

LITERACY & LONGING FOR EQUITY

How Librarians
Can Pave the
Way for All
Students

 **THORNDIKE PRESS**
From Gale, a Cengage Company

Booklist
Leading book discovery



Heather Booth

Heather Booth is an associated editor at *Booklist*. Booth spent the first two decades of her career as a teen services librarian in public libraries.

There's something heartwarming in seeing a complete series lovingly lined up in a tidy row on a child's bookshelf. For years, my daughter,

Julia, delighted in collecting and avidly rereading her favorite series. But as the books her peers were excited about grew longer and the text more complex, she stopped asking for new series. New books didn't arrive home from the school library as often either, and those tall and promising stacks that she selected from the public library largely remained unfinished. I wondered where I had gone wrong; we read together every day, she was tracking with her grade level, and I was a supposed expert at reader's advisory for teens! This summer, ready to make a positive change heading into remote learning for 7th grade, Julia embarked on a trial run with large print teen books. Her eyes lit up when she opened the cover of the first book—and went so far as insisting that she take the book along on a family hike. "Usually I don't finish the books that I like to read," she told me. "But I do finish these large print books because I can read them fast, and it makes me feel better when I see that I can read many pages really quickly."

Julia isn't alone in this. Many striving readers are finding success by incorporating large print into their reading repertoire, and for good reason. A 2019 efficacy study conducted by Project Tomorrow® determined that reading outcomes improve when youth have access to large print books, with numbers that are clear and compelling.

When given access to popular titles in large print, a majority of students in grades 3–12 reported improved personal self-efficacy around reading, and a third of teenagers reported improved reading comprehension. After seeing the impact of large print titles on their students in grades 3–12, more than of 80% of teachers would recommend large print to assist striving readers, those with learning differences or disabilities, and those who simply lack confidence in their reading.



BRINGING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION HOME

Large print provides ample benefits to striving readers, and creating a large print collection takes a strong step toward shaping a collection focused on equitable access for all. Ask Library Director Melissa Jacobs how large print fits into the collections she manages and her response will be persuasive and passionate: “I’m a strong believer in this format. We need to break down the stereotype of just having large print in the corner for seniors.” Jacobs is clear on the need for a diversity of formats and the role of large print, as she crafts a collection with an eye to equity for all students. “Equity, to me, is having a vast collection of content that is curated for an audience and is available in multiple formats. Librarians now have the ability to select titles that previously weren’t available in large print—popular authors like Jacqueline Woodson and Kwame Alexander. Giving students those options in large print changes everything.”

Changing “everything” in this way means that striving readers, who may have traditionally been directed toward high-interest, low-level titles and further segregated from peers in their reading options, no longer face this equity hurdle in accessing the wealth of diversity in today’s popular titles. Thorndike Press from Gale, a Cengage company, has curated a catalog of large print for youth, comprised of robust representation, including helpful title collections shaped by categories focusing on equity, diversity, and inclusion elements that feature a broad range of characters, situations, and genres. New titles like Jamie Sumner’s *Roll with It*, selections from the Rick Riordan Presents series, including *Sal and Gabi Break the Universe*, and Samira Ahmed’s *Internment* engage youth with bold and recognizable covers. Inside the covers, readers find high-contrast printing, larger fonts, and increased white space to ease the reading process, and content then holds the readers’ attention with relatable characters and gripping plots. Classroom classics like Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*, Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Chains*, and Christopher Paul Curtis’s *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* allow striving readers access to the same content their classmates are reading in a format that honors their learning needs without drawing attention to them, making access to both popular and classic fiction equitable for all readers.

“Equity, to me, is having a vast collection of content that is curated for an audience and is available in multiple formats.”

—Melissa Jacobs



Melissa Jacobs

Melissa Jacobs is the director of Library Services for the New York City Department of Education/New York City School Library System. Jacobs started her career as an elementary school librarian and then spent 14 years as the coordinator for Library Services. She has been named a Library Journal Mover and Shaker and has contributed to *School Library Journal*, *Knowledge Quest*, *Teacher Librarian*, and *School Library Connection*.



Brenna Shanks

Brenna Shanks is a selection librarian for the King County Library System, the 2011 Gale/Library Journal Library of the Year. Shanks buys teen books, audiobooks, DVDs, and eBooks for 48 community libraries in the greater Seattle area. She actively participates in the Young Adult Library Services Association, the teen services branch of the American Library Association, and has served on award committees and training programs.

