



Sylvia M. Vardell, *Children's Literature in Action: A Librarian's Guide. 2nd ed*
Children's Literature in Action: A Librarian's Guide. 2nd ed by Sylvia M. Vardell
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pects of library service. In the chapter on grants, the discussion on goal-setting is a very welcome tie-in of basic management concepts, and the ideas for potential funding sources have the potential to create even more partnerships. The authors also give tips for making your case for funding and support, with a reminder that starting small often leads to bigger opportunities in the future. Collaborations between school and public libraries may have the unique opportunity to draw from two budgets, and sharing financial and other resources eases the burden on both organizations. Finally, evaluating service, tracking progress on goals, and reporting successes and failures is an essential part of implementing teen service. These chapters include planning for presentations at meetings and conferences, with handy checklists and sample evaluations for getting feedback and creating reports.

Two appendices and a generous bibliography are a nice coda to this practical book. Appendix A contains a month-by-month reading calendar, with ideas for a year of programs based on fun, and sometimes obscure, book- and library-related celebrations. These include the Youth Media Awards (January), the National Scrabble Tournament (August), and Dictionary Day (October). Appendix B ties into the chapters “Professional Projects” and “Professional Development,” listing state and provincial library associations for both public librarians and school librarians.

Better Serving Teens through School Library–Public Library Collaborations is written by and for school media specialists and teen librarians in public libraries. However, any librarian who works extensively with teens will find useful tips and insight for creating quality teen service in her or his library. New librarians will learn about the many aspects of collaborating and serving teens, while more-established librarians will get tips on keeping programs fresh and mentoring new staff members. Whether you’re a public or school librarian, teen specialist or generalist, the authors’ main point is still relevant—you don’t have to do it alone!

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Children’s Literature in Action: A Librarian’s Guide. 2nd ed. By Sylvia M. Vardell. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2014. Pp. xv+343. \$50.00 (paper). ISBN 978-1-61069-5620-6.

Sylvia M. Vardell created a second edition of her book *Children’s Literature in Action: A Librarian’s Guide* for an audience of undergraduates and graduate students interested in pursuing library careers and in “linking literature with active practice in the school and public library” (xi). A professor of library and information science at Texas Woman’s University with a focus on poetry in children’s literature, Vardell relies on strong regional connections to supplement the library science information in her textbook.

In this edition, Vardell's formatting follows a consistent model, with several elements included in each chapter: "Literature in Action," "Librarians in Action," "Authors in Action," "One Book in Action," "History in Action," "Standards in Action," and "Assignments in Action" (xii). In addition to these sidebars, chapters 2–8 deal with a range of children's literary genres and include the following sections: an introduction; a definition of the genre; descriptions of the texts; a list of major contributors to the genre; evaluation criteria; major awards; a biography of professional resources; tips for sharing the genre with students, parents, and children; and a conclusion. Vardell's suggestions for activities and lists of resources are excellent starting points for librarians or library science students wishing to improve collection development, outreach, and librarianship at their institutions and to understand the scope of skills needed by library professionals.

As a current education librarian, former art educator, and former teaching assistant, I am aware of many elements essential to the instruction and guidance of children in school, home, and library settings. I feel that Vardell covers most areas for instruction and involvement in *Children's Literature in Action*, with gaps in the areas of diversity (she does not investigate concepts beyond cultural and racial diversity) and current pedagogical practices. Including supplemental information about nonbinary gender representation, diverse family structures, differing cultural conceptions of gender identity and ability, pedagogical approaches to literacy, and scientific approaches to learning is necessary if this text is to be used in the classroom. Today's teachers need to be aware of regional and cultural differences outside their own experience, and librarians should be prepared to engage their communities by mirroring teaching practice.

Children's Literature in Action begins with an introduction containing many of the same elements described previously and serves as an introduction to children's literature in general. Vardell includes a call for multiculturalism, parental involvement, early-childhood literacy, and school librarians in every school. One of the strongest areas of this chapter is the list of suggestions for professional development (33). This section remains strong throughout the book and is a resource that should be highlighted. Good content concerning online book reviews (15–17), author websites (25–26), library events (27–28), and classroom exercises (37) is included in the introduction. For students unfamiliar with children's or juvenile literature, this introduction contains a brief overview with personal insights from Vardell.

