

# "Stories: A List of Stories to Tell and to Read Aloud"

## The History of the New York Public Library's Storytelling List

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Marilyn Berg Iarusso

*This article describes the work at the New York Public Library to develop a storytelling program over a hundred-year period, starting in 1907. This work was reflected in a list of stories for storytelling, first developed in 1927 from notes on slips of paper. The list was revised seven times over the next sixty-three years by children's librarians actively involved in storytelling, who selected the stories they thought would best serve their work with children. The article draws on unpublished reports, letters, and clippings in the files of the Office of Children's Services of the New York Public Library, accessed in 2003.*

In 1906, Anne Carroll Moore was appointed the first superintendent of Work with Children at the New York Public Library. At Moore's invitation, librarian Anna Cogswell Tyler, who had been Moore's assistant when she was the children's librarian at the Pratt Institute Library in Brooklyn, came to the library and became the "assistant in charge of the storytelling," later referred to as the first supervisor of storytelling. Tyler began to organize story hours in the branch libraries in the fall of 1908. As Anne Carroll Moore wrote in a 1956 letter to Augusta Baker (when

Baker was the storytelling specialist), Anna Cogswell Tyler was “a graduate of the regular and advanced course of Pratt Institute Library School with an earlier experience of dramatic training and of the stage.” Miss Moore recalled that “Miss Tyler heard Marie Shedlock tell [Andersen’s] ‘The Nightingale’ and abandoned her plan to become a reference librarian to accept an appointment to become a Children’s Librarian in the New York Public Library, to serve in one branch after another where special interest in storytelling and reading clubs already existed.” Moore also recalled that “Miss Tyler was a great teacher as well as a rarely gifted storyteller.”



Anna Cogswell Tyler

When Tyler became ill in 1922, Miss Moore asked her to choose a storyteller to take her place during her absence. Tyler chose a young librarian, Mary Gould Davis, who was one of her assistants. Upon Tyler’s death in 1923, Davis received a permanent appointment and held the position of supervisor of storytelling for the next twenty-two years. Davis was also a gifted storyteller and inspiring leader of the program. Probably no higher mark of distinction can be given than that later storytellers such as Augusta Baker proudly stated, “I trained under Mary Gould Davis.”

From the beginning of the storytelling program, a great deal of attention was given to story selection. According to a paper by Mary Gould Davis, Tyler used to say, “The secret of your success lies in your power to choose the right story for the group that is before you.” Only staff who truly knew the collection could be considered qualified to select and tell the appropriate story for a particular audience. The purpose of storytelling, as Tyler conceived it, was to introduce fine literature to children and inspire them to read the books from which the stories were told.

## The First Edition, 1927

Records of the stories told in the branches and the Central Children's Room, with brief annotations, were kept on slips of paper in the children's services office beginning in 1915. In her 1927 annual report, Mary Gould Davis wrote:

Early in Fall "STORIES," a list that has been growing in the office of the supervisor for nearly twenty years, was printed in an attractive form by the New York Public Library. It has already been a great help in the branches and with the training classes, and is rapidly proving itself with outside organizations. Public libraries and schools have written in for it from twenty-eight states, Canada, England and British Columbia. It has been sent as far north as Montreal and as far south as New Orleans, east to Bangor, Maine and west to Portland, Oregon.

A later report indicates that the list went to London, Paris, Geneva, and Madrid.

The first "Stories" list was organized into three sections, with most of the entries having short annotations to capture the flavor of each story. The section "For the Story Hour" listed approximately four hundred literary tales and folktales. A short selection of tales "For the Older Boys and Girls" included stories by O. Henry, Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Wilkie Collins. The "Hero Stories" was a brief list of epics including Roland, Baldur, and Odysseus. Story hours were organized into two groups, ages six to ten and ages ten to fourteen. Teenagers in the very active Boys' and Girls' Clubs in the branches provided the core audience for the stories for older children.

Although the main section contained such awe-inspiring reading selections as George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* and Selma Lagerlöf's *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, most of the storytelling entries were folktales, including such favorites as "The Cat and the Parrot," "The Golden Arm," "Mr. Miacca," "Molly Whuppie," "The Elves and the Shoemaker," and "The Three Billy Goats Gruff." Ruth Sawyer's "The Voyage of the Wee Red Cap," which was first told in one of our branch libraries in 1910 and became a Christmas tradition, was on the list, as were stories from Anna Cogswell Tyler's collection of favorite tales, *Twenty-Four Unusual Stories*. Almost one hundred of the titles on this list were still being told by librarians and were on the latest edition of the list, published in 1990.

