

Sara L. Schwebel: Welcome to the Center for Children’s Books 75th anniversary lecture series! We had hoped, of course, that we might gather in person to celebrate this important moment in our history, but COVID-19 has conspired against us. The upside is being able to welcome so many visitors, including alumni, from afar. We are delighted that you are here to help us mark this occasion! This is lecture #2 of our 4-part series. If you missed Professor Emerita Betsy Hearne’s opening lecture, “CENTERED: The Life and Times of a Book Review Journal,” it is now up on our website, and it’s not to be missed!

Before I introduce my esteemed colleague today, I want to thank the CCB GAs who have put so much time and energy into organizing the Center’s MANY talks this spring. Thank you, Josh Altshuler, Alexandra Byerly, and Helen Salkeld. Thanks, also, to Diana Stroud who helped me connect to the School’s fabulous alumni as we put together this anniversary series.

Today, I have the great pleasure of introducing Kate McDowell, who is an associate professor at the iSchool and a leading expert on storytelling. Storytelling has long been a bedrock of youth services librarianship, and Professor McDowell has published extensively on the kind of storytelling that takes place in children’s rooms, and she has taught countless students the art of storytelling performance. Her current research, however, takes a new direction in thinking about what Youth Services librarians’ expertise in storytelling can teach professionals in other disciplines, and how this expertise can be marshalled to inform information questions, in their broadest sense, within the LIS and information sciences fields.

Professor McDowell’s recently published research includes:

- “Tell me a Story: Why advancement professionals need to listen for stories” (Currents Magazine)
- “Paradoxes of Storytelling in Librarianship” (Journal of New Librarianship)

- “Using ‘storytelling thinking’ for advancement” (Journal of Education Advancement and Marketing)
- “Open Wide the Doors: The Children’s Room as Place in Public Libraries, 1882-1930” (Library Trends)

While book evaluation has stood at the center of the CCB’s work since its inception, as Betsy Hearne’s lecture last week illustrated, so has storytelling. As a core competency of YS librarianship, it has always been taught by CCB affiliates because the *Bulletin* has always, and uniquely, been situated within a vibrant school of Library (and Information) Science. In addition to producing the *Bulletin*, CCB editors and reviewers have taught generations of future YS librarians. This makes Kate McDowell an especially appropriate speaker for this 75th anniversary celebration: she epitomizes the CCB’s dual interests in book evaluation and storytelling.

Professor McDowell is emblematic of another aspect of the CCB’s history as well. The Center and its *Bulletin* have been characterized by *long* tenures: just five editors of the *Bulletin* in 75 years. Moreover, these editors rose through the ranks, mentored into their positions by predecessors. Now an associate professor and core YS faculty member at the iSchool, Professor McDowell’s relationship with the CCB began when she served as its Graduate Assistant as an MSLIS student in the late 1990s. She later reviewed for the *Bulletin*, both between 1999-2003 and again as a GSLIS (GIS LIS) faculty member between 2005-2010.

Professor McDowell’s central research interest, however, was in storytelling rather than in evaluating children’s literature. Beginning in 2009, she regularly organized and directed, in collaboration with students, the Center for Children’s Books’ Storytelling Festival. Today, as the iSchool Youth Services faculty member with the longest tenure and institutional memory, Professor McDowell is playing a central role in the CCB’s strategic planning process as we collectively think ahead to the next 75 years. Her energy, enthusiasm, and profound care—of

colleagues, students, and institutional history—is an invaluable resource, one I’m grateful for every day.

It’s a true pleasure for me to turn the mic over to Professor McDowell, whose talk is titled, “Storytelling: From Story Times to Epistemological Information Divides”

Kate McDowell: So back again in the dawn of time being our most senior colleague--this is so fun for me to get to say what a what a laugh. Our most senior colleague, it turns out, I also did a dissertation, and in that dissertation, I found some things that later became an article published in *Library Quarterly* and I want to bring this back because it does relate to the long-term chain of events that leads to my talking about storytelling epistemology today.

I did this article; its title is there. And what I really found was that there was a collaborative model of discourse that arose among women in librarianship when they were only 20% of the professionals in the field. From 1882 to 1898, where they introduced the systematic use of surveys, as a way of gathering empirical evidence. It was the first time that anyone has systematically use surveys, and they did this over eight years, and they did it as a group.

Thank you so much, Gwen, for that.

I'm going to try stopping sharing and restarting sharing sometimes Zoom is super fun with it slides, isn't it? Such a blast. Can you see Caroline Hewins now? She has an amazing hat. Great. Yeah, so really one of the best hats in the field, I think. So women, developed the research model, and the way that what they did changed the field in two ways and we're talking about the you know the 1890s on into the early 20th century. They set a standard for empirical evidence about library practice, and they introduced a collaborative model and discourse that sustained from this point on, and I want you to keep your eye on those two

claims, empirical evidence and collaborative, because they're going to come back around. As a good, as a good chorus my.... that advancing okay for everybody.

