



RAR 65 – How to Best Use and Support Your Local Library, Amy Commers

Sarah: You're listening to the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. This is the podcast that helps you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.

So Amy, welcome to the Read-Aloud Revival, I'm so glad you're here. I've been looking forward to our conversation for a while now.

Amy: Thanks! Me too.

Sarah: So tell us, before we launch into our conversation – all about libraries today – tell us a little bit more about you and your work?

5:54 Meet Amy

Amy: Sure. So, I am probably not a typical Read-Aloud Revivaler. I am not married. I don't have any kids. Because of my work I am surrounded by families, I of course, have nieces and some friends who have children who I'm very involved in their lives so I'm around kids and recommending books in that aspect of my personal life, too, but because of the work that I do with families in libraries a few of them had mentioned your podcast to me and so I started listening and then I kept listening and kept listening and because, of course, if something is presented in order, just like a serious book, it must be listened to in order so I couldn't start with #45 or wherever you are when you get introduced to a podcast, no, no, you must start at #1.

Sarah: You've listened to them all chronologically?

Amy: Yes!

Sarah: That is super impressive.

Amy: Yes! So, I live in the twin cities metro area, that's Minneapolis/St. Paul for those outside the Midwest.

Sarah: What did your journey look like into becoming a librarian?

Amy: My mom and my mom's mom (my Grandma Ellen) were both secret librarians, never gone to school for it but they both really wanted to be librarians. My grandma volunteered for a long time at the library at her church. And then my mom, when she had kids, she just took us to the library all of the time; partly because it was free entertainment and partly because she wanted us to love books. We didn't have a lot of extra money. My mom stayed at home and I have a younger brother and sister. So she was home with the three of us and my dad worked. And so we didn't buy a lot of books; we got books as gifts. But even to this day my home library – people are surprisingly shocked by how small it is – because I'm so particular. If I'm going to buy a book and keep it in my collection it is going to be a book that I will have read 50 times or just has a lot of special personal meaning to me.

Sarah: It has to earn its place on your shelf.

Amy: Yeah. We visited libraries a lot and we were totally *that* library family where my mom would say, "OK, I have to go to the grocery store, who wants to come?" and we'd all be like, "Well, can you drop us at the library?" because it was on the way to the grocery store. So we'd pile in the van with our backpacks. We each bring a backpack with and fill it up with books – that was when we knew we were done – with how many books we could have. And we got very creative with packing the backpacks as we got older. Now that



I reflect on it you're like, 'Well, surely everyone is doing these kinds of things.' Not everyone is.

Sarah: It's true. And I think in large part more people don't make heavy use of their library because they don't know how or they don't know the best way to, or they maybe feel intimidated, or maybe embarrassed that they haven't used it much. So as an adult going in and going, 'I should know how to use the library' but I worked at a library (the Pierce County Library system in Washington State). I worked there for three years, I guess, when my oldest kids were younger. It was such a great job because my husband worked during the day and I was on-call at the circulation desk, so I'm not a librarian, I was just circulation (I can't remember the official title that I had there) but basically, I was the lady checking people's books out behind the desk, pulling holds, and I would work a couple of evenings a week whenever it worked for me, just to fill in for people who were sick, at all the 14 different branches in the library system, which was really cool because I got to know all 14 branches; I worked at all of them. And I got to get familiar with how different every branch worked a little bit differently, I got to meet lots of reader-ly type of people, I got to talk during my shifts to people who loved books – it was the perfect job, I absolutely adored that job when I did it. And I remember thinking, 'I thought I knew how to use the library really well' but then when I was working there I found all these other ... I just feel like I barely tapped in to this rich resource. And I feel like a lot of parents probably feel that way. Just sort of, 'I know that's a great resource, I just don't know how to use it' so I think that's what we should break down today. We should talk about how families can make really good use of their library, how they can get the most benefit

from them, how they can support them to keep them going. So, are you up for that conversation?

Amy: Absolutely.

