

iNK Think Tank

2016-17 Annual Report

Message from the President

Because this is the very first Annual Report from iNK Think Tank, I would like to take the opportunity to tell you something about who we are and how we came to be.

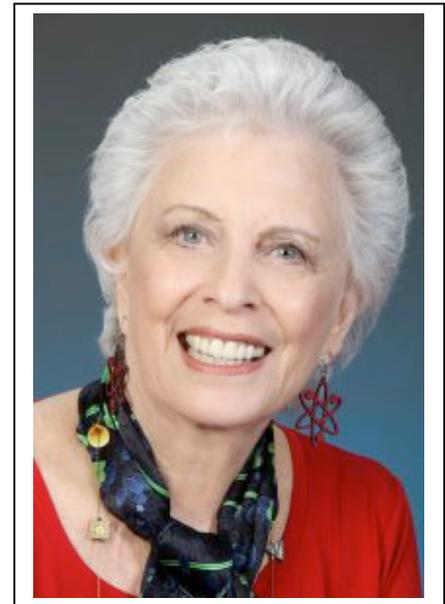
When I first started iNK Think Tank in 2009, the Common Core Standards had just been implemented, requiring more nonfiction reading. We nonfiction authors were pleased that the importance of our genre was being recognized by the education community. But we also knew that most teachers were unaware of the trove of excellent nonfiction books related to their required curricula that were actually sitting idly on their school library shelves. So I approached a number of my fellow well-known nonfiction authors and convinced them to join with me in creating a database aligning our books to the new Standards. We launched our website under the name of iNK (interesting Nonfiction for Kids) Think Tank in October 2009 and the response was strong.

Next came Authors on Call—a small group of iNK authors who were willing to invest time and money into learning about video conferencing with the aim of providing interactive school author visits at a low cost. And our further offering to teachers was the launch of the Nonfiction Minute in September of 2015. We wrote, recorded, and posted a new 400-word illustrated nonfiction essay every day of the school year. Teachers were able to upload the Minutes to their classroom computers and white boards at no cost, thus sparking student interest in a variety of nonfiction topics and providing exposure to excellent writing.

In August 2015 we reorganized to become a nonprofit 501 c (3) corporation, iNK Think Tank, Inc. Over the past decade, iNK has become known for its important contributions to education and it is now time for it to become financially sustainable. We are in the process of developing plans to fund our important work.



NONFICTION AUTHORS
IN YOUR CLASSROOM



About iNK Think Tank:

iNK Think Tank is a group of more than thirty award-winning children's nonfiction book authors. Together we are pioneering ways of working with teachers and students by sharing our skills as highly-regarded researchers and writers. Our books about science, technology, mathematics, history, and outstanding people provide student-centered learning that use of traditional textbooks cannot match.



Current iNK Programs and Projects:

The Nonfiction Minute

Nonfiction Minutes are 400-word nonfiction essays written and donated by iNK member authors. The Minutes are designed to expose young readers to a variety of topics in the hope of inspiring them to delve deeper into a subject. They also highlight the impact of top-quality nonfiction writing. Aimed at upper elementary and middle school interests and mandated curriculum content, each Minute is accompanied by an MP3 of the author reading his or her work, making the essays accessible for all learners. Visuals (illustrations, charts, photographs) accompany each Minute. iNK posts a Minute for each school day of the year on the nonfictionminute.org website, accessible at no cost to classrooms, parents, and anyone interested in reading quality nonfiction literature. Each Minute has a Comment section, a place for students to start a dialog with the author and for teachers to contribute their own ideas as to how the information is useful.

Experience and feedback from our classroom users have led to a number of modifications during the 2016-17 school year. Instead of publishing on each school day, we now post five Minutes at a time weekly on Saturday afternoons. This has provided teachers time to plan for the upcoming week, a popular change as indicated by a surge in site traffic. The program is now averaging approximately 3,000 page views per day, with some days seeing more than 6,000 views.

A notable enhancement to the Nonfiction Minutes in 2017-18 is the new *Transfer to Teaching* section. Each Minute published this season has a custom page with creative ideas for using the Minute in the classroom. Organized by subject area and focused on critical thinking and problem-solving skills, these ideas have been created and organized by certified school librarian Karen Sterling, an iNK Think Tank member. Each

Minute is also categorized according to the Library of Congress Subject Authority headings to increase access points for users.