Good news. Alright so we are, we're at a point where there has been over 120 years of storytelling in our field, and I'm just highlighting a few people who are most meaningful to me, you'll see. Carolyn Hewins in her hat, Betsy Hearn at the top, and Augusta Baker in the bottom left reading with a child. Storytelling was part of the practices of these early women librarians working with youth, beginning in broad way in the 1890s but there's even some evidence from the 1870s, so if I'm lucky, by the end of my career, it'll be 150 years of storytelling, in, in the world of librarianship. There are more women who have done this thing can be named, and some men as well too. But I do want to emphasize that women broke ground here and I do want to pick up on something that Dr. Betsy Hearn said last week and give my own version. Children's literature was not fully accepted as a field of study when I started as a faculty member in 2007. It was not fully accepted as a field of study when I started as a doctoral student in 2003. It was not fully accepted even when I served on a first dissertation committee for the Department of English less than a decade ago. I was still the only person on that committee who would actually read young adult literature at that time.

So, when I say that these women blazed trails, I mean to say that as someone who's 2003 to present career in academia, my experiences, the trails are barely cooled down even now. These trail blazers did all kinds of things that are unimaginable to many of us, simply because the fires burned down to coals, which became walking paths that we are walking on, and that we're being walked on well before some of us even started walking. So, and so, we

walk forward right. So I've been teaching storytelling since 2007 and after about eight years of teaching storytelling which I still do, and love.

I began teaching a new course co-taught with Dr. Matt Turk 2015 to present and these are some of the basic ideas of the course. And I'll let you read those while I tell you a few others. Of course, we teach about how to reach stakeholders with data, of course, we, but we also teach about storytelling an action to advocate for social justice and to advocate for libraries as institutions, to advocate for more just practices in the information fields. We also ask our students to work against the mind-numbing vastness of data to dig into practices of empathy and to use data in advocacy.

This co-teaching with Matt really brought to light for me, in some new ways an ongoing tension between ways of knowing that have informed my world. Now I'm going to I'm going to tell you about an article that I wrote about this which is really related to the talk, the title of this talk, in a second but first I want to talk about what I what I stumbled up against. And that was this persistent epistemological disconnect.

Even now when I talk about data in libraries it raises hackles for some people because they think of it as positivist in an anti, an anti-metaphysical way so that data cannot be inspiring for example. And I don't necessarily want to make all of the cases of all the arguments that are here, I just want to talk about this roadblock that I hit over and over and over again where people would categorize these things as different that I personally didn't always see as different, but I would stumble into this a lot. Stories have not been considered information. They've been considered different than information for specific reasons in the information sciences.

For one, stories are about playful collective meaning making we make stories together, whereas information is about individuals. Stories allow, and this is a quote from Betsy Hearn, each listener to glean different emotional, social, cultural intellectual spiritual and physical connections with a tale. Whereas information is focused on, and these are both critical perspectives from Ma and Rayward, things that didn't fit into a computer or having this atavistic positivist perspective built in. So, this roadblock that I've been bumping into for my whole career I finally found a name for: social constructionism on one side and positivism on the other side. And it has, I think it's a roadblock for more than me. I think it's a roadblock for an interdisciplinary career because when people stay in their lane and don't push beyond these things we don't get the, the wisdom value that we might out of the possibility of sharing across these areas. So, I do want to say that I think stories are also empirically observable that we say the same story, the field of folklore, is based in part on the common understanding that the same story appears in many different instantiations that it can and will appear that way.

So I wrote an article, and I'm going to tell you about that and read you some parts of it, on storytelling wisdom and these are it's two major claims. I learned on Friday that I had the official acceptance from JASIST which is very exciting. Well, it's a coo, I'll use Betty's word, because I emailed her immediately when I got the email. It was really, it was really exciting to see that happen because it shows me that it's possible, that our field may be able to bridge some of these divides.

So, the claims really are that story is a fundamental information form that has been overlooked by the field, broadly speaking, and I do mean information sciences and library and information science both when I say the field. And because of this, we continue to think of

information as an individual phenomenon. Storytelling shows us that information and meaning making can be inherently collective, so this article bridges the divide between positivism and social constructionism that has been a perpetual disconnect. Remember when I said it when I was talking about history that I would talk about empirical evidence and collective discourse? So, I see these things is related, it's, I didn't notice this to last week when I was putting this talk together but.

So I want to walk through some of the arguments with you, starting with the definitions that I use of these terms: story and storytelling. I always start with storytelling because it's the action and the practice that matters to me. And I'll come back to practice later. So, the first definition. Storytelling means telling the story within the dynamic triangle of the story, the teller, and the audience.

There are three relationships of the storytelling triangle and they all inform each other. The audience's relationship to the teller hinges in part on how they understand the tellers own relationship to the story, as well as which story the teller chooses to tell that audience. For storytelling to occur, there must first be a basic relationship of trust between the teller and the audience. This trust is contextual and depends on demonstrating that the teller wants this audience to know this story. Whether a story's, whether a true story is received as a truthful or not depends on this trust.

Second, the teller has a relationship to the story. Whether as creator or reteller, an LIS storytelling the tellers and I quote, Bishop and Kimball here, the instrument, the stories, the main feature. The storyteller's not neutral, as they inevitably bring a

bring a point of view. And the most obvious example is that of a personal story in which the person who lives the story is telling it. This and other forms of expertise can create trust when telling a true story.