From the beginning, judicious editing or combining telling and reading aloud was suggested to present the most ambitious selections. Memorization was



encouraged when a story had a particularly beautiful style. The global interests of the children's services librarians were reflected in story entries from India, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Tibet, and African American and Native American traditions.

In the introduction to the first edition, Mary Gould Davis paid tribute to Anna Cogswell Tyler, who had created the phenomenally successful model for the storytelling program. In 1909, the storytelling staff told stories to 28,325 children. In 1922, the attendance was 47,000 children. In 1934, one hundred thousand children heard stories. By 1944, annual attendance was 147,000. Many of the children who made up the audiences were newly arrived immigrants, another reason for the interest of the children's librarians in world literature.

That the lists were used by staff was demonstrated by the many copies of old editions found in branches with notes penciled in on the length of a story or the season of the year for which it was suited, as well as by the continuing use of stories on the list.

### The Second Edition, 1933

The "Stories" list was revised by Mary Gould Davis in 1933, and an index to authors was added. This second edition listed about 320 stories, deleting out-of-print sources and adding stories from new collections, such as "Living in W'ales" by Richard Hughes and "Young Kate" by Eleanor Farjeon. A picture book section was added, with such classics as *The Velveteen Rabbit* and *Millions of Cats*.

Books for which children's room staff members were responsible appeared often on the "Stories" lists over the years. The second edition included *Perez and Martina* by New York Public Library's first Puerto Rican librarian and storyteller, Pura Belpré; stories from Mary Gould Davis's collections, *The Truce of the Wolf* and *A Baker's Dozen*; Anne Carroll Moore's edition of *The Bold Dragoon and Other Ghostly Tales* by Washington Irving; and Ruth Sawyer's *This Way to Christmas*.

### The Third Edition, 1943

In 1943, the third edition, a much longer and fuller list of approximately seven hundred stories, was given an introduction by Frances Clarke Sayers, successor

to Anne Carroll Moore as the superintendent of Work with Children, and herself a noted storyteller. Sayers wrote that “the publication of such a list at this time, in a year of paper shortages and the ever-recurring report, ‘out of print,’ is an act of faith in the storytellers and their art on the part of the New York Public Library.” Mary Gould Davis and her assistant, Joan Vatsek, revised and organized the list into many sections, which seems likely to have made it a little difficult to use. The picture book section was dropped. Included sections were folktales by country, hero tales, “The Tree of Life” (religious legends from many traditions), saint stories, Christmas, Halloween, spring festival, and imaginative tales. The index listed authors and illustrators. The introduction indicates that in-print sources were found for each story, despite the difficulties.

The third edition shows a determination to expand the section of stories from North America, which may have been a reflection of the patriotism of a country at war, a result of publishing trends, or a combination of these factors. There were more Native American and American tall tales. Stories from Margery Bianco’s *The Baker’s Daughter*, which was celebrated as a portrait of small town America, were added. Richard Chase’s *Jack Tales* had just been published and several were on the list, as were Harold Courlander’s stories of Uncle Bouqui. Other notable additions were many beautiful stories from Ruth Sawyer’s *The Way of the Storyteller* and *The Long Christmas*, and *Three Golden Oranges* by Ralph Steele Boggs and Mary Gould Davis. The section of “imaginative tales” was a vivid cross-section of the kinds of poetic literary tales thought of as classic library storytelling in those days: tales by Hans Christian Andersen, Harry Beston, Margery Bianco, Padraic Colum, Walter de la Mare, Eleanor Farjeon, Laurence Housman, Richard Hughes, Seamus MacManus, Howard Pyle, Frank Stockton, and Ella Young.

The annotation for “A Chinese Fairy Tale” by Laurence Housman gives an example of the inspiration the “Stories” list provided for the idealistic women who were becoming library storytellers: “This is, perhaps, the most distinguished of all Laurence Housman’s stories. To tell it takes skill and courage. To tell it well is to reach the heights.”

At fifty cents, double the price of the first edition, the 1943 edition sold well enough to pay for itself in one year.

In a December 1944 report, Davis wrote of

the slow, healthy development of the part that storytelling plays in the general scheme of things. It is taken for granted now. Anyone who is a member of the

Children's Room staff may be a storyteller—if [*sic*] is willing to work for the privilege. She must know the sources. All other qualifications are minor compared with this.