The segments highlighting "Librarians in Action," "Authors in Action," and "One Book in Action" tend to focus primarily on members of the Texas Woman's University community or the Texas State Library community. The interviews and reviews of books included in these areas highlight themes important to children's literature, including Día de los Niños/Día de los Libros, choral reading and poetry performance, readers' theater, historical reenactment, audiobooks, cultural differences in literature, and the importance of early re-

search skills. Vardell often includes organized lists of authors, books, or dates related to these concepts in other areas of the same chapters.

“Standards in Action” are reviewed in all eight chapters of *Children’s Literature in Action*. These segments briefly cover areas such as the Common Core State Standards versus the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards and competencies and guidelines from national library associations such as the Association for Library Service to Children, American Association of School Librarians, and Young Adult Library Services Association and accrediting agencies such as like the National Council of Social Studies and National Council of Teachers of English/ International Reading Association. Standards influence the curricula of our school-teachers. Consequently, librarians are well served by Vardell’s introduction to the variety of guidelines published for schools and libraries in the United States. Vardell includes contact information for associations when necessary and sheds light on the functions of each organization.

Concepts related to teaching and learning reading skills appear throughout the book and are introduced so that the reader may do additional research to discover detailed articles related to literacy. For example, Vardell ties chapter 2, “Picture Books” to English-language learners without delving into the ways that teachers are using illustrations and personal narrative to teach second-language learners (72).

In the chapter titled “Poetry for Children,” the author highlights the importance of oral reading to development of oral fluency and understanding of language without directly identifying research tying rhymes to understanding of difficult phonetic constructions in English (138). Librarians interested in this field of research should read *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* by Maryanne Wolf (2008).

While discussing the Fantasy genre in chapter 7, the author makes the assertion that fantasy books appeal to “brighter readers” or to “gifted and talented” students because they use invented words and larger words (224). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) concepts outlined by the Center for Applied Special Technology (<http://www.cast.org>) stress the influence of teacher expectations, or affect, on student learning. Although fantasy may contain advanced vocabulary, book selection should be made with the student’s interest in mind instead of relegating an entire genre to students categorized as advanced.

In the chapter “Informational Books,” Vardell’s review of Jan Amos Komensky’s *Orbis Pictus* highlights another area important to UDL: visual literacy (255). She further explains that the Orbis Pictus Awards refer to this early children’s volume and that they highlight children’s nonfiction books with excellent illustrations (256). Ultimately, the teacher or librarian determines the best teaching method based on the characteristics of their varied classroom. Although pedagogical practices change, *Children’s Literature in Action* could benefit from a section outlining common teaching methods used by those in primary and secondary educa-

tion so that librarians will be familiar with the concepts being used in their communities of practice.

Children's Literature in Action divides children's literature into the following categories: picture books, traditional tales, poetry for children, contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, and informational books. Each chapter dealing with a genre includes lists of subgenres specific to the main category. Vardell notes that genres are defined differently and that some genres overlap. As an education librarian, I would like to see more discussion of the ways that different genres could be used in conjunction with each other and as supplements to history, social studies, math, science, art, and humanities lesson plans. For example, Vardell's discussion of *The Wizard of Oz* in the "History in Action" section in chapter 7 could incorporate notes or details about the narrative subplot, including William Jennings Bryan, the shift from the gold standard to paper currency in the United States, and popular American culture. Perhaps an additional book is needed to encourage the creation of complex text sets for use within public and school libraries.

Overall, Sylvia Vardell's second edition of *Children's Literature in Action* is a good resource for future and current librarians. The inclusion of web resources is excellent, and her love for children's literature is evident throughout the book. Texas librarians will feel right at home reading Vardell's text, and librarians throughout the United States will notice similarities between her Texas examples and those of their own communities. International librarians will improve their understanding of regional American librarianship while adding important information about children's literature to their knowledge base.

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