Sarah: So, why don't you tell us a little bit about what your role is in the library you work at?

Amy: Sure. So, not only am I responsible for **[**inaudible 5:04**]** for 0-18, story times and our one-off events, I also select all the books that go in our children and teen collection. I select media (DVDs and audio books, music CDs). I also catalog all that stuff so once it gets at our library, I do all the computer work to make sure that it's available in our catalog and searchable and decide where it's going to sit on the shelf. So if there are meetings or advocacy in the community, different groups or boards to be on that are related to children and families, I do that, I do outreach visits, so I have quite a plate of things that I have both taken on for myself but also just be normal things in the day-to-day work that I'm doing. For a lot of the larger systems a lot of the collections work, for instance, is centralized so there is a person at one administrative building who's purchasing, who's making decisions about what books they're going to purchase for the entire system and then which branches of their library system the books will end up at, so it's not librarians at each individual branches necessarily that are making those decisions for their library, someone else is doing it on the system level.

Sarah: I just think it would be amazing to be able to purchase books for the library system, like basically, you get to buy books with someone else's money.

Amy: Exactly.

Sarah: Ah, that's so much fun.



11:51 Making Reading Suggestions

When a child or a parent comes to you looking for a good read or a good next book and they say something like, “I really loved the *Percy Jackson Series*” or “I really loved *Harry Potter*” or “I really love *Anne of Green Gables* and Lucy Maud Montgomery’s work” how do you decide what to suggest next? Or is there a resource you recommend that we could look at at our library or use at our libraries to figure out what to read next?

Amy: One of the things that we use, sometimes when we’re looking for read-a-likes or someone saying, “I really like *Percy Jackson*, I’m looking for something else to read that’s like *Percy Jackson*” a lot of libraries subscribe to a database, a service called Novelist, and you can type in things like ‘a plot: Greek mythology teenager’s adventure’ and it will give you books that will meet those criteria. It doesn’t necessarily have to just be “I read [this book] and I want to a book just like it,” you can enter in elements of the plot or maybe you’re looking for a history book but you want it to have an African-American character in it, so to be about that experience rather than an Asian-American or something like that. So that’s one thing that you would maybe have access to through your library depending on where you are, that is a little different than what you’d find on the open internet.

Sarah: And your librarians at your local library are surrounded with books; they’re always reading books, they’re reading about books, they’re reading reviews, and I think sometimes as parents we feel a little intimidated to go up to our librarians at our local library or have our kids go up to the librarians and say, “Can you help me

find a book?” so could you talk to me for a minute about what you would tell a parent who’s maybe hesitant to use the library or to go up to the librarian and ask for help. What can a parent who’s nervous about visiting the library, what tips do you have for them?

Amy: The first one, here’s the not-so-secret secret. A lot of librarians are introverts so we’re as intimidated by talking to strangers as you are. So, don’t ever feel like you’re being awkward because chances are good that we’re probably sitting behind the desk also feeling awkward. A lot of people will say, “I don’t know if you know the answer…” and I always want to say, “Yeah, I probably don’t.” But here’s the thing about being librarians- that’s what we’re trained to do- find answers.

Sarah: That’s right.

Amy: We’re not trained to have an answer. We’re trained to find an answer.

Sarah: To know where to look, right?

Amy: Exactly. It helps to just introduce yourselves. Some of the best librarian-patron relationships I have are with families where the parents just kind of said, “Hi. I’m Sarah. We homeschool. So you’ll see us a lot.” And then we start to have a conversation about what kind of books that their kids like, and what ages they are. And so the next time they come in, I see them. And then when I’m looking through a catalog I say, “Oh you know, I bet the Mackenzie’s might like that book – let me make sure to point that out to her when she comes in.” And so pretty soon you’re building a relationship. Once I’ve gotten to know, especially the homeschool families in my community, I’ve asked them a little of the philosophy or the approach that they’re using at home, because then when I’m looking at



