

# Inspiration and Information Online All the Time

This time last year I was thinking about the many ways we can maximize our summers with professional development opportunities we find for ourselves: from reading the latest professional resource books, to traveling to conferences and NerdCamps, to taking advantage of online resources like Edutopia, Library Juice Academy, Future Ready Librarians (on Facebook) and checking out many excellent online webinars. It's one year later and I continue to be impressed by the many ways we can keep growing and learning as professionals with the in-person and digital resources at our fingertips. Many school districts and region centers are initiating their own EdCamps and TechCamps to create opportunities for librarians and educators to share and learn from each other. This kind of peer-led professional development is such an exciting trend. We're looking at our own needs and developing the resources that can help from within our ranks.

## Social Media for Ideas and Inspiration

You can see this online too with the use of Instagram posts with powerful hashtags that organize threads of ideas exchanged across multiple platforms. We can learn from each other with the social media we check every day. In a recent article for *Publisher's Weekly*, "Librarians Harness Instagram," Karen Springen writes about how to use Instagram to get inspiration from other librarians, as well as how to extend the reach of your own library programs and services through effective posts. You can begin by following other libraries and their accounts or search popular hashtags. For example, searching the hashtag #Bookstagram will yield nearly 30 million posts on Instagram—full of great info, links, and visuals. Blogger Selina Falcon writes about her experiences with becoming a #Bookstagrammer on Book Riot (<https://bookriot.com/2018/12/14/lessons-from-bookstagram/>), noting that, "Bookstagrammers are constantly pushing out content daily—not just photos every day, but Instagram stories, IGTV videos, blogs, and reviews." She describes the many techniques she gleans from others that enhance her own contributions to the field.

To get started, check out "Bookstagram for Beginners" by the award-winning The Guy with the Book (<https://theguywiththebook.com/2018/05/17/bookstagram-for-beginners/>). Then over at PaperFury (<https://paperfury.com/how-to-started-bookstagram/>), you'll find even more guidance with fun visuals, too. Epic Reads features some of their favorite Bookstagram accounts on Pinterest too (<https://www.pinterest.com/epicreads/bookstagram/>). It's a buffet of visual ways to promote books and reading. And if you really want to be creative, look at all the posts for #BookfaceFriday to see how people match book covers with real life or as Rachel Kramer Bussel wrote in "Oh, Those Clever Librarians and Their #Bookface" for *The New York Times*, "Bookface involves strategically lining up your face or another body part alongside a book cover that features a matching body part so that there appears a melding of life and art." Here are opportunities to use social media for creative book promotion and glean ideas from others that might work for you in your own setting—the most playful kind of professional development.

## Web Resources and Tools

If you're reading this essay, you're likely already familiar with the many resources available at School Library Connection – watch the Community page or @SLC\_online for upcoming webinars (Stacey Rattner on author visits, Rose Brock on audiobooks, and more). If we cast a wider net, we can find excellent resources from *School Library Journal* and WebJunction that are timely and practical. For example, *School Library Journal* (<https://www.slj.com/?subpage=Events&eventtype=webcasts>) offers a ton of tips for ongoing professional development too, whether through their webcast series (e.g., game-based learning, social emotional learning, etc.) or online articles and features (e.g., library hacks, developing mindfulness, etc.). And we can borrow great ideas from our public library cohorts who are dealing with children, teens, and families in a different context, but with similar needs. For example, OCLC's WebJunction (<https://www.webjunction.org>) is "the learning place for libraries" where regular articles highlight the latest trends and info. Check out the links to the #Library100Novels librarian's kit for free, downloadable materials to promote reading—especially the 100 best novels of all time identified by OCLC based on WorldCat data. Plus, there are a multitude of special projects and webinars to check out too.

## Conclusion

Whether we're exploring social media threads for inspiration and ideas or digging deeply into websites and webcasts for more depth and guidance, there are multiple professional development opportunities available to explore online. Whether we're just browsing or intentionally planning ahead, ongoing professional development is easier than ever with so many tools and resources at our disposal.

## Works Cited

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## About the Editor

**Sylvia Vardell** is Professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman's University and teaches courses in literature for children and young adults. She has authored or co-authored more than 100 published articles, more than 25 book chapters and given more than 150 presentations at national and international conferences. She is the author of *Children's Literature in Action: A Librarian's Guide*, *Poetry Aloud Here!*, *The Poetry Teacher's Book of Lists*, *Poetry People*, co-edits The Poetry Friday Anthology series (with Janet Wong) and maintains the PoetryForChildren blog and poetry column for ALA's Book Links magazine.

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