And third, the audience has an interpretive relationship to the story. That relationship is informed by everything that teller says, or gestures, or performs, or writes or records, etc.

In the course of telling the story but it is not entirely controlled by the teller. The audience's interpretation can influence the meaning of the story as well, because the teller is right there listening to collective responses that may occur in real time, especially in shared physical presence. So storytelling polishes stories like editing polishes essays, with the audience serving as editor.

I skipped too far, I have to pause and to find "story." Let me define story two ways narratively patterned information and narrative experience, and I think both definitions are important. So story means narratively patterned information. To be a story, language must be structured by the chronology of narrative--beginning, middle and end-- and the logic of narrative--character setting and plot. This definition invokes to intellectual traditions. First the beginning, middle, end structure of folk tales and their centrality and LIS discourses about story aesthetics and categorization, and two, the logic of narrative as defined in semiotics. So story as folk tale has been central to LIS storytelling scholarship. Betsy Hearn, Marguerite McDonald, Brian Sturm and others have shown this to be the case.

I quoted Betsy earlier and I'm going to quote even longer folklorist and acclaimed storyteller Betsy Hearne lauds the aesthetics of folkloric stories with their quote, "Fast moving highly structured elemental plots, and clearly delineate,

delineated archetypal characters for allowing each listener to glean different emotional socio-cultural intellectual spiritual and physical connections with a tale.”

Crossing both, both aesthetics and categorization, LIS storytelling ethics require respecting cultural or story origins and retellings. And Betsy has written about this extensively and powerfully in the field of children's literature. Folk tales are foundational to and constitutive of canonical structural understandings of narrative. For example folklore theorists, Vladimir Propp's analysis of 100 read Russian folk tales yielded 31 distinct stages, in order that structured every story though not all stories contained all 31 elements. Joseph Campbell's work of the *Hero's Journey* details the structure of this journey based on the sacred life stories of religious figures. Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed among them. Epistemologically, most of this work has been fundamentally empiricists with stories that kind of material gathered and analyze structurally with a presumptive goal to identify the universal patterns, sometimes explicitly made that goal. But there are some limitations to analyzing story empirically as raw material as demonstrated by narratology branches of semiotics, for example Roland Barthes theorized five codes that drive narrative. These five codes create a type of network of interlocking meanings. And what's important about this is three of the five codes, the seams, the reference, and the Enigma codes also rely on a context of social experience and cultural seams, sorry, cultural knowledge. An orientation so the reader co-creates the meaning with the person experiencing, with the person telling the story.

There's a sociologist of storytelling Francesca Polenta who whose book about protest storytelling and processed and politics argues, quote, “We expect ambiguity and narrative. That is, words and events will not mean what they at first seem to.” In other words, stories are both

amenable to empirical structural analysis and socially constructed in the narrative experience of the audience.

So the story also means narrative experience and I'll go fairly quickly here for time, but the reception of collective interpretation can be viscerally sensed through live audience responses. These include laughter, applause, boos, hisses, gasps, sighs which even some storytellers have categorized so embodiment in a ritual storytelling situation of, for example, the library storytime shows that collective narrative experience includes physical aspects, corporeal aspects as Heda Martin Limburg wrote, even among preliterate children. Most definitions of information, even today, center the individual and do not seriously consider groups, group reception, group interpretation, or any other collective phenomena that shape exchanges in places like social media or other fast paced live or present audience experiences. Because stories are constituted through narrative experience and audiences are partly constitutive of the stories told to and with them, storytelling, as a concept, a set of concepts that I'm outlining here, points to a way to begin to consider collective experiences of information.

I'm going to skip over this part of it but let me just say that research from the last few years has also shown that narrative experience appears to interconnect individuals neurologically. Neural story processing involves narrative emotions, mirroring processes of embodied subjectivity that are able to intertwine our experiences of time. So, I won't go into detail about that. But I do think storytelling as narrative experience can provide a key way of understanding collective information experience in future information science research.

I'm going to use information science or IS from this point on as the broad umbrella term, but I do think this, this, is also an overlooked contribution and LIS and I consider the two fields deeply intertwined. Mainstream LIS research has mostly overlooked story and storytelling to, to be frank, so I'll use IS and it's really all of us together.

So begin thinking about how to make these concepts meaningful and I came to a framework that I have encountered and also grappled with over a number of years. This is the DIKW framework data information, knowledge, and wisdom. This appears regularly in textbooks, with Jennifer Rowley in 2007 called "one of the most fundamental widely recognized and taken for granted models in the information and knowledge literatures." This has also been called the information hierarchy, the knowledge hierarchy, or the wisdom hierarchy. And like most IS definitions, the epistemology underlying DIKW was primarily empirical. In the DIKW model information is understood and organizes process data or as Ma said "things fed into a computer."

There are multiple ways of understanding this particular hierarchy, but all acknowledge the set and sequence of data information, knowledge and wisdom. And Jennifer Rowley's survey of this framework and textbooks found a significant consensus around three of the four terms, data and information and knowledge of with some more substantive disagreements about wisdom and I'll get to those in a minute. What I believe is the case is that a storytelling revision of this framework demonstrates that wisdom should in fact be part of this hierarchy.