something that I wouldn't necessarily buy. The more you're willing to share with your librarians the more that they can share back with you in terms of the books that are in there, the books they're pointing out to you or recommending to you. And on that note, too, something that's helpful for librarians is when kids and adults have enough language to talk about what they're interested in. And what I mean by that is like most librarians, if you go up and say, "I want a living book" aren't going to have any idea what that means. Unless they're familiar with homeschool methodology or what a living is they're not going to know what that means. But if you say, "You know, we like to study history through story, so we're looking for something that's going to teach us a lot about a specific time period or about a specific region of the world but we want it to be a really good story," they can start pointing you in the direction of what kind of books you're looking for without even knowing that ...

Sarah: Yeah.

Amy: ... in your mind what you're getting is a living book, they're just saying, "Oh, you're looking for narrative non-fiction or a really well-researched fiction book. Cool! I know where those are."

16:12 The Awesomeness of Holds!

Sarah: One of the things that I think that has been really helpful to help me make better use of my library is the hold system. I know when I've had very young children going to the library and roaming the stacks is like a certain form of torture because they're running around, they're making loud noises, or pulling books off the stack.

Amy: Totally normal.

Sarah: Yeah! So, one thing that I think some families don't realize you can do is you can go to your library's website and whatever your local library's website is you can search for books and if you have a library card you can put them on hold and what that means is that the library will go select those books off of the bookshelves and they'll put them on a hold shelf where you can pick them up. And one thing I didn't realize until I really started using my library more heavily is that you probably have access to, and this depends on library system to library system depending on where you live, but you very likely have access to more than just your local branch at the library. So for example, when I worked at Pearce County you could put a book on a hold that was in any one of our 14 libraries and we would, the library, would ship that book to whatever branch you wanted to pick it up to, for free. I know not all libraries do that. I have a friend who says at her library system to put a book on hold, especially if it's from a different branch, costs something. So I think it depends on your library system. But look into it because if you're thinking, "Gosh, I just can't keep up with the expense of having kids who are readers, voracious readers, I want to bring lots of books into our home" using your library's hold system is a really, really helpful way to get access to more books.

Amy: It may even extend beyond just what's within the system that your library is a part of. That service is typically interlibrary loan. So if you've never heard about that asking if your library has access to that, finding out if it does cost anything, that might also expand what resources you're able to provide to your kids.

Sarah: OK, so let's say you're on your library's website, you're looking up a specific title, and



you see that your library doesn't carry it. A lot of us will go, "My library doesn't have it. I guess I'm going to have to buy it." Another option is to get on the phone. Or if you're at the library just go up and say is there any way we can [this particular] book because what Amy's talking about with interlibrary loan means that a lot of libraries have access to other libraries' resources and they can get those shipped in, either for a small fee or for free, but find out. Just ask because I think for a lot of us we're not making use of some of those more cost-savings and pretty powerful resources because we don't know they exist and we don't know how to use them. The best way to figure out how to use them for your own system is to just talk to somebody. So, do librarians and circulation clerks, do they hate it when we put 20 or 30 books on hold at the library?

Amy: No, not at all! We're probably some of the biggest offenders, actually - library staff having as many holds as you possibly can at one time. Along the lines of holds, another good feature to check in to seeing if your library has is, we have the ability in a lot of the places I've been to suspend hold. So let's say you have 30 books that you are interested in having and you've requested them at the same time but you know that you're not going to be studying seashores and seashells for another three weeks but you just heard about this book and it looked great. Within our system you have the ability to say, "OK, I want to suspend that hold. I want to put it on pause for two more weeks so that when we're actually starting to study that, that hold will be active and the book will come in right at the time we need it.

19:46 Teaching Kids to Use the Library

Sarah: Amy, do you have tips on how we can best teach our kids to use the library?

