on Earth, but eventually begins to adapt to life on Elsewhere. She meets her grandmother who died before she was born, makes friends and even begins to fall in love. Through all this Liz discovers that there are no easy answers in life or death and that “A human’s life is a beautiful mess.” The author’s gentle language and hopeful tone makes this book a pleasure to read. (Ages 12 and up)

Terri Snethen
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Project Committee Update

The Projects Committee continues to work on its latest project, the on-line survey which will be sent out to all library media specialists in the spring of 2006.

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about the scope of Kansas school library media programs, services and functions. All school libraries will benefit from the knowledge gained from this survey, the results of which will be posted as a link from the KASL web site, hopefully around May 25, 2006. Earlier results may be available from your KASL representative. We are working with Dr. Rosemary Talab of Kansas State University, who is providing the expertise to post the survey on-line. The committee is very grateful to Dr. Talab for her many hours of work helping us with this project.

Julia Fisher
Chairman, Projects Committee

Technology Review

Nancy Wagner
Washington Elementary, El Dorado

If your students are like ours they need to work on keyboarding skills instead of the hunt and peck system. There are several online keyboarding games that students can brush up on their typing skills. I have listed a few below. One site, typingmaster.com does have an education link with a free demo that works on the home row.

Online sites:
- **Home row practice** - [http://www.typingmaster.com](http://www.typingmaster.com) (You will need to click on the education button on the right under Typing Master for Education, then click on Typing Master Online free demo button, click on try out study area under free demos and then on the next page click on home row under lessons. Unfortunately, there doesn’t seem to be a direct link to the final site, thus these several steps.)
- **Typer Shark** - [http://www.popcap.com](http://www.popcap.com)
- **Baracuda** - [http://www.powertyping.com/baracuda/baracuda.htm](http://www.powertyping.com/baracuda/baracuda.htm)

Nancy Wagner
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- NEW -
KASL Advocacy Downloads Page

A new feature has been added to the KASL Advocacy web pages - a one-stop shopping downloads page!

Divided into various sections:
- Brochures and Documents
- Bookmarks
- Posters
- Proclamations/Resolutions
- PowerPoint Presentations
- Letters
- Kansas Library Media Standards
- Teacher Documents
- Billboard

The page will offer all Advocacy related documents, including archives of the Advocacy Assistant!


“Hallway of Heroes” Contest a Winner

Looking for a fun way to get students and teachers involved in Teen Read Week or other special reading promotions? Why not try a door decorating contest? It worked for librarian Amy Brownlee at Sterling Jr./Sr. High School.

To play off of this year’s “get real” theme, students in advisory or homeroom groups were asked to choose a real life hero, someone whose life had made a significant contribution to society. Each group then decorated their classroom door to depict the life accomplishments of their chosen hero. Students chose to honor a variety of people as heroes, including Neil Armstrong, Galileo, Sam Walton, Benjamin Franklin, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Albert Einstein, Jesus, and recent SHS alums currently serving in the military.

Doors were judged by the school superintendent, and the winning classes received a breakfast of homemade cinnamon rolls and juice.

Some groups really put some creative thought into their work. Standouts include: a Lance Armstrong door featuring the faces of students in Armstrong’s racing gear through the “magic of PhotoShop”; a door replicating a Google search screen honoring the founders of Google; and a tribute to motherhood, which included a mother’s “to do” list, a timeline of mom’s duties for her child birth through age 18, and newspaper-style articles written by students honoring their moms.

Another successful contest held in the past was a locker decorating contest to turn the jr. high hallway into an “Avenue of Books.” Students could work in groups of up to 3 to decorate a locker to depict a favorite book. One group chose to honor a beloved children’s classic, Dr. Seuss’s *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, by decorating their locker with wrapping paper, bows, and working Christmas lights.

To see more doors from the Hallway of Heroes, visit the Sterling Secondary Media Center website at: http://www.usd376.com/media/TRW05/trwactivities.htm.

Amy Brownlee, District Media Specialist
brownleea@sterling.edu
KASL's Name Up in Lights!

Well, not literally, but the new KASL billboards are up and sharing the good news with Kansas citizens that Kansas Students Achieve Because of Great School Librarians!

For November and December the billboards will be a) between Russell and Hays on I-70, eastbound at mile marker 183.2 and, b) on I-35 at Ottawa, westbound at mile marker 195.8.

Fort Hays State University Spring Enrollment

It is now time to enroll in the Library Media Certification classes for spring semester at Fort Hays State University. We are offering both TELS 852 Selection and TELS 853 Reference Retrieval. They will both be offered on line. You may go to <http://www.fhsu.edu/sws> to see course numbers and line numbers, etc. to facilitate your enrollment. If you interested in starting the program go to <http://www.fhsu.edu/te/grad/index.html>. Scroll down a little to see the Library Media Licensure program. For further help or information contact Linda Gardner at 785-628-4204. For future reference, all Library Media Certification classes are now on-line. It is anticipated that all the Education Advanced Degree classes needed to complete the Master's Degree will be on-line in a year.
was Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The numerous copies revolved in and out without gathering dust. Now those copies only go out occasionally.

Angelou’s title was replaced by Dave Pelzer’s *A Child Called “It”* and *The Lost Boy*. Like Angelou’s title in the past, frequently no copy is in and there often is a reserve list. The Pelzer books are popular with both male and female readers but only a few want to read the third title *A Man Named Dave*. Just this fall I have been noticing a slow down in the Pelzer titles as the reserve list is not as long and copies do not always go out immediately. I do not know if this slowdown will continue.

Go Ask Alice, a publication of the early 1970s, continues to circulate with high frequency. The other anonymous teen diary edited by Beatrice Sparks, *It Happened to Nancy*, published in the mid-1990s, continues to revolve in and out just like Go Ask Alice. Sumner library has multiple copies of both of these teen diaries.

Ritchie, the true story of a teen drug addict published in the 1970s, continues to circulate occasionally, but that title has never had heavy circulation like Go Ask Alice.

At first the Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul just sat for a couple or so years. I do not know what happened, but that book and the companion second book began going in and out frequently and that has continued.

I am wondering if others have had similar experiences with the titles and types of books mentioned above. I personally read more nonfiction than fiction so I likely am predisposed to wondering about the popularity of teen nonfiction.

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Save these dates!

**Kansas Students A+chieve Because of Great School Librarians**

**June 14 and 15, at Emporia State University**

The program will include:

- The Mike Printz Writers Workshop with guest author **Christopher Paul Curtis**
- Storytellers **Evestor Roper** and **Lemuel Sheppard**
- Sessions on booktalking, book clubs and more!

Look for more information and registration soon at [http://slim.emporia.edu/programs/summerinst.htm](http://slim.emporia.edu/programs/summerinst.htm)