Davis went on to describe the long, careful process by which the new assistants became storytellers, trying their skills in informal outdoor summer programs and continuing in regular branch story hours, with conferences and observations along the way. The two requirements for the librarian storyteller were to know the sources and to develop the “technique that gives her interpretation of the story power and integrity.”

### The Fourth Edition, 1949

The fourth edition was compiled by Eulalie Steinmetz (later Ross), with the help of Augusta Baker and Jean Broadwell. Steinmetz had become the supervisor of storytelling in 1945 when Mary Gould Davis retired. She was raised in the Midwest with four German grandparents and wrote that her love for the tales of the Brothers Grimm catapulted her from cataloging into library work with children.

This list of 730 titles retained many out-of-print titles considered indispensable to the storyteller, which were still available in libraries. The fourth edition listed stories alphabetically and added a section of books for the storyteller. Subject indexes were added for countries, heroes, festivals and “fête” days, but the name index was dropped. There was not a dramatic change in content, but the form that was established with this edition remained the basic form of all future editions. The annotations are a little less effusive and more down to earth. “A Chinese Fairy Tale” now has as its note: “The storyteller must be an artist himself if he is to recreate successfully this sensitive story of an artist’s soul. It is one of Laurence Housman’s most distinguished fairy tales.” It is a far less intimidating description than the one in the third edition. For “Brother Rabbit and the Mosquitoes” the entry advises: “It must be told with the hands, as well as the voice”; for “Clever Gretel”: “A good gutsy story that invites clowning.”

Although modern fiction was always included on the “Stories” list, this edition, the longest of all the lists, had a greater number of titles that eventually found their most appropriate place in picture-book and reading-aloud programs rather than storytelling, including *The Little Prince*, chapters from *Homer Price*, Anne



Parrish's *Floating Island*, and Ruth Stiles Gannett's *My Father's Dragon*. Robert Bright's *Georgie*, and P. L. Travers's *Mary Poppins* were specifically recommended for reading aloud. Stories from staff members included additional tales from Belpré's *The Tiger and the Rabbit*, Marcia Brown's *Stone Soup*, Mary Hatch's *13 Danish Tales*, and *Wakaima and the Clay Man* by E. Balintuma Kalibala and Mary Gould Davis. Classics such as Tolstoy's "The Turnip" and Richard Chase's "Sop Doll," "Sody Sallyratus," and "Soap, Soap, Soap" claimed their place as storytelling treasures alongside Eleanor Farjeon's romantic tale "The Seventh Princess."

Steinmetz wrote in an annual report that the fourth edition was reviewed widely and sold almost half of its printing of five thousand copies at seventy-five cents each in little more than a year, selling particularly well from notices in a Boy Scout magazine and a radio trade journal. Steinmetz had made an effort to indicate which stories were best suited to beginning or experienced storytellers, since in her work as storytelling specialist she had been frustrated by seeing how much basic background beginning storytellers needed. In her 1949–50 storytelling report she wrote, "Their selection of stories is particularly unfortunate and there is really little excuse for it. If the neophyte is given a copy of the STORIES list which contains only stories that have been told to and acclaimed by children he should be able to make a wise choice. Moreover, the notes warn any beginner from stories that are beyond his present abilities and direct him to others within his grasp. The list is a good one. It is based on Mary Gould Davis's [*sic*] original work, and it derives from a storytelling program that is unique in conception, organization and operation."

A new cover design featuring four children sitting around an open book was provided by Fritz Eichenberg, and the cover continued to be used until 1970, although the clothing of the children had begun to look dated.

## The Fifth Edition, 1958

In 1958, Augusta Baker, who had become the storytelling specialist in 1953 when Eulalie Steinmetz retired, edited the fifth edition of "Stories" with the help of a committee of library storytellers. She also oversaw a slightly revised version for a second printing in 1960. Baker remained the storytelling specialist for eight years, until she was named coordinator of Children's Services at the New York Public Library in 1961. Throughout her career and in her retirement, she was a

celebrated storyteller.

The Baker edition was organized into sections of stories to tell; poems, folklore, and fiction for reading aloud; titles of classic out-of-print books; and background reading for the storyteller. Although out-of-print sources were listed, the 448 tales in the stories section had in-print sources. The new read-aloud section provided an opportunity to recognize literature that did not really lend itself to storytelling and reduced the confusion caused by some of the entries in the fourth edition. The out-of-print section served a similar function and allowed Baker to honor classic sources that were no longer the most successful choices for contemporary story hour audiences.

