As a librarian, I know the importance of dedicating time and attention to your own professional development. Over the years, I have had the good fortune to attend and present at national, regional and state library conferences.

In November, I stepped out of my library conference comfort zone by attending the Alaska Afterschool Conference held in Juneau. The theme of this year’s Alaska Afterschool Conference was *Shaking Things Up*, a tribute to the 2018 conference which had been held in Anchorage and was cut short by the 7.1 magnitude earthquake that struck on November 30 at 8:29 a.m.

The Alaska Afterschool Conference was primarily attended by afterschool professionals associated with Alaska’s 21st Century Community Learning Program. While public libraries in Alaska have been offering quality afterschool programs to children and teens for years, public librarians aren’t seen as partners in the afterschool programming effort.

The engaging, active and participatory library afterschool programs taking place in public...
libraries around the state aren’t recognized as being part of Alaska’s educational ecosystem. It appears that librarians need to be more intentional in calling attention to the important work public libraries are doing in this area. One way to accomplish this would be to add their library’s afterschool/summer reading program to the Alaska Afterschool Network’s Find a Program website.

Attending the Alaska Afterschool conference as an “outsider” (someone not associated with a school) provided me with a better understanding of the unique niche public library afterschool programs fill for so many children and families.

Strengths of Library Afterschool Programs

Public library afterschool programs are led by dynamic, skilled and passionate library staff who develop programs tailored to the interests and needs of their community. While library afterschool programs aren’t designed to support a school curriculum, they do support learning, exploration and creativity. Library afterschool programs are free. While some programs may have an age requirement, increasingly public libraries are offering intergenerational afterschool programs. These programs are designed to promote family engagement and provide a space for children to learn alongside their siblings or caregivers.

A few of the terrific afterschool programs currently being offered by public libraries in Alaska are listed below

- Big Lake Public Library’s STEAM Program
- Sutton Public Library’s Afterschool and Art Program
- Kenai Community Library’s Teen Programming
- Petersburg Public Library’s Curiosity Creates! Program

The Alaska Afterschool Conference introduced me to some of the great work taking place in Alaska’s schools to support and extend children’s learning. FIRST in Alaska was awarded the Alaska Afterschool Champion Award Presentation during the conference and is an example of quality afterschool programming positively impacting students' lives. All of the conference sessions I attended were led by knowledgeable professionals who care deeply about the children they serve. The Structure and Clear Limits session facilitated by Thomas Azzarella provided me with a solid understanding of how structure and clear limits meet the developmental needs of children.

The Jitterbugs! Integrating Art Into Engaging STEM Activities for Youth led by Karen Weston, Chris Etzwiler and Kenny Daher was just plain fun! Their session demonstrated how learning and creativity can be skillfully interwoven into programming for children.

At the conclusion of the conference, I was heartened to know that librarians and afterschool professionals share the same passion for providing quality programs to children and teens. It was evident that there is a great deal we can learn from one another. The challenge going forward is building a partnership that leverages the strengths of public libraries and schools so we can collectively better serve Alaska’s children.
I’ll be honest. It’s taken me a couple of years to truly grasp what connected learning means. There is a lot of focus on the digital aspect of connected learning, but that is just one piece of the puzzle. Digital technology is just one tool that makes connected learning easier, more fruitful, and more inclusive, yes inclusive, for our communities’ youth.

The Connected Learning Alliance, host of the annual summit I attended this year thanks in part to an Alaska State Library CE grant, defines connected learning this way:

“Connected learning combines personal interests, supportive relationships, and opportunities. It is learning in an age of abundant access to information and social connection that embraces the diverse backgrounds and interests of all young people.”

When I read that definition I think about community, families, youth, informal learning, partnerships, media literacy, inclusion, youth voice, and mentorship. Libraries are not mentioned anywhere in that definition, but connected learning is part of our work every day. In October, I headed to Irvine, California, to learn more about the latest research behind it and find ideas for new ways to support it here in Homer.