Amy: Well, we kind of hit on one of them, which would be giving your kids enough background knowledge and vocabulary to talk about their own reading so things like making sure to know that your kids know what genres are and what genres they like to read. If they like to read mysteries or they like to read historical fiction or science fiction, whatever it is, that they know what those terms are and what they mean and what kind of books they apply to. A lot of kids don't know things like that. That automatically helps us to start to filter down what we're going to suggest or recommend if you ask us for a recommendation about what to read. There's a researcher and a teacher, her name is Donna Lynn Miller, she's written a couple of books; one called *The Book Whisperer* and one called *Reading in the Wild* and both books are about how you cultivate life-long reading habits in children. She presents it from a classroom perspective because that's sort of what she's talking about but in general she talks about five things that lifelong readers dedicate time to read, they self-select reading material, they share books and reading with other readers, they have reading plans so they're always thinking about what they're going to read next or what topic they're interested in and, then they show preference for genres, authors, and topics. And so giving them both the tools and the language to talk about what books they're interested, but then also equipping them to make their own reading choice allows them to develop an identity as a reader otherwise they're only method of getting



books is from an adult. An adult says, “Here, read this. Here, you would like this.” But if you remove the adult from the equation the child themselves has no concept of what they like to read or what would be a good fit for them and so when I say let your kids choose, obviously, family by family you have your own values and you have things that are important to you and you’re already communicating and teaching them about those values and things that are important to you, so it’s OK, and I would say it’s a great idea to say, “Well that includes things that we consume; like media, and books, and movies, and TV. So the same values we have apply to these same books. So if you’re looking at a book and you’re flipping through it and you see some stuff that doesn’t really seem to fit with what our family believes, it’s OK to say that’s not a good fit for me, and so it’s not just this is ‘free for all’ – woah, they picked it off the shelf I better take it home. I definitely advocate for the parents role and the child having that conversation with their parents about is this a good book for me? Is this a good time for us? And it’s OK to say, “Well that’s not a good book for us, we’re not taking it home for whatever reason.” But if their only experience with books is just, “Oh, I found it” an adult gave it to me that’s not really a lifelong reader habit. People who are readers we know what we like and so we know if someone suggests something to us if we’re going to like it or not, most likely.

Sarah: OK, so giving them the language to be able to talk about books and describe the kinds of books the like to read. And also giving them the freedom to choose some of the books they bring home from the library so you’re not choosing everything yourself but you’re letting kids bring come home some books that they have found on the shelf and would like to try on

their own. Both of those things, being helpful and equipping our kids with a reader-ly identity are helping them see themselves as readers and having the habit of readers, and helping them use the library – very good!

23:45 ‘The Light Stuff’

I hear this question a lot. People who say, how do you get your kids to not bring home the light stuff, I don’t know, what parents might be less excited about, sort of the more pop-culture kind of things. Books based on TV characters, things like that. And what I’ll say is that I do let my kids check those out from the library, not like massive huge stacks. Sometimes I’ll go, OK, you can pick three or four of these, that’s it. But one thing I’ve noticed is that when I’m reading aloud with my kids (I basically get to pick those, right?) so I’ll pick books that I know are a higher literary value, that maybe have really good, sophisticated language in them, that tell a really good story, maybe an award winning book like a national book award or a Newbery Award winner or Caldecott book or something, a book that I think basically gives my child a taste of something really worthwhile. And if I’m doing that, if I am reading aloud to my kids, books that are really high quality, if I’m giving them and offering them books of really high quality, I don’t have to worry so much that absolutely everything we bring home from the library meets that standard. Some of my kids, like my oldest daughter for example, loved reading *The Babysitters Club*, loved reading *The Cupcake Diaries*, my 13 year old adored the *Disney Fairy* books that drove me crazy when she was younger. I just didn’t read them aloud but I let them read them on their own and they just basically acquired a really good taste, I think, over time. For some kids there’s a stage where



