



Well I am back from my summer holidays in Cape Town where I missed the Olympics, most of the riots but was fortunate enough to chat to a number of brilliant South African YA writers. I have been posting the interviews on [www.teenlibrarian.co.uk](http://www.teenlibrarian.co.uk) but will also feature them over the coming months in the interview section.

Staying with TLM we kick off with Caroline Fielding's Library Olympics and then move on to an article by the brilliant John Vincent and Anne Harding delivered a seminar for postgrad students from the University of Missouri on libraries and social justice. There was a big emphasis on library provision for teenagers, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This year's winners of the Libraries Change Lives Award, Library Songwriters: Skipton Rewind Club took part and gave a presentation.

Do you remember the good old days when Tokyopop still existed and ran ReCons, sadly Tokyopop is still gone but ReCons are back!

The interview this month is with award-winning South African writer and all-round lovely person S.A. Partridge, author of *Dark Poppy's Demise*, *The Goblet Club* and others – I cannot recommend them highly enough!

## Library Olympics

Caroline Fielding

In our school we have half-termly PSHE days rather than regular PSHE lessons. These days have everyone off timetable doing citizenship type activities or trips of all sorts! This July the theme was the Olympics. They spent the day doing Paralympics related activities, to learn about equalities, inclusion and team work, and one of the sessions for years 7 & 8 was The Library Olympics! A bit late for any London Olympics related things you may have done in your library, but some ideas that you might enjoy using for another occasion. I got a lot of the ideas from the School Librarian Network on Yahoo! (well worth joining if you work in a school and haven't already). They came in groups of

about 20 (ideally, some groups were too large) with teachers that helped them with the 5 activities. Luckily I have quite a large room so things were well spread out!

1. Author Ball – name an author; throw a tennis ball into a bucket. If you miss or it bounces out it doesn't count but how many can you get in 90 seconds? They did that in the fiction area so some of them started working in pairs – one looking round the shelves shouting out authors' names for the other to say – an excellent demonstration of teamwork and research skills...
2. Obstacle Course – small cones create a route around shelves in the NF area – navigate them while balancing a book on your head, and if you drop it start again!
3. Chinese Whispers – show the first pupil a first line of a book and the last pupil writes it down – as quickly as they can but they have to get it right!
4. Tower Building – build a tower of OLD books as tall as you can – that can stand alone – in a minute.
5. Poetry Hula – by far the favourite activity, some were great at it and would have carried on hours while others lasted 5 seconds – hula while reading aloud from a book of poetry!

The teacher organising the day threw me some year 10s as well. I was really worried they'd just sit around but they enjoyed it just as much as the littl'uns! I'd call it enjoyable chaos and it was totally exhausting! Tidying up afterwards didn't take as long as I'd feared either – pupils put the old books back into the boxes they'd come from so all I had to do was pick up the cones, shelve the poetry books and the ones they'd had on their head, and pick up a few stray tennis balls!

## Library Songwriters: Skipton Rewind Club and the University of Missouri

John Vincent & Anne Harding

This summer a group of postgraduate librarianship students from the University of Missouri made a study tour of the British Isles. We led a seminar for them at York Explore Library on the role of public libraries in supporting social justice, with a strong focus on library provision for teenagers, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We were delighted that CILIP Libraries Change Lives 2012 Award Winners, Skipton Rewind Club, agreed to take part and give a presentation. They are an amazing group of young musicians who meet in Skipton Library every week to develop their songwriting. This YouTube clip [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkb-BWPKm0U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkb-BWPKm0U) and their blog <http://rewindpresents.wordpress.com> give a taste of what they do.

It was great to have the viewpoints of the Club members, as well as those of the library students and of librarians from both sides of the Atlantic. Clearly there are lots of similarities between the States and the UK in terms of social disadvantage among teenagers, and barriers to library use. The debates about how to break these down and make libraries relevant and attractive to teenagers raised important issues.

Everyone was adamant that active involvement by teenagers in decision making in every aspect of provision and from the earliest stage of planning is fundamental to success. Library staff need to listen attentively to what young people say, and focus on their interests. Teenagers should have opportunities to co-run library activities, and be creative. Rewind members told us that libraries can do a lot to boost teenagers' self-confidence.

Staff training emerged as a major priority: vital for combating negative attitudes and stereotypes, and to help library staff counter other users' sometimes hostile reactions to young people.