At the conference, inspiring, powerful stories of social justice and youth empowerment, told by young people themselves, were intermingled with demonstrations of successful family learning programs, research findings about effective practices that support equitable access to learning in a digital age, and examples of initiatives that foster the relationship between topics like literacy, social and emotional development, computational thinking, creativity, and community.

Connected learning was viewed from a broader perspective. Researchers, educators, tech developers, professors, museum staff, young people, and even librarians, conversed, played, and explored new ideas together. Not every idea resonated with my experience or my community’s needs in their entirety, but I could pull threads from each and share my perspective freely, growing the overall understanding of how to support youth in a connected world.

Returning to Homer, I immediately shared one of the conference experiences with local youth in an afterschool program. The program at my library was basically the same format as the Programming and Projections session I attended and offered a new twist on coding.

I challenged kids to program animated characters (using Scratch on our Chromebooks) which were projected onto a wall in our meeting room and then have the characters interact with physical objects on the wall (paper, etc.).

For example, this photo shows a young person, a basketball fan, tinkering with the animated scene he created of a basketball player shooting hoops over a unicorn. The digital unicorn didn’t show up well on the whiteboard so he used markers to modify the shape and added the basketball hoop with marker. Teaching programming skills and computational thinking as part of

(Cont. on pg. 4)
informal programs at the library helps kids understand how digital tools work, how digital media can be manipulated to benefit the author, and how they can use digital tools to communicate—all aspects of media literacy. They also solve problems, work together, imagine, create, and discover new interests in a low-stress environment.

With Paula Langsam from the DC Public Library, I also shared my experience introducing computational thinking to young children and their families as part of the panel "Connected Learning in Early Childhood." Our successes, in very different environments, are rooted in a common idea: How do we prepare young children to be able to communicate and express themselves in a connected world? What if we started thinking sideways?

In traditional library programs like storytime, we developed effective ways to use both low-tech tools, such as picture books, feltboards and blocks, and high-tech tools–iPads and programmable robots. These introduce and support emerging skills: early literacy, computational thinking, and early math in developmentally appropriate ways.

I am happy to share more about the conference. Please contact me at chaines@ci.homer.ak.us or 907-435-3176.

Claudia Haines
Youth Services Librarian
Homer Public Library

Young person uses markers to modify the animated story he programmed with Scratch and then projected onto a whiteboard during the Maker Club at Homer Public Library.
It was a wonderful experience to attend the ALA Midwinter Meeting & Exhibits in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on January 24 - 28, 2020.

It was my first time attending an ALA Midwinter Meeting, and it was very enjoyable and provided me with some amazing new programming ideas and collection development ideas. I highly recommend participating in future ALA Midwinter meetings.

My best advice is to go a day early and participate in a pre-conference. I chose to go to the "RUSA Genealogy Institute." During this session, two very knowledgeable professors explained the basics of genealogical research. They also said that important genealogical research information can be obtained through the recently formed National Genealogical Society including online classes.

I also really enjoyed attending the sessions during the "Symposium on the Future of Libraries." I attended the session about "Cross-Campus Partnerships to Help Students Fund their College Education." The high cost of attending college for the students in our region is preventing many talented rural students from receiving additional education after high school. Through a college scholarship information program, libraries could help provide additional information about educational scholarships available to the patrons in their region.

The session which excited me the most was "Literacy, Movement, Mindfulness: Bringing Story Yoga to Your Library." This program incorporates picture books, songs, games, creative movement and crafts. The instruction demonstrated a sample program that included the following: Hello Song, Welcome Song with chime, breath work, warm-up song, story and poses, games and creative movement, chant, savasana and a closing song.

As soon as I got back to Nome, I began ordering books and additional programming accessories to start our own Nome Story Yoga program.

I am very thankful to the Alaska State Library for this opportunity.