It also serves as an example, revision, that could apply to other information theory frameworks in future. Each term in the hierarchy, so, I'll be I'll be redefined each term in the hierarchy, with its relationship to storytelling properties functions, and potential for future

research. I do think that this work, not only prompts consideration of storytelling concepts but also really provokes the question of whether this could or constitute a paradigm shift in is generally. The article will be appearing in a special issue of JASIST about paradigm shift.

Of course, DIKW like everything has a history, and I always want to know the history, because that's the story and it turns out that T.S. Eliot is often credited with inspiring DIKW with his 1934 poem "The Rock." "Where is the wisdom that we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge that we have lost in information?"

Because it turns out that even some of the most positive positivism saturated concepts are sometimes derived from poetry. So, in the article I go through and I define data, information, and knowledge but I'm actually going to skip straight to wisdom for this talk.

So, wisdom. Wisdom entails understanding data and knowledge entails, sorry, wisdom. Information entails understanding data and knowledge entails understanding information, and some argue that wisdom entails understanding knowledge in order to extract principles. Ballenger, and that that group. I do think wisdom requires knowledge. In story wisdom often means discovering a way beyond the ways that seem obvious. Protagonists succeed by doing the unexpected such as answering a test with a test.

For example, in the folk tale Clever Manka, the peasant girl, Manka, is tested. When the Burgomaster tells her to hatch chicks from a dozen eggs in one day. She responds by bringing back a handful of millet, and she shares that if he will plant and grow and harvest the grain in one day that, she will gladly bring him 12 chicks from the 12 eggs. In the end, Manka becomes the burger master's wife, but they do come to an irresolvable conflict. He does not like it when her cleverness shows him up. So he orders her to leave and to take only her most beloved

possession. After plying him with wine into deep sleep, Manka takes him, her husband, the Burgomaster, as her most beloved possession. In this final wise act, she defies his expectations by including him as a possession inventing a way be out of the dilemma, going beyond the given possibilities.

In preset scholarly debates, as to whether wisdom belongs as part of DIKW, one argument that wisdom does not belong invokes a wise person. I'll quote Michael Fricke here fairly extensively, quote, "A wise person has to know fallibly plenty. A person that genuinely knows little or nothing, a person with an empty head, is not a wise person. Then this wide knowledge has to be of a certain kind, a kind that applies to the many and varied problems of life. A person may have encyclopedic knowledge of the facts and figures relating to the countries of the world, but that knowledge of itself will not make that person wise." Fricke makes an excellent point that accumulation of knowledge alone is not wisdom, but he goes on to argue that "wisdom is in an entirely different category to data, information, and knowledge."

I argue, looking at clever Manka as an example story, and many, many folk tales, to the contrary wisdom is typically predicated on knowledge. Manka would not have been able to outwit the Burgomaster if she had not had knowledge of hatching chicks, farming millet, and in the end of her husband's proclivity for wine after dinner. These are more than cultural details; they are knowledge enacted by a character who refuses to accept the obvious.

In other words, wisdom, as a meta cognitive stance involves knowing the limits of what is known, can be known and what cannot be an implementing a process of intellect, in a way that issues, automatization. The field of information sciences have relied heavily on computation and dreams of automatization pervade. I believe that IS would benefit from

analyzing wisdom defined as discovering a way beyond the ways that seem obvious through the lens of inherent ambiguity of story interpretation, and storytelling dynamics. In order to foster that research though we need a new framework.

So this is the SDIKW framework. In this framework, each level is associated with a subset of storytelling abilities. Transitions between an across stages are based on storytelling and understanding how, when, whether and why to communicate via story. For example, S-information builds on the ability to interpret S-data, and this is updated to be an ability to communicate data with context to inform through a story. S-knowledge is information in action constructed and shared as a story so that others can also know. And S-wisdom is defined as emerging from the storytelling triangle and predicated on the complex ability to select a story to tell the right story to tell, for that moment. Concrete enacted examples of this in everyday life outside of children's literature and librarianship but related to them. Recent knowledge management research has revealed dangerous to organizations that fail to share stories across levels of management hierarchy, risking inadvertent rigidities that impede exploration and agile responses to turbulent environments. Within organizations, understanding who is positioned to tell stories by their access to S-data and S-information, as well as their role and conveying S-knowledge and potentially S-wisdom would provide an analytical framework with explanatory power for understanding why organizations fail to share stories.

This framework could also be the basis for organizational interventions to increase story sharing, by making roles in relation to each level both explicit and distributed across hierarchies. A storytelling intervention, could might better support collective exploratory, it

might better support exploratory activities that support agility of organizations. Although many, many organizations have embraced storytelling practices, especially in business in the last decade, there is yet little theoretical understanding of why storytelling has been effective when it has.