Our classroom teachers are calling for new Minutes, and we have been attempting to accommodate by offering a new Minute every Wednesday – which is the best we can currently do with this all-volunteer effort. Each minute takes from 4 to 6 hours of an authors' time, and about 5 to 6 hours of an editor's time to fact check, edit, copyedit, illustrate from free sources, format for posting, and schedule for posting on the website.

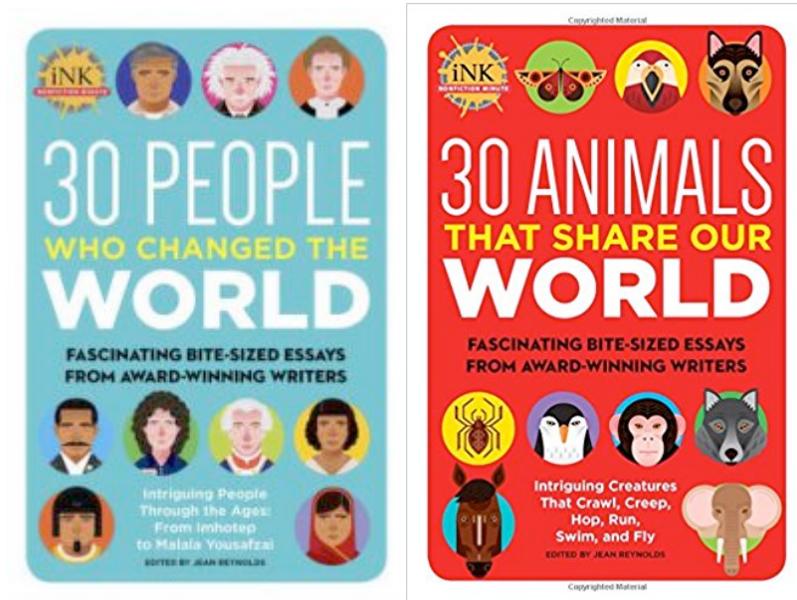
We envision that the ***Nonfiction Minute*** will eventually be the go-to app for teachers looking to infuse quality nonfiction into their daily lessons because they know they can trust the information for accuracy and count on it for being accessible to young readers. The posts will be tagged and archived so that teachers can search specific topics for use on any day of the year, not just on the day of posting. Our goal is to get additional teachers familiar with our free high-quality content. If we succeed in attracting a larger following, there is the possibility that our publishers would advertise our books on the blog, creating a revenue stream.

We are also in the process of seeking possible organizational or corporate sponsors for individual Minutes in specific academic areas, for example STEM or ecology.

See Addendum 1 for recent Author Book Honors (selected).

iNK Print Books

An editor from Seagrass Press, a division of Quarto Publishing, discovered the Nonfiction Minute site and envisioned making a series of books as anthologies, each containing 30 Minutes. During the 2016-17 school year, we signed two contracts for the publication of original paperback and subsequent library hardcover editions.



The first Nonfiction Minute anthology features a collection of 30 Minutes dedicated to historical figures such as Rosa Parks, Vincent Van Gogh, and Julius Caesar. The book is available through online retailers including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Indiebound, Books-a-Million, and Booktopia.

iNK's first published collaborative work was launched at the [Chappaqua Children's Book Festival](#) in October 2017 by three of the contributing iNK authors—Sarah Albee, Vicki Cobb, and Roxie Munro.

30 People Who Changed the World, was published in the Fall of 2017 with favorable reviews from major media. It was chosen as a Notable Trade Book for Young Readers by the National Council of Social Studies and the Children's Book Council in 2018.

30 Animals Who Share Our World will be published in Spring 2018.

[See Addendum 2 for recent NFM print book honors and reviews \(selected\).](#)

iNK Database

iNK's database of 800 of our authors' books tied to curriculum standards currently has over 7,000 registered users. The trend, since its inception in 2009, has been a growth of approximately 1,000 users per year.

