

ILLINOIS LIBRARIES



Special Report:

The Legacy of
the Library Services
& Construction Act
in Illinois

Illinois Libraries

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1998**

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Preface

Kathleen L. Bloomberg

It has been many years since an issue of *Illinois Libraries* has been devoted to one topic. The enormous impact that the Library Services & Construction Act (LSCA) made in Illinois makes it fitting that we set aside an issue to reflect upon what the LSCA program has done for Illinois. A collection of articles about special LSCA grants also was published in the Spring 1998 issue.

In preparation for this retrospective look at LSCA, many back issues of *Illinois Libraries* were perused. Countless articles have been published over a span of more than 30 years about varied projects but, due to the magnitude of the LSCA program, it is fitting that we close the LSCA chapter with a final tribute.

Thank you to the many contributors who enthusiastically wrote articles about the difference that the LSCA program made in library service at the local, library system and state levels. Due to their efforts, we have a lasting reminder of the impact of the LSCA program.

Baby TALK: Still Growing a Decade Later

Katie Gross

Baby TALK at Decatur Public Library, LSCA 1987-88

Reflecting on the labor and delivery pangs that went into writing and administering the Baby TALK LSCA Grant 10 years ago is much like reflecting on the birth of a child. You almost forget the difficulties of the birth after 10 rewarding years of growth, development, successes — and a few frustrations — have gone by. At the time, the Baby TALK grant was as traumatic as the birth of a first child. Neither I nor Decatur Public Library, as far as I know, had ever experienced the demands or rewards of an LSCA grant.

Fortunately, I was not alone, and Baby TALK had been in the planning and early implementation stages for more than a year by the time we wrote the grant application. In January 1986, Claudia Quigg, truly Baby TALK's creator and still the energizing force behind the program, had called together a meeting of professionals interested in issues of early childhood development, parenting, education and literacy — librarians, educators and representatives from the local hospitals' obstetrics units. Convinced of the benefits of surrounding babies with "language, literature and love, we had developed a program of hospital visits to introduce new moms to the joy of reading to their babies and had worked on raising enough funds to get started. In October 1986, with local contributions paving the way, Baby TALK began serving new parents, with coordinator/teacher Claudia Quigg visiting the OB units of Decatur's two hospitals three times a week to talk with new mothers about the importance of reading, singing and playing with their babies. Each mom was encouraged to choose a cardboard book to take home for her baby. Funding would cover about nine months of gift books and hospital visits. If we wanted to continue Baby TALK, another funding source had to be found.

AN LSCA grant through the Illinois State Library seemed the most promising way to continue and expand the program. Even with a coordinator, board of advisors and initial program in place, as the grant cycle progressed my motto soon came to be, "Everything connected with a grant is at least twice as complicated

as you can possibly anticipate!" For instance, as we wrote the timetable for the grant application, how could we have foreseen that Chinese New Year in Hong Kong would delay the publication of the read aloud manual we promised to write?

Decatur Public Library was awarded the LSCA grant of \$35,575 to begin July 1987. Coordinator Claudia Quigg and two visitor-teachers would continue visiting Decatur's two hospitals three times a week to talk to new mothers. Cardboard gift books were purchased to give to newborns, and one-year-old birthday babies who visited their public libraries. Small collections of favorite baby books were purchased to keep at the hospitals as samples of what libraries had to offer little ones. Core collections of 70 of the best baby books were purchased for 11 participating libraries in Macon county, so that mothers would be sure to find recommended books available in all area libraries. Decatur Public Library already had an adequate collection of books for babies and toddlers, but needed a place to house them, so a Modulsystem shelving unit was purchased, providing perfect display space for baby photos and all sizes of baby books.

Letters were developed to send parents when babies turned three, six, nine and 12 months, with developmental information and a list of good books to be found at the library. The six-month mailing invited families to bring their babies to the library to be photographed as part of the first library visit. (158 babies were photographed that year.) The 12-month mailing invited babies to the library for a "birthday party" and to receive a free birthday book. (91 parents picked up birthday books at DPL, and 54 more at participating libraries.)