they need to read a lot of light books or they're going to be drawn to characters that they see on TV because, for a young child especially, the characters they watch on their favorite shows kind of seem like friends and so they're like, "Hey, there's my friend there at the library." What I've seen in my own home with my 13 and 15 year old daughters, for example, it did not damage them to be reading *Babysitters Club* or *Cupcake Diaries* or the Fairy books. It didn't damage them to bring home *Dora* picture books. If anything it helped them see that I value their relationship with books and then because we read so many really, really good books together, out loud, and because I was also offering those to my kids, they were able to tell the difference, and they can tell the difference. Taste is acquired over time so I wouldn't stress too much. I would guess that if you're struggling with bringing home books that are TV character-based, ones you don't really want your kids to bring home, if you told them, "You can bring one home" (or two) and then the rest of the things are going to choose something else that would probably be more helpful than absolutely banning them and turning those books that you don't really want your kids to read tons of into forbidden fruit.

26:19 Choosing YA

OK, let's chat just for a second about YA. It can be a difficult section of the library for parents to navigate. Do you have any tips or recommendations on helping parents navigate YA, especially if they're not reading ahead, most of us aren't probably reading ahead of our kids or love YA ourselves. I would say what is allowed in a YA book content-wise is a little bit more – No, I won't even say a little bit, it's quite a bit more free than what I would feel comfortable handing to my

own teen – so do you have suggestions for parents who feel the same the way?

Amy: YA is tricky because it's covering such a wide range of development and kids, especially ... I was an early and voracious reader so by the time my reading level had reached where YA books are written my emotional maturity was not there because I was in 4th grade. So, that one is really tricky. It's not a very helpful suggestion but my best suggestion, really, is to find either a friend, a teacher, a librarian, a blog even, someone on Twitter, find someone who reads YA, who seems to have similar values as you or at least is someone you could communicate with and say, "Hey, can you tell me more about [this]? I'm curious about what happens in [this] romantic relationship? What is [this] school environment like?" To ask questions that help you better understand what the content is like. The other thing that I would recommend is looking at other library sites. There are a couple of big national – people know about Multnomah County library system, they know about New York public library, Chicago public library. If there is a bigger metropolitan area near you see if their library has – a lot of librarians will call this kind of a list like a 'clean reads' or a 'gentle reads' list for teens. And what that means is books that don't have a lot of swearing usually, sexual encounters or content, drinking, drugs, that kind of thing, so they're just nice good stories where nothing too objectional happens, and that, of course, is always really subjective of course what someone...

Sarah: Right.

Amy: ... what's objectional is subjective.

Sarah: Yeah.

Amy: But in general, libraries will have lists like that and so you may get a lot of ideas from



looking around even if your own library doesn't have a list specifically like that. That's where your own self and your child being able to very specifically talk about what you're interested in and what you're not interested in is helpful to a librarian because we can start to plug in some of those words into our searches, asking around to other librarians, talk to other librarians a lot when we get questions like this, so that if you're working with a librarian, the more specific you can be about things that you're not quite ready to introduce to your teenager can be helpful but there's no magic source, there's no magic bullet like, "Here's where you can go to find good recommendations."

Sarah: And the truth is we all have a little, like you said, it's subjective. We all have a little bit different level of what we're comfortable reading with and talking about with our kids. We all have kids who are at a different emotional maturity to be able to handle certain content, or not. It's so dependent on your individual family. One thing that I think is really interesting is the way books are categorized by ages. So, this is probably helpful for our listeners to realize that once you get out of picture books and early reader types you have middle grade fiction which are books targeted to 8-12; this is marketing/publisher terms, 8-12. And then you'll have YA which is 13-17. From a parent's perspective I would love to go in there and hack that up, and say, "There should be 8-10, and 11-12, 13-15, 16-17" because from my perspective there's a huge difference in my 13 year old and my 15 year old even, let alone a 17 year old and with the content that they're prepared to take on, read, and talk about. Same thing I would say with middle grade- there's a big huge difference between an 8 year old and a 12 year old. So it seems silly to me to

