



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“Hap Palmer pioneered the integration of music and movement in the area of early childhood education ...Teachers have used his music for more than two generations to teach letters, numbers, phonics, days of the week, colors, shapes and more.”

-Association of Children’s Librarians of Northern California (ACL) speaker biography

As it was last year, this year’s ACL institute was held at San Francisco Public Library’s main branch, which is – depending on how you exit the station – right across the street from Civic Center BART. The way you go out is important because this year I managed to walk down a long corridor – as usual – and emerge out of sight of the library.

I come from a long line of geographically challenged people, the ones who can get lost returning from a restaurant restroom, and so I know that panicked feeling will go away as soon as I find someone who can help me. The librarians at SFPL should be happy to know everyone - including street vendors and people rushing by in suits - knows where the library is. Fortunately, I didn’t miss Rosemary Wells, who was the first featured author of the day. This year’s theme was “Baby Bounces, Books and Music for the Very Young,” and who better to represent this genre than the person who created the

charming and humorous Max and Ruby books? These brightly colored books about various bunny characters appeal to children while entertaining the adults; they are perfect examples of quality children’s materials.

Wells praised and thanked us as children’s librarians, drew pictures, and talked eloquently and passionately about the need for parents to read to their children. “Every day,” she told us, “for 20 minutes,” makes a huge difference. She shared the name of her favorite children’s book – *Ferdinand the Bull* – and praised Robert Lawson who made her a lover of history. She was inspiring and eloquent and I’m glad I got to hear her.

Wells was followed by author and longtime professor of children’s literature, Virginia A. Walter, who has written extensively about libraries and children’s literature. Her topic was why we do what we do, because she thinks children’s librarians are “some of the most reflective practitioners out there

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- when you get a chance to reflect.” She recited a list of her current top ten reasons why every child should “read good stuff,” and they included becoming a member of a community of readers, exercising the brain, and helping to understand the narrative of their own lives. She highly recommended and quoted from

Maryanne Wolf’s *Proust and the Squid*, which looks at the development of the reading brain. One

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Author and illustrator Ashley Wolff was next. Her illustrations in the Miss Bindergarten books are perfect examples of her talent and warm sense of humor, since Miss Bindergarten is a believ-

able border collie, teaching a room full of various animals. Wolf talked about the power of pictures, giving an example of an illustration that - without reading any text - informs the reader about the character and setting for the story. Her talk was funny and endearing and it gave me a further appreciation

for the importance of children’s book illustrations.

Hap Palmer was last and he regaled, enter-

tained and involved a room packed with children’s librarians, who stamped their feet, waved their arms, clapped their hands and simply had a good time. It was the perfect finish to a day that most of all gave us enthusiastic and heartfelt support for our ongoing work with children, libraries, books and literacy.