Much time and effort went into the creation of a manual to give to new parents in the hospital to encourage them to read to their babies. Mrs. Quigg and I wrote the text and prepared the bibliographies, but were in a quandary as to illustrations for the booklet. Should we use clip art? Photos? We really wanted the manual to reflect the beautiful art available in books for babies, in order to whet parents' appetites. We also wanted photos of real babies enjoying books. Mrs. Quigg, who dreams big, wrote to G.P. Putnam's Sons, requesting permission to use illustrations from Tomie dePaola's MOTHER GOOSE, along with photos of local babies.

*Katie Gross, Head of Children's Division, Decatur Public Library, and Baby TALK board member.

Imagine our amazement and joy when dePaola and Putnam's granted permission! Because we did not want the responsibility of handling the original art work, we opted to use color films, which had to be shipped from the printer in Hong Kong, which of course was closed for a month for Chinese New Year! Needless to say, this part of the project was way behind schedule.

When the films finally arrived, designer Sharon Janckowicz arranged art work, photos, text and bibliographies. With the generosity of Tomie dePaola, Putnam's the Friends of DPL who paid the unanticipated cost of using the art work and shipping the films from Hong Kong, and the generosity of our printer, who printed in color at the black and white price, we had a publication that far surpassed our initial vision! More generosity from the Kiwannianes enabled us to meet our objective of giving Babies & Books: a Joyous Beginning to every mother who gave birth during the grant year. Because the book wasn't printed until April, it had to be mailed to nine months worth of mothers. The Kiwannianes gave us 45 hours of volunteer time, preparing the books for mailing, along with another 200 hours sending out 5,750 quarterly letters.

By the end of June 1988, Mrs. Quigg and the visitor-teachers had reached 2,088 mothers in the hospitals. We had spoken to community groups such as prenatal classes and high school child care classes on 36 occasions. Claudia Quigg and teacher Tonya Donnelly worked with Decatur schools to set up a complimentary program to work with moms attending prenatal clinics at both hospitals. (This effort developed further the next year and eventually evolved into the SPARK parenting program in Decatur schools.) I was able to share the program's successes with other librarians at a Cracker Barrel session at the ILA conference.

As Decatur Public Library's Baby TALK grant year came to a close, my motto became "Sometimes a grant is even more successful than you could initially imagine." My own personal reward came after visiting a Baby TALK teacher in the OB unit of the hospital. Nine months later I was in the OB unit myself with a new baby to read to, getting my own Baby TALK visit, gift book and a copy of Babies & Books, two weeks before the final grant report was due at the State Library!

Anticipating this happy event made it evident that library administration of the Baby TALK grant should pass from Decatur Public Library to Rolling Prairie Library System, should the grant be funded for a second year. Besides, Rolling Prairie would be able to involve more area libraries, wouldn't have to contend with the constant distractions of day-to-day service in a children's department, and could provide physical space for a Baby TALK office.

Baby TALK continues at Rolling Prairie Library System, LSCA 1988-89

Claudia Quigg and Sally Wachter, children's consultant at Rolling Prairie, wrote the grant application for LSCA funding for FY 1988-89, and the grant was approved for the amount of \$59,999. During the second year as an LSCA program, Baby TALK staff met with 1,788 new mothers in hospitals, redesigned and continued to send out quarterly mailings and expanded the program greatly. The very popular Lap-Sit program for toddlers and parents began at Decatur Public Library, with 682 attending 20 programs that year. Core collections of 39 board books and Tomie dePaola's MOTHER GOOSE were purchased for each of the 33 RPLS public libraries that had not participated the first year of the grant.

The number of family contacts increased greatly with visits to the hospital's prenatal clinics, where BT teachers talked about parenting and helped expectant parents make homemade toys for their babies, highlighting different aspects of child development and demonstrating that good parenting didn't necessarily mean spending money. They recorded a total of 2,830 contacts with low-income families in the clinics. Lap-Sits and parenting programs were held in conjunction with schools and other community agencies, and 291 family contacts were made through home visits.

A major thrust of the project during the second year was sharing the program with other libraries and communities. An informational brochure and implementation manual were developed to put in a packet, along with Babies & Books and the quarterly mailings that were then disseminated to hundreds of other libraries and agencies. The Baby TALK program was presented to all the hospitals in the library system's area, and several began implementing the program. Two workshops were held, one for Rolling Prairie system librarians and another for other system's librarians. Sally Wachter and Claudia Quigg presented a Poster Session at the ILA conference, and participated in a conference called "Babies, Books and Libraries" at the New York Public Library.