Authors on Call

One of the initial visions for the founding of iNK was to use interactive videoconferencing (IVC) as a way to bring authors to the classroom without the time and expense of travel and lodging. The program not only makes the experience for students actively participating with a favorite author affordable for schools, but also helps them learn the ins and outs of videoconferencing, a skill they will need for college and for the workplace. iNK currently markets this program through two partner organizations: [CILC](#) and [FieldTripZoom](#). At this juncture, iNK has 45 programs listed on the CILC content provider directory, and we sell approximately 200 programs per year. It is in the works to expand the number of iNK authors participating in distance learning programs for students and for teachers.

About CILC ([Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration](#)): CILC is a nonprofit corporation specializing in providing access to education content providers via the utilization of videoconferencing for live interactions. They provide a directory of hundreds of professional education content providers and professional development specialists including Authors on Call/ iNK Think Tank.

About Field Trip Zoom: **Field Trip Zoom** provides assess for teachers to supplemental curriculum content using the Virtual Field Trip approach. Much like CILC, they promote experiential learning; project-based learning; blended learning, and strategies for connecting classrooms and students with professional content providers such as iNK Think Tank.

Class ACTS Pilot Project

iNK is in the process of using the Authors on Call knowledge participants have gained as distance learning providers to establish a pilot project: Class ACTS (Authors Connecting with Teachers and Students). The aim is to bring these authors and their programs to Title 1 schools that cannot afford the Authors on Call Program. These are the schools that would benefit the most from the concept of authors and teachers collaborating to bring excitement and literacy skills to the classroom. This extended distance learning program will provide mentoring for teachers and the chance for students to drill deeply into the process of reading and writing nonfiction. They will be provided with energizing content directly related to their mandated classroom curriculum content. After reading and dissecting one of iNK's author's books and looking deeply into the craft of writing, they will participate in an extended mentoring session that includes creating their own writing products. During this time, their teachers will have access to on-going professional development fashioned for their specific needs.

As part of this pilot project, iNK has partnered with two higher education literacy specialists and evaluators who will provide an Evaluation program and Project Consultation during the 2018-19 school year. These Evaluators and Teacher Consultants are highly-respected professionals in the field.

Dr. Cunningham: Katherine Egan Cunningham is an Associate Professor at Manhattanville College in the Literacy department. She is the author of *Story: Still the Heart of Literacy Learning* (Stenhouse, 2015), co-author of *Literacy Leadership in Changing Schools: Ten Keys to Successful Professional Development* (Teachers College Press, 2016), and co-author of the School Library Journal blog *The Classroom Bookshelf*. Her research, scholarship, and teaching focus on children's literature, new technologies, methods, professional development, and intentional teaching towards student and teacher happiness.

Dr. Mary Ann Cappiello teaches in the graduate literacy programs at Lesley College. She has spent over a decade teaching language arts and the humanities in public schools in New York and New England. She is the coauthor of *Teaching with Text Sets* (Shell, 2012), *Teaching to Complexity: An Evaluation Framework for Literary and Content-Area Texts* (Shell, 2013). Her blogs include "[The Classroom Bookshelf](#)," a *School Library Journal* blog, and chairs the National Council of Teachers of English [Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction](#) Committee through 2018. Dr. Cappiello presents regionally and nationally, and partners with museums and libraries. She has appeared on public radio and consults with public television.

Future Plans, 2018

Development — iNK has hired a nonprofit consultant and grants professional to develop a long-term fundraising strategy and to access grant monies for iNK capacity-building, the **Nonfiction Minutes**, and for our pilot program, **Class ACTS**. She has identified over 100 foundations to approach on behalf of iNK. She has also provided consulting sessions to assist iNK Think Tank as we continue to restructure as a nonprofit organization in order to compete for grant dollars in a highly-competitive philanthropic environment. Numerous proposal submissions will ensue during the first months of 2018, the beginning of the 2018 funding cycle. During the end of the 2017 funding cycle, while preparing iNK documentation and researching potential funding sources, several proposals were submitted to foundations and corporations, and a number of these, including requests to Cisco Cyber Grants program, the Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation, Charles Lafitte Foundation, the Andrews Family Foundation, the Pinkerton Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, are pending.

Fundraising — In 2014 and again in 2017, we conducted a crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo, and raised approximately \$1,000 for 2017, having raised \$4,000 in 2014. iNK will continue to explore a diverse fundraising plan.