Stories contributed by present and former staff and even family included tales from Baker's collection *The Talking Tree*; Katherine Love's *The Shepherd's Nosegay* (an edition of Parker Fillmore stories, which were frequently told at the library); Marcia Brown's *The Flying Carpet* and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*; Eulalie Steinmetz Ross's *The Buried Treasure and Other Picture Tales*; Anne Carol Moore's "A Christmas Party in New York Public Library," which had just been published in an anthology by Claire Hutchet Bishop, formally on the children's services staff; and *The Magic Feather Duster*, written by Will Lipkind, the husband of Maria Cimino, who became head of Central Children's Room.

The fifth edition continued to provide subject listings for countries, heroes, and festivals, and reinstated the name index. This revision showed the most dramatic change in content of all the "Stories" lists. The press release reported that 397 entries were eliminated, 321 titles were retained, and 127 new stories were added. Subject headings for Twelfth Night, Saint Nicholas Eve, Midsummer Eve, and Easter were eliminated. Easter stories were listed under the subject heading "Stories for Spring and Summer." The first subject heading for "Channukah" appeared with a single story, "Judah, 'The Hammer'" from Ausubel's *Treasury of Jewish Folklore*, though there were other Jewish tales on the list. Baker dropped many literary titles, long and increasingly obscure classical legends, saint stories, epics, and hero tales. She cut entries for Roland, Reynard the Fox, and Robin Hood. The twenty saint stories in the previous edition were cut back to seven. Baker added many Harold Courlander stories, Native American selections, stories from the Caribbean, and stories from Africa. Among the Courlander stories was "The Woodcutter of Gura." Baker also reinstated Courlander's "Uncle Bouqui Rents a Horse," which had come back in print in a new anthology. Both of these were stories Baker told to the delight of countless listeners throughout her career.



Augusta Baker received deserved recognition for her visionary leadership. She herself modestly said she had the good fortune to be in the right place at the right time. Changes in the “Stories” list in 1958 were no doubt due to a combination of factors: her sensibilities as an African American, her own love of folktales, changing audiences in libraries, and changes beginning to come in the publishing industry. The 1958 edition sold for one dollar and the first printing of three thousand copies was out of stock by 1960, when three thousand copies were reprinted. There was an additional reprinting of six thousand copies in 1963, showing how much interest the list was attracting across the country.

### The Sixth Edition, 1965

In 1965, Ellin Greene became the storytelling specialist, succeeding Katherine Love (1961–63) and Sally Helfman (1963–65). Greene produced the sixth edition of the “Stories” list, with the help of a committee of experienced staff storytellers. This edition included 373 titles in the stories section. According to Greene’s notes, she removed 109 stories from the last edition and added seventy-one titles. Some out-of-print sources were used, but in-print sources were also provided for every title. By request, the name index was expanded to include titles of the collections. Greene’s interests included nonprint resources, literary tales, and storytelling for young children. She added recordings of stories; a number of literary fairy tales by Rosemary Sutcliffe, Barbara Leonie Picard, and Sorche Nic Leodhas; and several stories that are especially liked by younger children: “Budlinek,” “The Cat and the Parrot,” “The Old Woman and Her Pig,” and Marcia Brown’s *Once a Mouse*. Favorites such as “The Squire’s Bride,” “Toads and Diamonds,” and “The Three Sillies” appeared. New sources for favorite stories were found in such welcome collections as Augusta Baker’s *The Golden Lynx* and Eulalie Steinmetz Ross’s *The Lost Half-Hour*. The number of stories from Puerto Rico and the West Indies increased, some titles being additional stories from Pura Belpré’s *The Tiger and the Rabbit* as well as her picture book *Juan Bobo and the Queen’s Necklace*. Saint and hero tales continued to be cut back.

The list continued to include a reading-aloud section with poetry, stories drawn from folklore, literary tales, and full-length fiction as well as a section of background books for the storyteller. The subject index continued to list stories by countries, heroes, and festivals.

The 1965 edition was printed in a quantity of six thousand and sold for one dollar. In 1968 two thousand copies were reprinted. It was reprinted in quantities of five hundred and two thousand, respectively, in 1971 and 1972.

## **The Seventh Edition, 1977**

On its fiftieth anniversary in 1977, the seventh edition of the list was published with Marilyn Berg Iarusso as editor, aided by seven library storytellers. Iarusso became the storytelling specialist in 1974, succeeding two storytelling specialists, Clara Hulton (1967–71) and Barbara Rollock (1971–74).

As a starting point, a count of how often stories had been told over the previous twelve years was made from group work reports in the files of the Office of Children's Services. The final list included 442 stories and retained out-of-print sources for some favorite stories.