During the second year, Baby TALK began filling orders from other libraries wishing to distribute Babies & Books in their communities. Arrangements were made with Putnam's, so that libraries could individualize the title page. Sale of materials to other communities would prove to be an ongoing source of funds for Baby TALK over the years. Some of the first customers were Champaign, Rantoul, Normal, Bloomington and Mesa, Arizona public libraries.

Besides further developing the program during the year at Rolling Prairie, much time and effort went into the search for funds to allow Baby TALK to continue beyond the second year of LSCA funding. By the end

of the grant period, about \$20,000 had been raised from Decatur Public Schools, St. Mary's Hospital, Decatur Public Library and its Friends group, and Rolling Prairie Library System enabling Baby TALK to continue a while longer.

Beyond LSCA

Thanks to the energy, vision and faith of Claudia Quigg, and a dedicated staff and board, Baby TALK is still going strong nine years after the second year of LSCA funding ended. Fund-raising is a constant struggle, with on-going grant writing sometimes paying off, but oftentimes not. Each year the staff manages to put together a budget consisting of grant funds, donations, contracting out services (for example Decatur Public Library paying for Lap-Sit programming), and funds raised from the sale of materials and workshops, among other sources.

Though taking a great deal of time and energy on the part of the Baby TALK staff, funding efforts have caused Baby TALK to cement a host of partnerships with other agencies as it has delivered services to families over the past decade. Besides working closely with libraries and hospitals in Decatur, Baby TALK works with Head Start, the public schools, Richland Community College, Project READ, Millikin University, Macon County Health Department, Community Health Improvement Center and other agencies. Reaching far beyond the boundaries of Decatur, Baby TALK has developed a close working relationship with Dr. T. Berry Brazelton's Touchpoints project, based at the Child Development Unit of Harvard Medical School.

Over the years, Baby TALK has continued to grow. Its message to parents that "We believe they can give their children a wonderful start in life with an environment of Language, Literature and Love," retains an emphasis on sharing books with babies and toddlers. In addition, Baby TALK has branched out to emphasize all aspects of early childhood development, from brain development to toilet training, and works with parents in even more settings, from pre-natal clinics to adult literacy/parenting classes. Baby TALK programming has extended beyond the boundaries of Decatur and Illinois, with Baby TALK training professionals from across the U.S. and in Canada, who have then implemented parts of the program in 150 other communities.

Baby TALK Milestones Since 1990

- 1990 — Baby TALK received its first grant from the Illinois State Board of Education for Early Childhood Parental Training.
- 1991 — LSCA Mini-Grant for \$15,500 enabled Baby TALK to conduct 9 workshops in Illinois and produce two videotapes, one for parents and one for professionals.

- 1992 — Decatur Public Library and Baby TALK received an LSCA Grant for \$32,870 for a "Families and Books" project to hold family storytimes in the library and at various community sites, giving families paperback copies of featured books. An average of 190 people attended an average of 11 storytimes per month.

Baby TALK was cited by the U.S. Department of Education as one of 13 programs in the country meeting Goal One of the America 2000 Strategy: "By the year 2000 all children in America will start school ready to learn."

The Secretary of State's Office began sending copies of *Babies & Books* to all babies born in Illinois on Family Reading Night.

Baby TALK began offering quarterly workshops to certify Baby TALK practitioners. This was already being done on an informal basis, and the board decided that BT should formalize and charge for the training to provide it more efficiently and effectively. The workshops began as one day programs; they now run for three days.

- 1993 — Baby TALK published *Read For Joy!* an easy-to-read manual for parents of children of all ages, written by Claudia Quigg, featuring illustrations by Tomie dePaola. The manual was developed for use in family literacy programs at the suggestion of First Lady and literacy advocate Barbara Bush.

- 1994 — Baby TALK published *La Alegria de Leer!*, a Spanish translation of *Read For Joy!* with bibliographies of good Spanish children's books.

Baby TALK also began publishing *Dialogue*, a quarterly newsletter, and revised *Babies & Books*, updating the bibliographies.

- 1995 — Baby TALK was designated one of three pilot sites for the Touchpoints project developed by Pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton and based at the Child Development Unit of Harvard Medical School.