put them in the same category. So one of the things that I do when I'm looking at a book and I'm trying to decide which child to hand it to or what age children to read it aloud with, one of the resources I will go to is CommonSenseMedia.org and what they do is they'll just give you ratings for the nature of the content of what's in the book. So they'll say on 0-5 rating how much violence is in this book, how much sexual content is in this book, how much swearing is in this book, how many positive role models are there generally in this book. It kind of gives you an overarching sense for the level of maturity the publisher is expecting your child to have when they approach it. That way you can look at it and go, "My child is ready for the level three in cussing but not in these other areas, or as a family, we're comfortable with our 14 year old reading [this] but not [that]." It kind of just gives you a good idea of what to expect so that you're not handing a book to your child that completely surprises both you and your child in an unpleasant way. So that's a good resource, that's CommonSenseMedia.org. They don't have everything there, of course, but I do go peek there for YA books almost every time before I'm selecting them. And then booklists are really helpful, *Honey for a Teen's Heart* by Gladys Hunt is a good book resource if you're looking for books for your teens, and Heather Woody at BlogSheWrote has some good book lists for teens. We'll put a couple of our favorite book lists for teens in the YA category up in the Show Notes to this podcast and so if you go to the Show Notes for today's show you'll find some of those.



32:03 How to Support Your Library

Amy, I know that a lot of our listeners are big library supporters, or want to be big library supporters, we want to see our libraries thrive, I think there might be a secret fear we all have that someday libraries will go away if we aren't supporting them and making the best use of them and helping them flourish so do you have any perspective on what families can do to support their local library?

Amy: Sure. If you don't know how your library is funded, whether that's through county, city, or region, find out how they are and then you can write letters. You can even have your kids send scribbles. Let them know that you appreciate them supporting and funding libraries. Tell them how your family uses the library. Hearing directly from people in the community ... we can tell them 'til we're blue in the face about our circulation statistics or how many programs we had, and how many people attended, but having that personal letter from a 5 year old about 'my favorite books come from the library' means a lot to government officials to city workers and county workers because it tells the story directly from them. It's not us trying to make some kind of marketing campaign to plead for our existence; it's coming directly from you. So that is one way to do it, just to directly write letters to the people who fund your library and thank them and let them know how your library uses it.

Sarah: I have a story about that actually. This wasn't a library I worked at but it was where my oldest three were super small, our little library that was walking distance from our house, they had to do some library cuts, they had to do some funding cuts, budget cuts, and they cut the

library story time that was at that branch because it was pretty small and I remember going up to the front desk and saying, "Oh, that just makes me so sad. It's harder for me to get to any of the other bigger branches that have library story time and also those story times are really crowded and so I really liked our story time here." And she said, "Ah, yes, somebody else just told me that. Send a letter in to the president." And so I did. And I got a letter back from him saying your letter and a couple of letters similar to it from a couple of other families meant a lot to us, we'll be reinstating library story time at your branch in whatever month it was, it was the following month, and sure enough they brought story time back to my little branch. And I thought, 'Wow, I had no idea.' I could have grumbled about that for a long time, frustrated, just wishing we had a library story time but I think a lot of times we just need to speak up because the people who are working the libraries in your area they want to make the service work for you, they want to help you, that's why they're there, and so if you tell them, "Hey, this is what could help me" that's exactly the kind of feedback they use when they're deciding where their resources and money and funding should go."

Amy: Exactly. Your library may have a friends-of-the-library group. That's usually the non-profit arm of the library that can do fundraising events for the library. In general, they maybe run book sales, they're people who are wanting to be supportive of the library and they have the ability, because as government entities libraries cannot fundraise, they can be involved in those kinds of activities in support of the library so there may be opportunities for you to be involved in that organization. You can inquire about volunteering. One library that I worked at – it was so sweet – a



family would on their birthday they would come in and give us a check to buy a book in honor of their child's birthday and so we would put a special plaque in the front of the book saying that this was given in honor of their child's birthday...

Sarah: Oh, that's cool.