I believe this framework will be particularly useful in any context where information is presumed to be either generated or understood by more than one individual, in other words collaboratively or collectively. If we're going to research storytelling and information together then that research is going to require a framework like this one. Outside of perhaps theatre and related humanities disciplines, perhaps no other field than IS is as well positioned to take up storytelling research. If the field draws on the century long practice of storytelling and LIS for conceptual and practical foundations. So, there's a future to this research that I'm really excited about. And here are some of its elements I will go through these in brief and there's much more that I could say. First research and collected information experiences. The involvement of audiences itself prompts some scrutiny of collective information experiences and whether that information is passed down through families or circulated in Facebook groups or other emerging platforms, there's been very little research on the idea of a collective experience of information. There has been some initial research on audience experience of story reception as enchantment by Brian Sturm. But there remains a lack of research on narrative experience and especially of the persistence of story collective stories that persist over time, which frankly is what folklore is and part of what I always found fascinating about folklore is the way that it persists over time.

So, researching narrative experience is going to call for parallel approaches to recent research on things like embodiment experience and information behavior and analysis of moment-to-moment embodied interaction. Future research based on SDIKW might examine not just what you shared in story form and how but also explicitly acknowledge and account for the vital role of the audience, analyzing how audience interpretations of story influence what is heard and especially what is retold over time. So second, we can analyze from this framework how information and story contribute to experiences of belief and belonging. Storytelling is powerful, and the stories that groups choose to collectively retell signal, what they believe and when and where they feel they belong. Whether their stories are factual or not is has potential to contribute information focused understandings of the epistemic benefits of well told stories as a kind of narrative reasoning, research that Worth began in 2008, particularly in relation to successes and failures in public trust, and boy, do we have a lot of those to choose from right now.

Storytelling plays a central role and experiences of collective information in public spaces, libraries among them, where belief and belonging are established or diminished. Stories story storytelling and the relationship of trust between teller and audience influences how groups choose what information they collectively trust. Collective information understandings will requires more scrutiny of the intersection of aesthetics and logic and exploration of storytelling in collective sense making and related information practices. Belief and belonging also relate to historical family stories. To give a family example, my mother heard from her grandmother that during the 1918 influenza epidemic that pandemic her grandmother's

parents left food on the porch and visited through an open window. Much the same social distancing practices as in the COVID19 pandemic.

Unfortunately, due to systemic racism and economic injustice, not all families experience continuity of story, belonging, or belief of trusted relative stories from a century ago. Not all stories that age human survival survive. As T.S. Eliot asked “Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” Story and storytelling open conceptual ways to begin to frame research about collective information trust or distrust such research might shed light on why some information is sustained in story over long, long stretches of time, while other information is lost. Third and last but not least, storytelling concepts could spark newly urgent comparative research, examining information and story and narrative misinformation. To date, analysis of misinformation focuses on identifying its source, but IS storytelling research could introduce new questions to discern not only when and how misinformation is made into compelling stories, but also why large audiences retell and broadly diffuse inaccurate stories. Deeper focus on the agency of the audience and determining what they consider informative would provide a conceptual way of understanding information and knowledge communication that acknowledges collective impacts.

Comparing information storytelling with misinformational and disinformational storytelling might be an important compliment to research on dissemination of propaganda or fake news. Future research with SDIWK framework, could take up current crises in truth, whether manipulative fake news or nationalist misinformation that to date have challenged AI and human interception efforts. I'll say that again, these efforts to take these things up and combat this information have challenged computers as much as they challenge humans. So

artificial intelligence is not there yet with figuring out how to parse these things, right? We've seen this on all of our social networks.

Storytelling contributes to explanations of why some audiences divest from assessing the relationship between their beliefs, and the evidence. Storytelling provides an important lens for information researchers and scholars that can address collective group, crowd, or aggregate data about human opinions, ideas, and ideologies whether face to face or on social media. Serious consideration of storytelling as a dynamic process of exchange, maybe a missing piece in efforts to build systems, both human and computational that thwart misinformation COVID19 infodemic issues, political propaganda and more by examining collective audience to interpretations in metric indicators of those interpretations.

So, a lot of research in IS based on an approach to knowing that centers computational centers but, systems computational systems, but the inspiration of our field is that we do not center the computational alone, but equally consider humanistic approaches and real data from human information use and behavior. Storytelling and retelling. A theoretical approach informed by a century of storytelling practice prompts reconsideration of both computational and humanistic IS research story storytelling and the SDIKW model reveal a need for a paradigm shift and is adding story as a fundamental information form and storytelling as foundational to needed definitions of collective information.

The powerful dynamics of storytelling should expand research and understanding how data information, knowledge, and wisdom function in any information society.

And I want to show you one more thing, because we have enough time and then there'll be some time for questions and conversation, and that one more thing is where I see my next

steps in this. Not every next step that I think is worth doing is something that I or my colleagues are necessarily going to take up ourselves, but there are some steps that we want to take up. So, Matt Turk and I, who co-teach Data Storytelling, are co-PIs on a toolkit. With the very helpful research assistant, Anna Elizabeth Mitchell, who's been we've all been working together on this project. Data Storytelling Toolkit for Librarians which is going to be an IMLS application we're in the second stage of application right now through the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program.

Our idea here is to take what we've learned in five years of teaching and bring it to libraries and we're going to focus on public and community college libraries first. Both because the need for advocacy is great in those spaces. And because public and community college libraries have very similar taxing, tax based, systematic tax-based orientations their structures are based on taxation that is how they are funded. And so the way is that authority moves in those organizations have some relationship to each other, and therefore the kinds of stakeholders and persuasion that are needed will be related to each other as well. So, we're going to create this toolkit and our goal is, we know we can't solve the problems only with technical tools, although we certainly will include some good ones in the toolkit, open source freely available tools, but we really mean to focus on data stories just as we have in the class.