Jan Mandernach, in charge of research and evaluation of Baby TALK, began research on language development of kindergarteners in the Decatur Public Schools, looking at how Baby TALK might have affected scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. In a subset of the larger research, Ms. Mandernach showed that children who had participated in Lap-Sits at Decatur Public Library scored significantly higher than the average for children in the district as a whole.

1996 — Claudia Quigg and Jan Mandernach went to Boston for five days of Touchpoints training, then began training the Baby TALK staff.

October 1996 marked the 10th anniversary of Baby TALK serving families in Decatur.

1997 — Claudia Quigg and Jan Mandernach began teaching a class in Early Childhood Development at Millikin University spring semester.

In December, Baby TALK officially went online with a new Web site at www.babytalk.org. During the first few months, the site was receiving about 60 hits per week.

1998 — In January, Baby TALK moved from a small office in Rolling Prairie Library System to newly remodeled office space in Decatur Memorial Hospital's Grand Main Building at 1314 N. Main St., Decatur, IL, 62526. Finally, Baby TALK had desks and office space for all its staff, a training room, on-site storage and even a child-size bathroom! For the first time Baby TALK had their own space in which to receive families and provide training.

In March, Baby TALK began offering free music classes for toddlers in the training room in the new office.

April 1998 — Baby TALK has reached 22,000 families in the Decatur area! Baby TALK programs have been replicated in more than 150 communities across 20 states and in Canada!

A Partial List of Communities Distributing *Babies & Books: A Joyous Beginning*

Illinois libraries and agencies:

Normal Public Library
Champaign Public Library
Rantoul Public Library
Carthage Public Library
Oak Park Public Library
Parlin-Ingersoll Public Library
Waubonsee Community College
Mt. Prospect Public Library
Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Public Library Association
Bensenville Community Public Library
Kankakee Regional Office of Education
Kankakee Community College
Family Literacy Program, Effingham
Illinois State Library
Education Service Network, Morris
South School, Chicago
St. Vincent Hospital, Taylorville

Libraries and agencies outside Illinois:

Cobb County Library, Marietta, GA
Westchester Public Library, Chesterton, IN
"Norweld" Northwest Library District, Perrysburg, OH
Sandusky Library, Sandusky, OH
Dr. Robert Judge, Berne, IN
Susquehanna Co. Free Library Association,
Montrose, PA
Tiffin-Seneca Public Library, Tiffin, OH
Burnham Memorial Library, Colchester, VT
Lake Geneva Public Library, Lake Geneva, WI
Kettleson Memorial Library, Sitka, AK
Hageman Library, Porter, IN
Laurens County Library, Laurens, SC
Charleston County Library, Charleston, SC
Oklahoma State Library, Oklahoma City, OK
Lake County Office of Education, Painesville, OH
Edith Abbot Memorial Library, Grand Island, NE
Granite State Council, Bedford, NH
Groton Public Library, Groton, CT
Edward Gauche Fisher Public Library, Athens, TN
Norwell Library District, Bowling Green, OH
Fayette Literary Council, Uniontown, PA
Laurens School District #55, Laurens, SC
Greenville News, Greenville, SC
Omaha Public Schools, Omaha, NE
HUB Family Support Center, Dover, NH
Welcome Baby, Mt. Vernon, WA

Long Term Impact of Baby TALK on Decatur Public Library

For 11 years Decatur Public Library has benefitted daily from Baby TALK in sites all over Decatur, encouraging parents to read to their children and use the public library. In the Children's Department we have recorded about 3,500 Baby TALK contacts, library assistance given to families we felt sure were in the library as a result of Baby TALK. We have photographed nearly 1,600 babies and given out 1,250 gift books in the library to birthday babies and the few babies who missed being signed up in the hospitals. Well-loved Baby TALK teachers Liz Smith, Karen Hurley, Deb Widenhofer, and Susan Woods-Cunningham have done 730 Lap-Sit programs for more than 14,000 parents and toddlers in the Children's Department.

Working cooperatively with Baby TALK has enabled the staff in the Children's Department to work with many other community agencies as well. At a time when technology seems to be the overriding concern for most of the library world, it is helpful to be part of a larger team effort still committed to books, reading and families. No one could provide more inspiration than the dedicated staff at Baby TALK.

Our base of library users has certainly broadened and deepened because of Baby TALK staff constantly

encouraging families to visit the library. With some certainty we can point to families who are regular library users and readers because of Baby TALK. We know with great certainty that reading will make a difference in those children's lives.