Amy: ... which was a very fun way; sometimes they'd make a suggestion about what they'd like to purchase, a book that their child really loved at that time, or something. So that's a way to kind of build your library's collection around what your family's interested in, and also have a sweet – your child can come in and see their book. You could always ask if there are any items on a wish list and either do some fundraising of your own or maybe you and your kids decide if you want to do some finance lessons and donate something small that the library's looking for, asking librarians if there is something they want to purchase. They might say, "Yeah, actually I've really been wanting to buy some new shakers for our story time" ...

Sarah: Yeah, yeah.

Amy: ... you know, your family provides the shakers for story time, and that's a super great gift for the library.

Sarah: Is it true that the libraries need its patrons to check books out and to keep books moving through the system to keep funding? Does that have anything to do with it? Just using the library?

Amy: So, I think this is an area where library services are changing a lot. There's a large project that the American Library Association (which is the national organization for libraries) there's a division of that that's just for public libraries and they are really trying to encourage us

to move towards to more outcome based evaluation. So what that means is saying, looking at things that are broader than just your statistics because your statistics only tell part of the story. It's certainly not going to hurt your library to have a great circulation number but we're also wanting to expand the way that we evaluate our services so that we can capture stories like, "We had five homeless patrons who came into the library that we connected with appropriate social services to support them transitioning out of homelessness." How can libraries capture that kind of data that we're showing the ways that we're actively improving and changing people's lives ...

Sarah: ... that are harder to quantify than how many times a book has been checked out.

Amy: Exactly.

37:51 Encouraging Libraries to Keep Great Books

Sarah: One of the questions that some Read-Aloud Revival listeners suggested that I ask Amy (I forgot to ask her on the show but I emailed her after I was done recording to ask if she would answer it for us). The question was basically, how can families work more closely with children's librarians to ensure that much loved and much used library books don't get weeded out of the library collection? So, I bet you've had this experience where you've seen some of your favorite books be weeded out of the collection. I know I went to the library one time, not too long ago, and saw on the purchasing shelf, the friends-of-the-library sale shelf, a ton of really beautiful picture book fairytales, and I snatched them all up selfishly thinking how wonderful of a day it was until I realized these are all getting weeded from the collection and I was so sad. So



I asked Amy how do librarians decide which books should be weeded and how can we as families who are using the library influence the kinds of books that our libraries carry? What Amy told me was just like a garden library collections need to be cultivated. When shelves are too full they're hard to browse. And she says that overwhelming collections actually lead to less circulation instead of more. Of course, then, they'd also run out of space for all the wonderful new books that are coming out and there are a lot of wonderful new books coming out every year. Amy acknowledged that it's hard to see old favorites disappearing from shelves but she said, "Think through, if you were browsing for a book and you pulled one out and it had a lot of mysterious stains on it, would you want to bring it home and give it to your kids? Probably not." So books that are tattered, that are old, that are getting dirty and worn, they get weeded. And, of course, the more loved books are the more they take a beating so they're getting checked out a lot. So she will weed them out of the collection and librarians will weed them out of the collection to replace them with fresher copies. Now, unfortunately, not all books stay in print and so unless individual publishers and companies, like Beautiful Feet Books (we're big supporters of Beautiful Feet Books here at Read-Aloud Revival), companies like that are bringing books back into print. If a book has gone out of print there is nothing a library can do to get it back. And so that's one problem. And then also librarians are trying to consider the content of the materials on their shelves; trying to figure out if there is content that is misleading or inaccurate, that is irrelevant to their community, and she says if a book is never checked out, clearly it's not meeting a need in their community. So, as a parent I was thinking through Amy's suggestions

and I thought the best way to support our libraries and to keep encouraging them to buy the kinds of books that we want them to buy are to check out the kind of books that we want to read. Make heavy use of your local library and talk to your librarians and make some connections there, and let them know the kind of books that you love finding in their collection. I hope that this conversation with Amy helps you realize that the people in the library, your local library, they want to work with you, they want to serve you, and they want to bring you the books that your family would love to read. And we can, in turn, support them and thank them and help them grow wonderful collections that will serve our whole community.