The list was published two years after New York City's celebrated fiscal crisis, when the city was declared bankrupt and staff were laid off for the first time in the history of the library. The future of the storytelling programs and specialty services to age levels was in doubt. All staff were being given generalist training in order for the library to survive in the difficult financial times. Children's rooms, which often occupied an entire floor in a branch library, were being moved into a corner of the adult department on the first floor. Of necessity, story hours were scheduled less frequently.

Rather than adding many new stories, which would have been used by younger storytellers who were no longer on staff, the seventh edition reinstated many previously listed stories that continued to be told by the remaining longtime staff. This had always happened over the years. The stories remained accessible in the library, even though some were from old books, because of the Reading Room collections of noncirculating books that heavily featured sources for storytelling.

A particular effort was made to increase selections of nonreligious Jewish and Christmas or winter stories for the December holidays, to provide more African, Native American, Jewish, Puerto Rican, and West Indian sources, more assertive women, and more participatory stories. The number of Jewish tales increased from six to fourteen. The Puerto Rican and West Indian stories increased from twelve to twenty-six. The Native American tales increased from five to eight. Hanukkah stories increased from one to five. Short, spooky, or surprising stories

were popular, and some were added to the list, including Maria Leach's "Twist-Mouth Family" and "The Yellow Ribbon." Four more saint stories were dropped.

Sources that were available for tall-tale hero stories and myths were not proving to be satisfying to the library storytellers. Their use had fallen off in story hours, and they were again cut back on the list. Some long literary tales were dropped, but many lovely ones were retained even though the story hour audience was growing younger and had less experience in listening to stories.

The section of poetry and prose for reading aloud included more multicultural sources. The section "For the Storyteller" was expanded, with more books about storytelling and folklore. The recordings section had more storytellers and fewer actors reading stories since more recordings by storytellers were becoming available.

Staff and former staff provided new sources for stories on the list. Ellin Greene compiled a new edition of Laurence Housman tales, *The Rat-Catcher's Daughter*, and published *Clever Cooks*, a collection of stories about food as well as her adaptation of Mary E. Wilkins's *The Pumpkin Giant*. Eulalie Steinmetz Ross's *The Blue Rose* and Pura Belpré's collection *Once in Puerto Rico* and her picture book, *Ot  *, were also added.

Probably the most useful feature of the seventh edition was the subject headings, which were expanded to aid in program planning and included such topics as "Clever and Heroic Women," "Nursery Tales," "Picture Books," "Short Stories (less than five minutes)," "Spooky Stories," "Music, Song, and Dance," "About Storytelling," "Action and Participation Stories," and lists of tales about witches, devils, ghosts, giants, and toys. The index included author, editor, illustrator, and collection.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux gave permission to the library to use an illustration from Margot Zemach's *Salt*, and the list had its first new cover since 1949, although the quality of the printing left much to be desired. There was no professional graphics staff, and the New York Public Library could only send the printer a photocopy of the art.

The seventh edition was printed in a quantity of four thousand. A reprint of two thousand copies in 1978 was sold out by 1984. Another one thousand copies were printed in 1984, and five hundred more in 1987. Because of the last small printing, the price of the seventh edition rose to six dollars from the original price of three dollars, to cover printing costs.

The same year the seventh edition was published also saw Ellin Greene and



Augusta Baker collaborate on the first edition of the classic text, *Storytelling: Art and Technique*.

## The Eighth Edition, 1990

The eighth edition, again edited by Iarusso with the help of a committee of library storytellers, was given a slight change in title and became “Stories to Tell and Read Aloud.” It was published with a new handsome cover, in bright red, designed by a professional artist, and featured a charming preliminary illustration by Wanda Gág for “The Fisherman and His Wife,” a gift from Gág’s brother to the collection of the Central Children’s Room.

Approximately one-quarter of the stories were new, but nearly one hundred stories that had appeared on the original list in 1927 were still being told in the Branch Library System. There was a pronounced shift to folktales; of the over five hundred stories listed, only about sixty were literary fairy tales.

The alphabetical listing of stories in the main body was expanded to include see-also references to all stories mentioned in the annotations. The “Reading Aloud” section listed poetry, folktales, and literary fairy tales, dropping the classic novels that had been included in the previous two editions. The “For the Storyteller” section was expanded and divided into three sections: “Books on Storytelling Techniques and Program Planning,” “Books on Fairy Tales and Folklore,” and “Reference Tools.” The recordings list included only records by storytellers. A section of films and videos was added. The subject headings were retained and expanded. The list was indexed by author, editor, storyteller, and title of collection.