To be welcoming spaces for teenagers, libraries also need places to relax as well as to study in ways that suit young people, and a teenage area well away from the children's

library. Libraries should review their overall focus said club members: teenagers get the impression that libraries are disproportionately geared to children and 'old people'.

Marketing is key. Libraries must spread positive messages to counteract their bad image in many teenagers' eyes. Social media have a huge role, with YouTube especially powerful. Library staff should go out to talk with young people. Schools are an obvious place to promote libraries actively. Procedures should be addressed. Do forms really need to be counter-signed by parents, for example?

Introducing the Club presentation, librarian Claire Thompson explained that prior events at Skipton Library had attracted good teenage audiences, but failed to produce subsequent visits. Discussions with teenagers and partner organisations led to workshops with a musician and youth workers. Rewind was born. Claire told us her role uses traditional library skills: communication, facilitation and sign-posting opportunities.

The Rewind members then showed us how theory discussed during the day can turn into practice with a brilliant presentation on the operation and benefits of the club. They shared masses of ideas for good library interactions, and were full of praise for the support and encouragement Skipton Library provides, calling it a great influence and inspiration. Musician Rich Huxley's workshops and mentoring were crucial, we heard. 'The library is the hub of anything I wanted to do musically', but the club 'is more than music'. It has enhanced members' skills in lots of areas, music of course, social skills and public speaking, as we witnessed, plus organising events, marketing, making funding applications, managing finances, blogging. Importantly, the club is entirely collaborative and each member works to their strengths. Rewind has changed their lives. In addition, it has been a catalyst not just for all sorts of music-related activities, but also for better community relations. Outdoor gigs attended by locals of all ages have changed attitudes towards young people. They have led to an increase in membership, and inspired other local young people to form music groups.

The club ended their slot with a scintillating performance of one of their songs. Students and university staff were bowled over by their contribution to the day. We were too.

The relationship between the Rewind Club and Skipton Library is a wonderful model of good teenage provision, with lots of valuable messages for the UK and the US, applicable even in tough financial times.

**John Vincent** is co-ordinator of The Network and an independent trainer, consultant and lecturer specialising in social exclusion.

[www.seapn.org.uk](http://www.seapn.org.uk)

**Anne Harding** is an independent trainer specialising in library provision for children and young people and children's reading.

[www.anneharding.net](http://www.anneharding.net)



Remember the good old days when Tokyopop still existed as a manga-producing powerhouse and the hard-working staff crossed the country from Scunthorpe to Canterbury running the Tokyopop ReCons?

Well Tokyopop may be gone but the ReCons are still with us! Andrew Whelan (formerly of Tokyopop) is still involved with them but this time through Diamond Book Distributors.



The format is still pretty much the same so:

- new titles presentation
- quiz
- cosplay contest
- art competition
- raffle
- freebies/prizes

Where possible they try to get a local gaming shop or Games Workshop store or even the distributor Esdevium to come and do a demo of games .

If the ReCon is run in a local library then they invite a local retailer along as well be it comic or book shop .



The preferred days are usually midweek but they would look at Monday/Friday if it was only option and usually between 6 and 8 pm . Although from 6.30pm to 8.30pm is also a possibility but probably wouldn't want to go later than that.



For more details or to book a ReCon at your library you can contact Andrew:

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Special thanks go to S.A. Partridge for taking part in the interview

All submissions of articles, reviews & ideas are welcome and can be sent to [teenlibraryservice@gmail.com](mailto:teenlibraryservice@gmail.com)

Subscribing to Teen Librarian Monthly is free just send an e-mail to: [teenlibraryservice@gmail.com](mailto:teenlibraryservice@gmail.com)

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## YA in SA: An Interview with S.A. Partridge

S.A. Partridge is the author of award-winning YA novels Fuse, The Goblet Club and Dark Poppy's Demise.

**1. I am ashamed to say that until I picked up a copy of Dark Poppy's Demise at [Kalk Bay Books](#) I had not read any of your books. Would you be able to introduce yourself for those that have not encountered you in print or online before.**

I am a YA writer from Cape Town, South Africa. I have three novels out in the wild.