In the case of this toolkit we envision data stories, encompassing at least these four elements and maybe more. We will begin with data usage scenarios, through a process of, if, if funded, understanding we've begun some of this already but understanding greater depth, what are the scenarios in which libraries today need to use data to persuade, in order to tell stories about what they are doing that are evidence of their impact. But, but communicated in

memorable form, as a story. We'll use journey maps to look at how the data moves through the organization from stakeholder to stakeholder where the information goes. We'll use journey maps because they're a little more accessible than something like the data life cycle, but really, it's to capture the data life cycle as data moves from collection into story and retelling and beyond. We'll look at narrative strategies. These, some of these I've alluded to in talking about various forms of narrative theory and semiotics today, but these are narrative strategies that we teach in the course to help people think about what kinds of narrative approaches in terms of the overall shape of the story will make sense of the data of the, of the accurate data that they are that they are conveying. And finally, last but not least, data visualizations which themselves involved a process that Matt is expert in of data exploration, as well. So not only bringing things to be visible but also understanding what choices there are in terms of what to make visible. Some of you might get a kick out of the fact that just this week we taught Molly Bang's book *Picture This* in that class because we want to talk about ways of visualizing and Molly Bang does it better than anybody else I know.

Wonderful.

Yeah, Yingying, thank you for that comment.

Yeah, so that that takes us right up to the present. Those are the things that I'm working on there's so much I could have talked about and now that I have a little time I almost wish I had talked about more about the Storytelling Festival and its history since 2005 or so and the amazing generations of students I've seen graduate from our school and the places that they've gone. But I did think inspired by Betsy talk last week that I would bring a couple of questions for the future that have really been on my mind.

The first and foremost one and this is informed every single moment of my career is, how will the intellectual contributions of these services librarians continue to inform and inspire the broadest information questions in our field? I think they can do that. I think they should do that. I think we overlook our own intelligence in detrimental ways when we forget that people in practice, because a very artificial presumptions about the intellectual merits of work with children have been overlooked in terms of their intellectual contributions and my earlier research proved that I think this research takes that to another level and I'd like to see that continue in our field and I hope other people will take that up as well.

Second, I think about what will be revealed. I don't know the answers to this which is why I'm asking it, what really is revealed when stories understood as information, if we take that seriously not just collecting stories as part of qualitative research, which is important and would help us understand people's perspectives and experiences. But really thinking about story, alongside data as having validity, what changes in our field when we do that? I hope that it is one of many wedges toward much greater inclusion of voices perspectives, experiences, when we start to think about what it really means to take seriously story as information. I hope that it opens things up tremendously for our field.

And third, last but not least, how our 21st century information societies, being shaped right now by storytelling as collective meaning making? Here's a place where we're going to have to run to catch up right there's a lot that's been happening in this area, but we haven't necessarily been looking at it as collective meaning making, and I didn't assert in this article but I imagine that I may and future assert that that is partly because of overlooking storytelling, because collective meaning is so infused with the experience of collective meaning has so much

to do with hearing a story, and feeling oneself to be part of a story or in reaction to, or in resistance to a story.

So those are all of the things that I have for you today. Thank you so much for your time and attention. I really appreciate it. I just to round out the once upon a time, I thought I would have a quick moment of taking us back to 1999, when I started my career. This is my staff picture from the Urbana Free Library. We still have it on our basement bulletin board, and it was up at the up at Urbana Free Library for many years and then when I left to come to the iSchool I brought it with me and I thought I thought you might enjoy seeing a contrast over time. Thank you so much.

Sara L. Schwebel: That's fabulous. Thank you so much Kate for the really interesting talk and provocative questions with which you ended. In a moment, we're going to put a poll up and we asked a participants to help us collect data about who is in attendance today at our talk, and then two, we invite you to use the chat to ask any questions you'd like of Kate and/or to respond to some of the questions that she raised at the end which really seemed like a spark for some fruitful conversation discussion. We have about minutes so we should have time for some conversation.

Kate McDowell: Great and I just saw that my friend and colleague, Ali Tafti raised his hand so I wonder, is it possible for participants to use the mic?

Sara L. Schwebel:Um, yes I think if you if participants raised their hands, I can enable them to speak out loud.

Kate McDowell: Great.

Interesting poll to nice to see.

Sara L. Schwebel: So again, we invite. We invite you to type questions into the chat, or if you'd like to raise your hand, I can also turn on your mic.

Kate McDowell: And no worries if you raised your hand by accident, it's totally fine.

Thank you so much for that feedback in the chat I've been teaching online since, oh you know 1998, I think, Betsy, we put the children's literature course online.

So, so I think I followed most of the chat that was great I think I did see a hand raised though, is it Celeste?

Sara L. Schwebel: And I need to ask. Oh yes.

Celeste: Can you hear me okay?

Kate McDowell: Yes.