41:02 Let The Kids Speak

Sarah: Now it's time for Let the Kids Speak. This is my favorite part of the podcast where kids tell us about their favorite stories that have been read aloud to them.

Child1: [Mom: What's your name?] Hannah Ruth. [Mom: Where are you from, Hannah Ruth?] Alabama. [Mom: What's your favorite book?] *Paddington*. [Mom: What do you like about *Paddington*?] That he packs his bacon in his suitcase. [Mom: Is *Paddington* funny?] Yeah.

Child2: Hello, my name is Caroline. I live in Birmingham, Alabama and my favorite book is *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. I like *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* because I like it when Lucy comes to the lamppost and meets Mr. Tumnes.

Child3: Hi, my name is Ellie and I'm from Hoover, Alabama. My favorite book is *The Magician's Nephew*. My favorite part is when they come into



the woods and when they see Narnia just beginning.

Child4: [Mom: what's your name?] Kate. [Mom: What's your favorite book, Kate?] *Little Blue Truck*. [Mom: How old are you, Kate?] 2. [Mom:2. What does *Little Blue Truck* say?] He says, "Beep, beep, beep."

Child5: Hello, my name is Murphy and I am 7 years old and I live in Mobile, Alabama and my favorite book is *Cobble Street Cousins* because it has three little girls and the little girls are all cousins and they live in a house with their aunt Lucy.

Child6: My name's Abram and my home state is Maryland and my age is 5 and my favorite book is *The Magician's Nephew* and because the chapter what happened at the front door and because of all that people and stuff like that.

Child7: My name is Amaya, I'm 9 years old. I live in Missouri. My favorite book is *Boxcar Children*. I like it because there's a lot of mysteries and excitement.

Child8: [Mom: What's your name?] My name is Julianna Rose. [Mom: Julianna Rose. What's your favorite book, Julianna?] My favorite book is *Clifford*. [Mom: *Clifford*? Why do you like Clifford?] Because you read it to me. [Mom: Where do you live?] In Missouri. [Mom: Missouri.]

Child9: My name is Peter. I'm 4. [Mom: And where do you live?] Milwaukie, Oregon. [Mom: And what's your favorite book, Peter?] *The Cat in the Hat*. [Mom: *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*?] Yeah. [Mom: What's your favorite part about that book?] The part when the cats go back in the Cat in the Hat's hat. [Mom: All the cats go back in the hat? And what does it do to the snow?] Makes a

row. [Mom: And it makes the snow all clean.] Yeah.

Child10: My name is Carly and I live in California and I am 6 years old and my favorite book read aloud is ****inaudible*** [Mom: Norris Smith?] I like it because ****inaudible**** is very funny.

Sarah: Well, that's a wrap for the first episode back of season 11. So glad that we're back. I'm really excited that we have turned the Read-Aloud Revival into a weekly show. You can expect a mini-episode a week from today, next Tuesday. I can't wait to share it with you. And all throughout the season you can expect an episode from the Read-Aloud Revival every Tuesday. The best way not to miss a single episode is to make sure that you are subscribed in iTunes, Stitcher, or whatever your favorite podcast app is. And also, to make sure that you're on the email list because the email subscribers always get the first word on anything awesome happening at Read-Aloud Revival. Go to ReadAloudRevival.com and pop your email in there to make sure that you are on the list. Now, don't forget that you can grab your free librarian kit. That's going to give your librarians a sign that they can print out as well as a printable list so they can really quickly grab from their shelves and their stacks the books we recommend here on the Read-Aloud Revival. So if you'd like to see a display set up at your local library just like Amy did for hers grab that librarian kit, print it out (it's just a couple of pages), and bring it in to your local youth librarian at your local branch and see if they're up for setting up a table that helps people in the community grab Read-Aloud Revival recommended resources quick and easy. You can grab that free librarian kit in the Show Notes to this podcast. Go to ReadAloudRevival.com and look for episode 65.



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