Board — The original iNK Board of Directors has begun participating in on-going Board development and Strategic Planning activities for organizational restructuring. A working board will be brought on over a period of time, representing our client base and expertise in nonprofit management, financial planning, and education reform. We are always striving for diversity in the iNK organization.

Staffing — As iNK grows into its nonprofit skin and begins to realize a goal of long-term sustainability, it will be necessary for the volunteer Executive Director to be replaced with part time staff members who have the experience to wear several hats. This could include nonprofit management and development, project management, volunteer coordination, financial management, and literary and publication experience and expertise. As we continue the publication of new Nonfiction Minutes, we will need to add an Editor to our staff.

Membership — iNK's goal is to expand its paid membership base through our attractive member benefits for nonfiction children's book authors including their participation in creating Nonfiction Minutes, garnering wide recognition by the iNK education audience; inclusion in our upcoming anthologies; use of iNK's mailing list to promote author books; earned income as an Author on Call, and more recognition through this program by the education community. Additional membership strategies for Educator Memberships are in the works.

Volunteers — The heart and soul of every successful nonprofit organization is its volunteers. iNK is fortunate to have members who also volunteer for a wide variety of endeavors, including writing Nonfiction Minutes, providing graphics for various organizational promotion projects, maintaining our active presence on social media, promoting iNK at national conventions as speakers or members of panels, and carefully following curriculum developments to keep fellow members thoroughly informed in all disciplines. In the future, iNK plans to expand its volunteer base beyond its own author membership. We also enjoy the pro bono contributions provided iNK by our accountant, and our librarian member, Karen Sterling, as well as the work of our webmaster, editor

Jean Reynolds. Our Board of Directors contributes untold hours and dedication to assisting iNK as we emerge as one of the premier literacy organizations for K-12 classrooms.

Social Media — iNK members have made more and more regular use of social media outlets during 2017 to promote both iNK authors and iNK projects and products. Our plan is to increase social media exposure further in the coming years by involving our authors in posting and passing along information on a more regular basis, and through our blog postings. One of our authors, Roxie Munro, is an expert in this area and will lead the initiative.

Marketing Perspectives (see Addendum 3 for list of recent Author Conference appearances promoting iNk Think Tank and the Nonfiction Minute)

Addendum 1. iNK AUTHORS RECENT AWARDS LIST.

Listing of major awards that iNK authors have received during 2017 (selected):

Booklist ONLINE Top Ten Sci-Tech Books for Kids

Poison: Deadly Deeds, Perilous Professions, and Murderous Medicines by Sarah Albee

Beastly Brains: Exploring How Animals Think, Talk, and Feel by Nancy Castaldo

National Science Teachers Association Best STEM Books for 2018

How Could We Harness a Hurricane? By Vicki Cobb

Voyager's Greatest Hits: The Epic Trek to Interstellar Space by Alexandra Siy

Music of Life by Elizabeth Rusch

National Science Teachers Association/Children's Book Council Outstanding Science Trade Books for 2018

Can an Aardvark Bark? By Melissa Stewart, illustrated by Steve Jenkins

Catching Air by Sneed B. Collard III

The Secret Life of the Red Fox by Laurence Pringle

School Library Journal Best Books 2017

Fault Lines in the Constitution: The Framers, Their Fights, and the Flaws that Affect Us Today by Cynthia Levinson & Sanford Levinson

Impact: Asteroids and the Science of Saving the World by Elizabeth Rusch

Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library by Carole Boston Weatherford, illus. by Eric Velasquez

Junior Library Guild 2017-2018

Bertha Takes a Drive by Jan Adkins

Stand Up and Sing: Pete Seeger, Folk Music, and the Path to Justice by Susanna Reich

Hopping Ahead of Climate Change: Snowshoe Hares, Science, and Survival by Sneed B. Collard III

Elizabeth Started All the Trouble by Doreen Rappaport

Full of Fall by April Pulley Sayre

Meet Cindy Sherman Artist Photographer and Chameleon by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan

Kirkus Reviews Best Middle-Grade Nonfiction of 2017

Meet Cindy Sherman: Artist, Photographer, Chameleon by Jan Greenberg, Sandra Jordan

Fault Lines in the Constitution: Their Framers, Their Fights, and the Flaws the Affect Us Today by Cynthia Levinson, Sanford Levinson