Celeste: So, I love the ideas that you're sharing and I'm especially interested in getting feedback from practicing Youth Services librarians. Do you have thoughts on how that what that would look like people who go into your services are especially passionate about service, I would say,

Kate McDowell: Yes, absolutely.

You know, we have done interviews already with a number of Youth Services librarians there's a project that kind of underlies this one, that is the Storytelling at Work project, where I have amassed 100 interviews over four years with the help of multiple capable research assistant so a lot of the insights, I would say come, I would say many of the insights, are already informed by Youth Services Librarian. This is brand new, like we hope it's coming out in Spring in JASIST, and I don't know

know and I think you asked a great question and it makes me think about whether a version of the article might not belong in some place like *Children and Libraries* in order to reach a different audience.

So, Celeste, that's a great question and I don't, I don't have a specific answer right now except to say that, yes I always want to sustain that dialogue. Definitely, yeah and I expect some of our public library participants to be youth services librarians, in, in the data storytelling toolkit for librarians project. There's really. We've been reaching people a number of different ways including with the brilliant help of Sharon Comstock with her connections to the Public Library Data Alliance but we're very much open, we're very much open to talking to lots of people in that process. And Sara I'm writing that down because I think that's a good idea. Thank you, Celeste.

Sara L. Schwebel: There's another question in the chat from Glenn Worthey, I'll read it out loud. "Do you see a sort of anti-analogy between the way story has not been taken seriously enough and Information Studies and data has been taken too seriously, perhaps overvalued data stories as a term is such a lovely and unexpected mashup seems like it might be a fixed for both first misperceptions."

Kate McDowell: Yes. So, Glenn, Thank you for the question and I will say I read fast enough I know that Deborah Stephenson said it had an earlier question and I haven't missed that one. And I haven't missed that one. Glenn. What a great, so thank you. First of all, thank you. Yes. What a great way to say it I do, I do think, I think this is part of what I didn't want to speak too much for Matt but I think this is part of what Matt and I together, see, is that we are trying to balance out a kind of a kind of public set of, I would say it's a combination of passions

and apprehensions, depending on what you're looking at, right? These data passions that people get so excited about, the amount of information that they feel that they have from that data, that, so one typical thing I say in workshops that I give when I'm consulting or talking with nonprofits is we need to put story before storage. Data isn't just something we collect in order to store and put in our vaults and know how many people came through the door to whatever program. Data is something that we tell stories with right it's story before storage, and in fact in our data life cycles for libraries, specifically, should always come first that we're telling we're collecting things we know we're going to tell a story about. Imagine it this way we talked to our publics and we say, "hey we need to know from you what you want from us" and then we speak again and say "hey thank you so much for telling us let us tell you how we modify our services in response to your feedback."

So it's not just that we collect that data we do things with it and then we put it in action and we tell the story again and again. Sometimes we even need to tell the story before we make the changes to stakeholders, library boards, to the public, to administrators within a community college library setting, and research libraries. So yes, I do hope that it is, it pushes misperceptions people tend to have either passion or allergy to data and the same to story. And I think that's really, it informs me tremendously when I'm when I see that kind of information.

Sara L. Schwebel: Scrolling back to Deborah Stevenson's question.

Kate McDowell: Yeah.

Sara L. Schwebel: Did anything in 2020 whether the COVID experience or shift to virtual life change your thinking. As you went through this work.

Kate McDowell: This is such a great question. To be honest, the shift to virtual life maybe less so than the American presidential election and its context. That was really informative to this way of thinking as I watched and marveled at misperceptions run amuck. We also developed for the data storytelling course assignment called the tweet critique that really was based on Matt doing these brilliant jobs in class of taking misinformation tweets and just tearing them apart and showing how they didn't work in terms of the data and now we make our students do this assignment. Some of you have done this assignment who are in the audience right now. And, and it's the same kind of thinking it's saying, "okay what, how, it's still story is a great force," how is it being used or misused in this situation and how does it align are not aligned with what we know to be the truth of the situation?" So I would say the election in 2020 was tremendously influential. I think that, other things in 2020, there might be some other things we can talk about what we have lunch. Thank you, Deborah it's a great question.

Sara L. Schwebel: There's a question in the chat for Meg Cornell, you meet some connections with folklore. Do you also see your work connecting with conversations happening in Indigenous Studies about epistemology and storytelling traditions?

Kate McDowell: I do and I wouldn't want to necessarily quaint and you know, I feel like there's a important respect as a middle class white woman who has continually had to re-learn the invisibility of whiteness as a privilege right, that whiteness itself is a there is a cultural way of unknowing one's privilege and that I am constantly having to work against. So I will tell you in relation to that I have several invited panelists to a panel that I've been putting together for ALISE about storytelling as resilience.

I think I will be the only straight white person on that panel, I hope so. And I think that's appropriate. I think that's appropriate. So, I'm really trying to open that that door I think it's important that, in it so in addition to everything you just said,

the, the world of queer identities the world the world of, you know, I think it's, it's the word was marginalization and it's not now the word now is, it's a good word, minoritization. I think is something that recurs over and over again and so yes, I think. I know there are colleagues I have an Indigenous Studies who see storytelling really differently and part of why part of my attempt to be extremely respectful of indigenous storytelling traditions is to make it very clear that I'm talking about a professional storytelling tradition. It does not have some of the depth of the cultural implications of indigenous storytelling traditions. I think that's important. I think those are different. Thanks Meg, great question.