Marguerite La Riviere, Director
Kegoayah Kozga Public Library
Nome

The Alaska State Library has instituted a CE grant [http://library.alaska.gov/dev/grants.html#cegrant](http://library.alaska.gov/dev/grants.html#cegrant) requirement that we believe will help disperse the learning that occurs during conferences. Individuals who have been awarded a CE grant are now required to write a short (up to 250 words) Newspeak [http://akla.org/newspoke/wp-content/assets/files/newspoke/pdf](http://akla.org/newspoke/wp-content/assets/files/newspoke/pdf) article about their conference attendance to share what’s been learned with the larger library community. We hope this requirement will provide attendees with an opportunity to stop and reflect back on their conference experiences and personally apply what they’ve learned.

Julie Marie Niederhauser
Public Library Coordinator
Alaska State Library
Alaska Experience Corner

Submitted by Larry Hibpshman, Book Buzz Manager (Kenai)

But you too can submit to the Alaska Experience column

ILbombastico@yahoo.com

Children are perhaps the only true residents of a place. The rest of us choose where we will live; children have little choice. Yet most of us retain an emotional attachment to the places we grew up. Alaskan children’s history seems to need deeper investigation. Among other things is the question of what happened to children without complete families?

There were a number of children’s homes over the years in Alaska. Elwin Matthews, Superintendent of the Jesse Lee Home, told Betty Epps Arnett in 1952 that 29 places in Alaska claimed to be “children’s homes”! (See reference on page 56 in Book 2, below)

Here are two valuable accounts by someone who has personal knowledge:


Betty Epps, fresh out of college, accepted a Methodist Church U.S.-2 short term missionary appointment. House Mother to 11 boys, ages 6-8 years (through 3rd grade). This book is a valuable resource to understanding day-to-day activities at Alaska’s well-known Jesse Lee Home. The book is about people and not so much about official happenings!

Arnett chronicles her initiation to life in the home, and also that of Dolores Morey, another house mother. She describes most other Home staff and some Seward residents she knew.

And she talks about the kids! They act and sound like I remember Alaskan kids behaving—and misbehaving—in the early 1950s when I was an Alaskan child. I recommend the book heartily to adults and to older children.

(Cont. on pg. 7)

This reads like a narrative of Miss Epps’ first year at the Jesse Lee Home. Within the narrative is a good depiction of what it is like to live in a group community in which everyone is directed toward caring for one another, as they get along together.

There are other books and writings about Jesse Lee Home. Mrs. Arnett lists several under on the last page of her preface. There don’t seem to be many publications, however, about other Alaskan children’s homes: Woody Island; El Nathan; Lazy Mountain; Moravian and possibly more.

Elwin Matthew chaired the first Alaska Children’s Conference at Lazy Mountain in 1952. Participants prepared the first official Standards for Childrens’ Homes in the Territory.

Does anyone know where a copy of this document is currently available?
Not accepted: paid advertising; material intended to “sell; make a profit” rather than to “inform.” Submissions viewed as advertisements, unless item is of particular interest to Alaska, Alaskan patrons, libraries, or is submitted by an AkLA member.

Accepted: Alaskana—books, book reviews, or articles relating to, or of interest to, Alaskan librarians and/or their patrons. Informative material related to libraries and librarianship, especially in regard to Alaska.

Most anything submitted by AkLA members—reasonably tasteful, of appropriate length, “decently” well-written; author is willing to submit to possible editorial changes. This may include length, perhaps spellings, downsizing of convoluted sentences... (Editor will make every effort to let the author know of, and pre-approve, any significant changes before the material is published in Newspoke.)

Other—determined on an individual basis by “the committee” (defined as a group of at least three AkLA members).

If the Newspoke editor, or the individual submitting, has questions or concerns about any submission, the matter will be sent on to the Newspoke Committee.

Stay tuned for information about the upcoming PNLA/AkLA 2020 Joint Conference, August 4-7, 2020 in Juneau, Alaska.

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