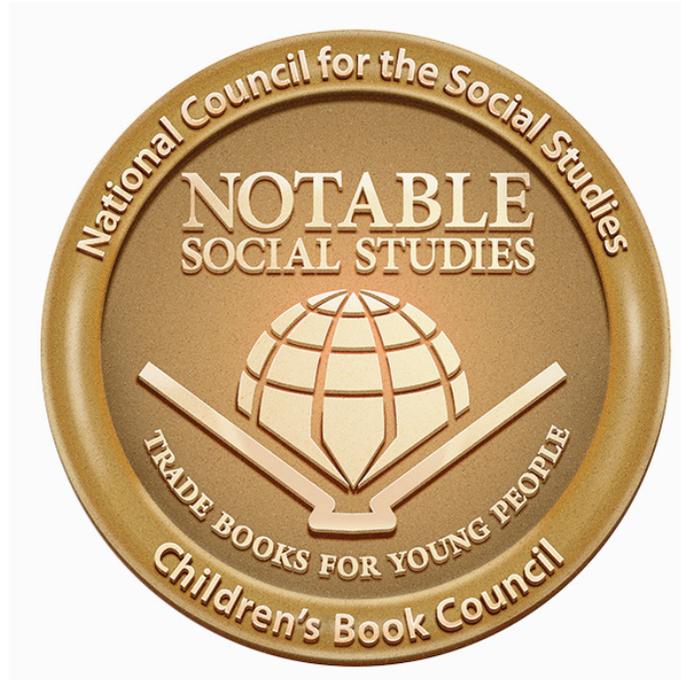
2018 American Association for the Advancement of Science/Subaru Science Books & Films Prizes Finalists:

Animals by the Numbers: A Book of Animal Infographics by Steve Jenkins

Voyager's Greatest Hits: The Epic Trek to Interstellar Space by Alexandra Siy

Addendum 2. Recent awards and reviews for Nonfiction Minute print books.

30 People Who Changed the World, was published in the Fall of 2017 with favorable reviews from major media. It was chosen as a Notable Trade Book for Young Readers by the National Council of Social Studies and the Children's Book Council in 2018.



30 People Who Changed the World (9781633223776, \$14.95) – Seagrass Press

Kirkus Reviews, November 15: Biographical highlights and sidelights from a dozen, mostly veteran, nonfiction authors. Originally posted on the Nonfiction Minute blog, these short essays focus less on biographical details than on why their subjects are worth knowing. Cheryl Harness, for instance, looks at George Washington Carver's intrepid early efforts to make a go of it as a Kansas chicken farmer; elsewhere she suggests some of Mary Shelley's likely sources of inspiration for *Frankenstein* and pays tribute to the warm friendship between the Marquis de Lafayette and the enslaved African-American James Armistead. Readers in search of role models will find plenty of lesser known possibilities among the usual suspects, such as ancient Egyptian Renaissance Man Imhotep (profiled by Jim Whiting), Sarah Keys Evans (by Amy Nathan), an African-

American woman who preceded Rosa Parks in refusing to move to the back of a bus, Cal Rodgers (by Roxie Munro), a white pilot who was the first to fly across the U.S., or even George Frederic Handel (by Andrea Warren), the German composer who donated proceeds from his Messiah (and much more) to the London Foundling Hospital. Hellegouarch fills gaps in the array of period photos, documents, and art with mildly dramatic watercolor scenes, and each entry ends with a few leads to further information (often one of the writer's own works). Brisk and appealing historical vignettes, as readable as they are revealing. (writers' profiles, index) (Collective biography. 10-13)

Booklist, December 15

The title may be hyperbole, yet the 30 people profiled in this handsomely produced nonfiction book are certainly interesting and mostly exemplary. The compendium contains someone to interest everyone, including contemporary role models (Malala Yousafzal), artists of color (Edmonia Lewis and Juan de Pareja), and explorers (Roald Amundsen and Robert Scott). Authors, scientists, and civil rights icons are all represented. A few oddball choices include Ulysses S. Grant's son, Frederick, who was a young soldier, and the Radium Girls, who inadvertently proved the dangers of radium when they used it to paint clocks. Photos, maps, art reproductions, and even graphs keep the layout lively. The authors, among them Roxie Munro and Jan Greenberg, have produced prolific amounts of nonfiction and clearly know how to sum up their subjects in three-to-five pages while whetting young readers' appetites. This is a good jumping-off platform to longer similar essays, as in the Who Was series. Resources listed for each entry include websites as well as books.— Karen Cruze