**2. Your novels focus on problems that many teenagers face – bullying, living rough and so on as a South African writer do you feel that SA youth have a unique set of problems or do you think what they face is universal?**

South Africa is unique in that it's a first world country with a third world reputation. It's home to a melting pot of cultures and one of the most interesting places you can live. But rather than focus on what makes us different, race is kind of the elephant in the room that is missing from all my novels. Instead I focus on the real world, modern problems that face teenagers in South Africa and across the globe, such as Internet predators, drug dealers, peer pressure, abuse, and yes, friends with murderous intentions.

**3. You have won a number of awards for your books The Goblet Club winning the SABC/You Magazine I am a writer Competition and the MER Prize for Best Youth Novel, Fuse short-listed for the [Percy Fitzpatrick Prize for youth literature](#) in 2010 and will be showcased at the [IBBY World Conference](#) in August and Dark Poppy's Demise won the [MER Prize](#). Not only that but you have been named as one of South Africa's best authors. Do you feel under pressure from all these accolades or are you able to ignore the expectations and just write?**

I just write. As soon as I'm done with one novel, another story starts nudging for my attention and I move on to that. I don't write

with things like awards and being prescribed at school in mind. I tend to focus on the story and the characters and doing my best to translate them down onto to paper. I'm weird in the way that I believe stories exist out there in the universe and that the writer is just the medium.

**4. Have any of your novels been picked up by overseas publishers?**

I'm working on it. Watch this space. You can pick them up through some online vendors. <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/dark-poppys-demise-s-a-partridge>  
<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Goblet-Club-The-S-A-Partridge>  
<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Fuse-S-Partridge>

**5. Are any of your novels based on personal experiences**

Not really. Sometimes I overhear bits of conversation or see something that makes an impression and then add it in, but for the most part the story is complete when it finds me. For *Dark Poppy's Demise*, which is about a girl that meets a psychopath online, I drew on my own experience of online dating, but only for research. It didn't play a part of the story.

**6. I read in a review that you “*deliver a dystopian view of South African youth culture*” why do you think that young people have such a rough time (not just in SA but globally)?**

There is an urgency to being a teenager that we tend to forget about the older we get. High school is where we learn to interact with people socially, so if you think about it, it's a little bit like the island in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. It's about being the alpha dog, fitting in, finding your social status, impressing the girl, impressing the rest. It's such an insular environment that isn't really affected by the outside world and every problem seems more end of the world than it really is.

### **7. What is your favourite part of the writing process?**

I enjoy flat out bouts of writing where I produce a massive amount of content in a matter of hours. I'm addicted to seeing a story start to take shape. It gives me a greater sense of achievement than actually publishing the book.

### **8. How do you think that YA writing perceived in South Africa?**

YA is incredibly popular in South Africa. Walk into any bookstore and you'll see the floating displays of latest releases. There are also a lot of dedicated YA book blogs that build excitement for upcoming releases. For example, when Veronica Roth's *Insurgent* came out, there was a huge buzz among local book bloggers on Twitter. They are also hugely supportive of local writers, which is awesome. There's an incredible atmosphere of support and encouragement here.

### **9. Have you had much feedback from teen readers? What have their thoughts been about your writing?**

I've been very lucky. My first novel was adapted into a school play and on opening night I was bowled over by the kids wanting to talk to me about the book. I also get quite a few messages on Facebook from readers, and most recently Twitter as well.

### **10. The SA YA writing pool seems to be incredibly small, can you recommend other SA authors that you enjoy reading? (I currently have you, Lily Herne, Cat Hellisen and Michael Williams as well as Liz Davis from Namibia)**

[Edyth Bulbring](#) is very prolific. [Adeline Radloff](#) wrote an excellent YA about a super hero and his teenage apprentice set in Cape Town that won the Sanlam Youth Prize. [Lauri Kubuitsile](#) is a YA writer from Botswana whose novel *Signed, Hopelessly in Love*, was also up for the MER prize. There's also [Alex Smith](#), [Jenny Robson](#), [Gillian D'achada](#), [Jayne Bauling](#), [Francois Bloemhof](#), [Robin Malan](#), [Fanie Viljoen](#). It's a small community, but the content coming out is fantastic.

### **11. What is coming next after *Dark Poppy's Demise*?**

My next novel is called *Sharp Edges*, which tackles the mystery surrounding the death of a seventeen year old girl at a trance party, seen through the perspective of the five other people there. It will hit shelves in April 2013.

You can follow S.A. Partridge via her blog: <http://sapartridge.bookslive.co.za/>

on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/Sapartridgewriter>

or on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Sapartridge>