

# OSLA NEWS

Winter 2018

## Librarians revisit visual literacy skills



**OSLA kicked-off the new academic year with its AGM on 5<sup>th</sup> November at St Gregory the Great Catholic School, Oxford, followed by an excellent training session on *Visual Literacy*.**

OSLA members were reminded of the importance and power of visual literacy for readers of all ages by library professional and children's book expert Joy Court. Joy has a great deal of experience working with children's books in her capacity as chairperson and judge on both the Kate Greenaway and Carnegie Medal panels. Joy took us through a selection of some of the finest picture books to have graced the Greenaway shortlist over the last two decades and discussed them in relation to the Greenaway criteria.

For some it was a chance to reminisce about the genius of favourite authors and illustrators such as Anthony Browne or Shirley Hughes, but it was also a reminder that we dismiss pictures in books at our peril. Good illustrations and artwork, in whatever medium they are created, when thoughtfully deployed, open up new intellectual and emotional worlds for readers as well as entertaining them.

We should not forget that picture books also do their bit to tackle serious issues such as family breakup, refugee experiences, bereavement, war and bullying. Joy really imparted her passion for picture books and reminded us that visual literacy is a key asset in a child's education. On behalf of OSLA members we would like to thank Joy for delivering an enjoyable and insightful session.



## Membership

OSLA has always enjoyed strong support from school library staff across the county and we want to keep it that way.

OSLA fees for 2018-2019 remain frozen at £20.00 per year to enable as many colleagues as possible to continue being members and enjoying the benefits of membership including professionally run CPD sessions, opportunities to share ideas and good practice and of course the odd social event.

To renew your membership or to become a member please contact our Membership Secretary at:

**dickinse@st-hughs.co.uk**

*For information on the Greenaway Medal visit*

**[www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk](http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk)**

## Putting research skills at the heart of things

**On Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December members met for a morning training session run by fellow OSLA member Lynn Winkworth, Head Librarian at Headington School, Oxford.**

The focus of the of this session was research skills with particular focus on post 16 pupils doing the IB, EPQ and other independent research elements across taught courses. That said, Lynn was quick to stress that the fundamentals of good research skills are universal and can be taught in primary and prep school settings with some adaptation by library staff.

We began with a brilliant example of how to explain Boolean search techniques to students, which involved everyone around the table bobbing up and down in their seats depending on how many siblings they have, the age of those siblings and their eye colour. This is probably an exercise that will repeated at future meetings for the benefit of those who were not present but are now intrigued!

Lynn very generously shared the materials that she has built up over a number of years of teaching research skills to students at her school. Handouts included guides to research strategies, referencing and avoiding plagiarism and how to build a bibliography.

We also had time to reflect and put ourselves in the shoes of our students with a research task. As the meeting was kindly hosted by colleague Graham Gardner at Abingdon School in the newly opened Beech Court library, it also presented us with an opportunity to explore the environment and get ideas for our own libraries.

Research topics covered an array of subjects from movement, space, bridges, time and home to name but a few. We chose our resources, analysed them for relevance and provenance. We even had a go at writing a bibliography with old fashioned paper and pen, without the use of referencing tools in Microsoft Word or the various freely available web tools like Citation Machine that we may be in the habit of automatically directing our pupils to.

It was an enjoyable and worthwhile experience, not only because we could freely rummage around in someone else's bookcases and test out the new comfy seating along the way, but because it is good to remember what it is like to be a student approaching a large piece of research for the first time. It was especially interesting to search for resources in a library full of resources purchased, catalogued and arranged by someone else.

If you have worked in your library for any length of time you will probably be able to recall the position, just to the right of the window, under the clock, where that book about Napoleon with the red and blue cover is, without referring to you catalogue or even the Dewey Decimal system. However, if we are to help our students become lifelong learners we need to remember to build their skills thoroughly and methodically from the bottom up and also to model good research and information handling skills ourselves.

Thanks go to Lynn for prompting us to remember the problems and pitfalls students face when they embark upon independent research projects. Also for her willingness to share her ideas and professional knowledge about the ways in which we can help smooth the path to research success for our students.

## **Abingdon School puts independent learning and creativity at the heart of its new library**

September 2018 saw the opening of a new library at Abingdon School. The facility is the culmination of a project that began four years ago when librarian Dr Graham Gardner, with enthusiastic support from the senior leadership team, began outlining plans for a facility designed from first principles. His aim was to "bring together people, books and technology in an environment engineered to encourage independent learning and creativity."



The heart of the library is an extensive open-plan space, supporting collaborative learning for up to 100 students at a time; sound-baffling and other elements of acoustic design enable multiple activities to peacefully co-exist. Students can also take advantage of dedicated rooms for seminars, project work and silent study.

A reading zone offers soft seating for students who want to drop by and simply fall into a book, while a "classroom without walls" supports teaching for class projects. "Learning hubs", each orientated around a subject area, incorporate non-fiction books and journals with seating and workspace.

Reflecting the advance of digital technology and the persistence of print, the library has more than 15,000 books along with Wi-Fi to support up to 150 devices simultaneously; cloud-based printing and numerous charging points for laptops and tablets help students make the most of the school's bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policy. Floor-to-ceiling windows and the naturalistic greens of the colour scheme contribute to a light, airy environment and a calm but warm aesthetic, conducive to teaching and learning - and settling down with a good book.

The library is staffed by Dr Gardner - a full-time librarian with a background in academic research and children's literature - and two part-time assistant librarians.

### **OSLA Committee 2019-2019**

**Jodie Brooks, St Gregory the Great Catholic School, Oxford – Chair**

**Astrid Fraser, St Clare's, Oxford – Secretary**

**Donna Pocock-Bell, St Helen and St Katharine, Abingdon - Treasurer**