BRINGING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION HOME *continued*

In Washington State, teen materials selector Brenna Shanks shares Jacobs's perspective on the expanding role of large print in a youth collection. "There is an equity element in offering large print. We're here to find any tool we can offer to try to raise literacy across our communities. Traditionally, there was a bit of a stigma around large print, but we live in a text-variable world now. We all have devices that let us change the font. I think that teens are so used to consuming material in a variety of formats that it's possible teens won't carry that stigma, especially now that Thorndike Press is really making an effort to produce titles that are identical in terms of cover art and presentation."

Jacobs and Shanks embarked on deliberate and thoughtful programs to increase the number of large print books in the collections they oversee, informed by compelling research from the educational nonprofit Project Tomorrow and with support from Thorndike Press.

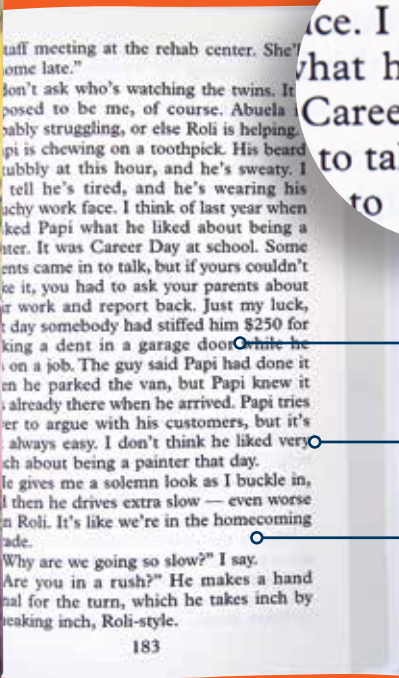
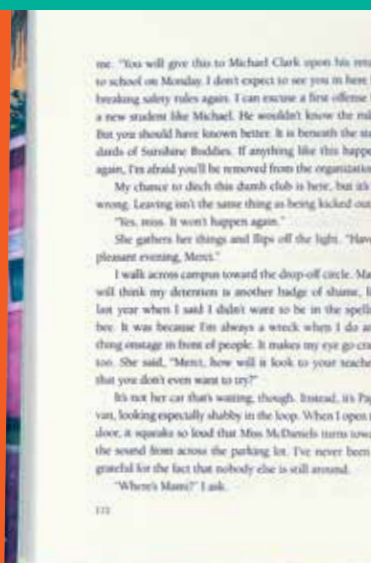


Standard Print



Thorndike Press Large Print

LET'S TAKE A LOOK INSIDE



16-POINT FONT
Actual size

EXPANDED SPACING
BETWEEN WORDS

HIGH-CONTRAST
BLACK INK

1/3 MORE
LINE SPACING

READING FUNDAMENTALS: CREATE A COLLECTION BUILT TO LAST

Large print, traditionally thought of as an accommodation for aging readers or those with vision difficulties, is expanding in readership as its broad-based benefits become clear. Access to large print can dramatically improve learning outcomes for students—especially striving readers—regardless of grade level or previous reading achievement. Even in middle and high school students, for whom direct reading instruction has largely ended and reading fluency may be assumed, learning outcomes improved noticeably when teens and tweens were given large print versions of popular books. With an understanding of these benefits, the next step—thoughtfully incorporating large print into youth collections in both public and school libraries—becomes clear and logical.

Popular titles are the foundation of most new youth large print collections. While starting any new collection can be daunting, Thorndike Press' robust catalog of high-demand titles is a natural place to begin. Like the easy pairing of large print with the New York City Reads list, King County began its focus on popular titles with a ready audience. "We would get the occasional teen large print title in a standing order [from Baker & Taylor], but it wasn't actively selected. When the Project Tomorrow striving reader research came out, I started revamping how I was ordering large print and began to actively curate the collection," said Shanks, who advocates for large print youth collections to be selected and curated from the youth department. "We know the core literature. We know the authors. We are aware of which books are getting a big push." This knowledge of the field makes adding large print akin to an audiobook collection, another space where high-demand titles are duplicated. "These [new release] lists were getting bigger and bigger, and it was exciting to see that they were bringing in popular and new titles that we previously couldn't get in large print editions. I've been focusing on new releases and [high-demand] books that I know teens are reading—that maybe a striving reader sees their peers reading but is having trouble with. They're hearing about it. They want to read it. But it's kind of daunting. I'm focusing on those titles, or things that I think could be classroom assigned. And hopefully, I'm getting them into the hands of kids who need them."