Addendum 3. Marketing Perspectives

Additional Promotion

Our Promotional Postcard

We continue to distribute postcards featuring iNK authors, their books, the Nonfiction Minute, and iNK programming at various conferences.

iNK
iNK THINK TANK is proud to produce
The Nonfiction Minute

High-interest, short illustrated text essays spanning all areas of the curriculum. Each selection is also read aloud by the author so content is accessible to all.
www.nonfictionminute.org

30 PEOPLE
WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

- Free!
- More than 250,000 visitors
- A teachable moment for memorable learning!
- Common Core-Aligned 2,000,000+ page views
- Give them reading that gets them thinking!
- A brand new book! Our first print collection of Minutes

iNK THINK TANK
NONFICTION AUTHORS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

iNK Think Tank
A website that connects teachers and students to top nonfiction books and their authors to inspire, instruct and inform across the K-12 curriculum. iNK authors know both content and writing.

Find the books through the FREE iNK Database
Search by grade level, subject and/or curriculum standards to find wonderful books that speak to children. Most of the books are already in libraries.

CILC PINNACLE AWARD

iNK
AUTHORS ON CALL

Meet the authors through Authors on Call
An innovative, cost-effective way to bring authors into your classroom through our virtual conference room. Authors collaborating with teachers and students have produced a new kind of professional development that has garnered RAVE reviews and has just won iNK a Pinnacle Award from the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (www.cilc.org).

www.inKthinkTank.org

Conferences

Conferences are a great place to promote, market, and network. iNK members have done a great job of getting the word out to the literary and education communities. Conferences are just one way that our name recognition is rapidly building.

Examples of member conference presentations include, but are not limited to:

✓ **iNK author, Roxie Munro visited:**

- ✓ NYC Pediatric Hospital for Project Sunshine
 - ✓ World Read Aloud Day
 - ✓ Texas Library Assoc. Annual Conference
 - ✓ Chesapeake Children's Book Festival
 - ✓ Chappaqua Children's Book Festival
 - ✓ NYS Reading Association
- ✓ iNK Author, Marissa Moss, spoke at the **92nd Street YMCA** to a sold-out audience in October 2017
- ✓ iNK Author, Dorothy Patent, provided three **Author on Call presentations** in 2017: Wayland-Cohocton Central School, Tangipahoa Public Schools, and the River Landing at Sandy Ridge Retirement Community
- ✓ Also during 2017, iNK Author, Amy Nathan, gave a teacher workshop presentation at the **Reginald. F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture**, and to students at the **Success Academy Washington Heights**

- ✓ iNK Author, Susan Stockdale, gave presentations during 2017 at the **Takoma Park Maryland Library, the SCBWI MD/DE/WV Annual Conference; Children's National Medical Center; National Museum of Natural History; Kensington Festival of the Book; Chevy-Chase Bethesda Community Children's Center; Washington Co. Free Library; Montgomery Co. Lit Camp; Gaithersburg Book Festival, and The Children's Book Story in Baltimore, MD**

During 2016:

- ✓ iNK author, Heather Montgomery, handed out iNK postcards and talked about the Nonfiction Minutes at:
 - GA Children's Book Awards and Conference**
 - Summer Institute of the GA Library Media Association**
 - SCBWI New Jersey Annual Conference**
 - SCBWI Southern Breeze Keynote: Back-To-Nature Kidlit Retreat**
 - SCBWI Southern Breeze Playshop**
 - Mountains to the Gulf Educator Expedition**
 - Metro Nashville Public Schools Librarian Professional Development Day**
- ✓ iNK author and one of the founding members, David Schwartz, distributed iNK postcards while signing books at:
 - University of Illinois Youth Literature Festival, Champagne, IL**
 - Charlotte Huck Children's Literature Festival, Redlands, CA**
 - Association of School Librarians of Connecticut**
- ✓ Roxie Munro, distributed postcards and gave a slide presentation on the Nonfiction Minute at the **21st Century Children's Nonfiction Conference.**