Sara L. Schwebel: Betsy, asked the question, saying “youth are notoriously subject to this information stories. Could you talk a little bit about that?”

Kate McDowell: So true right, I mean, I can. Yes, yes, yes. So, there are so many ways that society uses “youth” rhetorically and manipulates “youth,” right? I mean it's very complicated this this set of questions, but I think that when we see this question of belief and belonging especially belonging.

Thanks, Ben.

Especially this question about belonging I think young people in societies that are in turmoil and we are in one in a global pandemic, but I think in other ways as well, are seen as the recent Illinois representative who has been stripped of congressional duties, who, who referred to racism positively. We'll just say that. Referred to, refer to, Hitler's actions positively

in a way that was absolutely reprehensible. I think it was a shock. And also, and spoke exactly to the ways that people throughout time have tried to use this information to manipulate youth into being subject to the will of other political forces, but I also think there's a rhetorical move that happens around youth that's even a second layer that happens where youth themselves are targeted sometimes, and then youth are used to try to saw this just yesterday with a student's draft tweet critique where it was a tweet critique making a specist, and very biased prejudicial argument that being queer is something that is recruited for. This was a tweet and it used data about adults in order to make an argument about children being recruited in schools and by Hollywood. And it was a very, you know, so it's a very disingenuous argument at least but partly in the student pointed this out and the way that I didn't quite get in the moment and, I got it later I thought this is really true. It was making it argued about us but using data about adults. We do this all the time we're talking about fear of the future.

Right, yes right, Stephen. Great example. As opposed to just playful community creation and also acknowledgement of people and the great diversity of life.

Yeah, so, so I think that's a really, that's a really, I don't know Betsy I feel like that's, we could have lunch about that too, and it's probably more, probably more to say. I'm sort of touching on two ways of thinking about it. If there's anything else you're thinking about there that'd be great. Thank you. Yeah.

Sara L. Schwebel: Apologies I missed earlier comment from Mitchell Silverman.

Kate McDowell: Yeah, sorry,

Sara L. Schwebel: "This presentation was a tour de force as a lawyer librarian I'm thinking about how much of what lawyers do all advocacy is storytelling.

He's to construct a reality for the decision makers the lawyer is addressing also as a dude, a big part of Talmud, the biggest collection of Jewish law is Aggadah—legends, parables or anecdote stories, used to illustrate a point of law in the Talmud, that are used to construct Jewish society, everything you've talked about applies to both of these studies. And I'm appalled that anyone would think that stories aren't information and that storytelling isn't a legitimate subject for Information Science and Library and Information Studies research.”

Kate McDowell: Yeah, I mean I share that I share very much that being appalled same page on that. And I think it's weird that the things that I'm doing should be bold or seen as bold right you know in a way they're not there, they're in a way they're not saying, I'm don't want to undersell, it but you know in a way it's just like it's kinda I'm connecting the dots between things. But, but I've routinely seen when I talk about stories I've also I've seen job candidates say to me, “oh you study storytelling “and then they will give a very technical presentation and I'll have an answer a question about it because it's something I'm curious about I'm not a programmer I'm not a coder but I know some things I've been around and somebody once did say to me, “oh you were able to follow” that within a note of surprise in their, in their voice and I thought, wow. Gosh, guy that's an interesting response there that you had there. So, so yeah, I know for sure that unfortunately we have a real disconnect in our field that has to do with prejudices about ideas, and where they come from. And, and that's not the only set of prejudices about ideas I think you're pointing to others, and that are, that are nuanced, and you know again ritually cultural in ways that a professional, a professional tradition won't touch on with some, with some of the same depth as, for example, the Jewish tradition would touch on in Jewish law in particular. But yeah, I mean this to be, I mean this to be so obvious that it's

undeniable. And therefore, and therefore we have we get out of some of this dismissing of certain people's stories right we get out of dismissing people's stories, because we can't do it anymore if we actually take seriously that those stories are information. And by we, I really I mean academia, more than anything but I think also people, you know, people who are trying to assess what they think of as valid or valuable to know, I think it's extremely valuable to know people's stories, and when somebody gives you with their story that is an incredibly precious gift, you know. Yeah, thanks for that.

Sara L. Schwebel: Such a nice note to end on and we are at time. I see there are a few questions in the chat we didn't get to you, but I'll make sure that Kate gets a transcript of the chat so that the conversation can continue. Thank you all for being here and also for your patience as we navigate this new Zoom Webinar format, which we are still in the process of mastering. Again, Kate, thanks for really, just, such a generative laying out of your current work, how it connects to the history of the field, and how it connects to the history of the CCB. I want to remind everyone that we have two more talks in the series coming up. Sarah Park Dahlen will be speaking on March 23rd about Advocacy and Infographics, and Dipesh Navsaria will be giving a talk, "Books Build Better Brains," on April 6th. So please watch for email reminders and thank you so much for joining us this afternoon.

Kate McDowell: Thanks, everyone. Bye bye!