See back page for popular titles.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT WISHES GRANTED

Through the New York City Reads program, Jacobs offered a book grant to teachers and school librarians from a curated list. "We were excited about the list; we knew [it] was really good. I had offered high school librarians the opportunity to receive the books in large print, then I offered a workshop on the [benefits of] large print and everyone came back to me afterward to change their request [to large print]. Literally, it was unanimous. It was really exciting." The next year, everyone who had received their grant for large print—nearly 100 educators—had such remarkable responses from students that they requested the format again.

Shanks, who oversees the teen collections for 48 public libraries, is also increasing her large print holdings. She has observed a similar eagerness among the teen librarians she works with. After sharing that 56 percent of youth report a more positive mindset toward reading with access to large print and other Project Tomorrow research, Shanks saw enthusiasm from her public library colleagues. "It seemed a natural next step, and most of them were immediately eager to try it." Even in libraries with limited space, librarians saw the importance of adding the large print format as they prioritized access and equity in their collection development. "They're very into expanding resources and removing barriers. That's what all of them have in mind, almost all the time."

NYC Reads Titles—a Selection

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe
Benjamin Alire Sáenz
9781432849276

The Book Thief
Markus Zusak
9781410468062

Darius the Great Is Not Okay
Adib Khorram
9781432866990

Dragon Pearl
Yoon Ha Lee
9781432860981

Esperanza Rising
Pam Muñoz Ryan
9781432861957

Fish in a Tree
Lynda Mullaly Hunt
9781432859732

Front Desk
Kelly Yang
9781432861452

Ghost
Jason Reynolds
9781432860868

Harbor Me
Jacqueline Woodson
9781432855901

The Hate U Give
Angie Thomas
9781432841690

The Martian: Classroom Edition
Andy Weir
9781432863128

The Night Diary
Veera Hiranandani
9781432866600

On the Come Up
Angie Thomas
9781432852849

The Poet X
Elizabeth Acevedo
9781432864583

Shout
Laurie Halse Anderson
9781432861773

The Wild Robot
Peter Brown
9781432859893

A young woman with long, straight brown hair is shown from the chest up, looking down at an open book she is holding. She is wearing a white, textured knit sweater with a lace-up detail at the neckline. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The image is partially obscured by an orange banner at the top right containing the main title.

BROADEN YOUR LIBRARY'S INFLUENCE ACROSS THE COMMUNITY

While studies of reading outcomes relate largely to school settings, growing a youth large print collection is a ready connection point for school and public library partners. In the COVID-19 era, these partnerships become even more important. With the "COVID slide," the prevalence of remote learning, and its accompanying lack of physical access to school libraries, public libraries can help bridge this gap. "I think that if public libraries can acquire those titles in large print, it will make an impact. I truly believe that a school librarian and a public library should work hand in hand," said Jacobs.

Shanks also sees large print as an equity point connected to the disparities exacerbated by COVID-19. "We know people turn to the public libraries when they can't get resources elsewhere. We're especially essential in times like this."

As the COVID-19 learning gap becomes a concern, large print quietly provides students with the increased confidence, satisfaction, and success in reading that can bolster their achievement this year, and for many years to come.

"Having a robust, physical large print collection can only help youth in the current situation. If a student has a need for large print, for whatever reason, and we don't have that title and they don't have access to that title through the school, that kid is going to struggle through the regular version or wait in a queue for the digital version [if they even have access to eBooks]; whereas, if we have the large print version, they can leap right in," Shanks said.

Once the collection is established, Shanks encourages librarians to incorporate promotion into the efforts that are already familiar to readers. For example, if a library's newsletter lists new fiction, nonfiction, and audiobooks for youth, she suggests adding a section for new large print. In virtual reader's advisory surveys, include large print as a format option along with eBooks or audiobooks. Add large print titles to displays, book lists, and shelf-talkers. Jacobs suggests recommending large print without even mentioning the format. "Don't 'out' a book. I would just say, 'Here, try this.' Just talk about the content of the book. If they come back and say they loved the book, then you might get into the format. But otherwise, it's like giving kids vegetables at dinner. It's just part of the plate."