Putting this eighth edition together was particularly satisfying. In contrast to having been suddenly thrust into the task in 1977, the editor had spent the previous thirteen years preparing to do a revision, as well as reading and watching for promising new stories to suggest to library tellers, and it was gratifying to put that research toward a tangible result. Furthermore, during the previous decade a wealth of new storytelling sources had appeared. Although there were still difficulties in finding in-print sources for some of the older stories, it was exciting to have many delightful new titles and new collections put together by talented storytellers such as Joseph Bruchac, Anne Pellowski, Peninnah Schram, Nancy Schimmel, George Shannon, Laura Simms, Barbara Walker, Diane Wolkstein,

Jane Yolen, and particularly Margaret Read MacDonald, whose retellings of stories seemed easier to learn and inspired countless children's librarians. Print versions of the tales of professional storytellers, such as *The Folktellers*, Heather Forest, Robert Munsch, and Jackie Torrence had also become available. Other authors who contributed works ideal for storytelling included Natalie Babbitt, Molly Bang, Virginia Hamilton, Carol Kendall and Yao-wen Li, Richard Kennedy, Julius Lester, Alvin Schwartz, and Howard Schwartz. Storytellers such as Caroline Feller Bauer, Ellin Greene, Margaret Read MacDonald, Anne Pellowski, and George Shannon had produced helpful volumes about storytelling and new reference tools. (Bauer and Pellowski had been storytellers at the New York Public Library.) Storytelling organizations and publishers devoted to storytelling contributed to the rise in a variety of valuable storytelling resources.

The increase in books by storytellers also increased the diversity of the choices available. Jewish stories increased to eighteen from fourteen, and Native American stories to nineteen from eight.

Subject headings were expanded to help program planners, including "Foods and Feasts," "Jump Stories," "Love Stories," "Plants and Flowers," "Husbands and Wives," "Books and Reading," and "Drawing and Painting." Although the majority of the stories continued to be for school-aged children, a subject index pointed out stories for younger children. A new subject heading of "African American Stories" included sixteen tales. There were thirty-five action and participation stories, four times as many as the previous list.

The print run was six thousand copies. In 1991, the library's Dewitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Connecting Schools and Libraries Project printed an additional five thousand copies to give to teachers when it was discovered that schoolteachers considered the "Stories" list a resource for multicultural curriculum development and asked for it over our other library bibliographies.

Storytelling at the New York Public Library grew from the leadership of visionary librarians, the support of staff who carried out the program with dedication and generosity, and library administrators who supported it philosophically and financially, finding money to print the "Stories" list or hire field storytellers in times of staff shortages. The storytelling program benefited from the talents of children's specialists who worked for the library and who subsequently produced books and recordings that preserved the favorite stories beloved by our storytellers, edited stories to keep them alive for modern audiences, or presented new stories to share.

Iarusso, the editor of the eighth edition, believes that the list also profited from her exposure to nonlibrarian storytellers and members of the New York City Storytelling Center (of which she eventually became director) in that it gave her a broader appreciation for different storytelling styles.

The “Stories” list was used to train new storytellers at the New York Public Library. The participants in training seminars selected their first story from it, told the story at a branch story hour with an experienced children’s specialist, and then told it again with the storytelling specialist. The list was a key element in reminding staff to search for the best versions for telling to children, which our librarian storytellers believed was vital to successful storytelling.

When Iarusso retired in 2004, Jeanne Lamb became the New York Public Library storytelling specialist and later youth collections coordinator. In the fall of 2007, the library administration discontinued the age-level training seminars. In 2008, the Reorganization Plan for the library was set in place and age-level specialty positions were largely eliminated. At the present time, there is no formal storytelling program at the New York Public Library, although individual librarians continue to use storytelling in class visits and programs.

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**Marilyn Berg Iarusso** was a children’s librarian at the New York Public Library for thirty-nine years, and for the last thirty of those, she served as assistant coordinator of Children’s Services and storytelling specialist. Iarusso was responsible for the “Stories” list and for the storytelling program at the New York Public Library, which included training new storytellers, encouraging the presentation of storytelling programs in branch libraries, and organizing and running summer storytelling programs at the Hans Christian Andersen Statue in New York City’s Central Park.

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Additional sources for this article include unpublished reports, letters, and clippings in the files of the Office of Children's Services of the New York Public Library, accessed in 2003.