TEACHER OBSERVATIONS OF LARGE PRINT IN THE CLASSROOM

76%

reported students reading below grade level had better retention

42%

reported ESL/ELL students' decoding improved

57%

reported special education students had better letter and word recognition

73%

reported students reading above grade level enhanced reading fluency

68%

reported special education students increased participation in class read-aloud activities

74%

reported students reading below grade level had greater confidence in their reading abilities

ADVOCATING EQUITABLE LIBRARY SERVICE FOR ALL

Both Shanks and Jacobs see large print as a staple in their growing collections, selecting titles with staying power, like *The Hate U Give* or *Children of Blood and Bone*. "They have a long shelf life—those are not going to go away," Shanks said. "I also like the fact that the binding is solid," Jacobs pointed out. "It's not a flimsy paperback book. That makes a difference as well. I strongly believe in "You get what you pay for, and it's worth a couple more dollars to get the right fit: the right book for the right kid." This investment helps her confidently support these collections in budget and administrative decision-making. "Becoming a bigger part of the conversation is really important, because if administrators understand what you're trying to accomplish with a large print collection, it may change the investment—financial and otherwise—into the library."

Ultimately, both librarians agree that this investment comes directly back to the issue of equity and is a vital element in their efforts toward providing equitable library service.

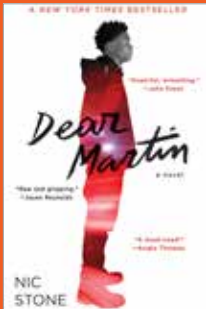
“Large print is a transitional material for anyone who’s striving or struggling with reading. Equity is so often economic and related to resources and what you have access to. As many things as we can give people access to helps equity.”

—Brenna Shanks

Large print is a straightforward and effective way to provide striving readers with a simple tool to improve reading outcomes, offering them the materials that they crave in a format that’s appealing. Librarians who select Thorndike’s striving reader titles may be purchasing them with the self-declared “nonreader” or kids still working on reading skills in mind, but they can be enjoyed by any library patron—from avid readers who want to give their eyes a rest to English language learners to adults interested in improving their literacy skills. In this way, large print in the youth section is an economically wise way to embrace collection equity, making good use of collection funds and shelf space while providing desired material for the whole community.

For Julia and other students like her, access to large print has been a game-changing simple solution. "I would like to see more 'teenager books' in large print," Julia tells me, full of enthusiasm for reading in this newly discovered format. "What do you think you want to read next?" I asked her. She's quick to reply, "Fantasy! I love the stories, but they're usually huge books with very small print and I only get to . . . chapter 4. But I think now I can get through the whole thing." Browsing the Thorndike Press catalog, I'm certain she and her peers will have ample material to satisfy, engage, and enrich.

TOP RELEASES



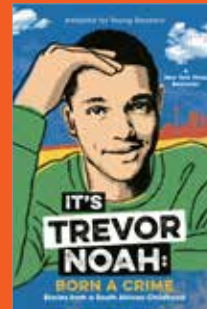
Dear Martin
Nic Stone
9781432874414



Fighting Words
Kimberly Brubaker
Bradley
9781432881214



George
Alex Gino
9781432874940



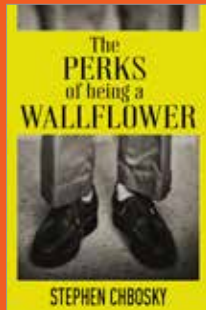
It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime (YRE)
Trevor Noah
9781432882198



The One and Only Ivan
Katherine Applegate
9781432860400



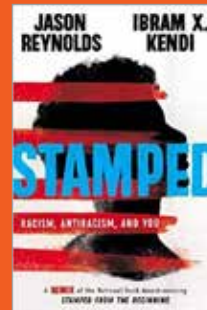
Out of My Mind
Sharon Draper
9781432860752



The Perks of Being a Wallflower, 20th Anniversary Ed.
Stephen Chbosky
9781432878610



Prairie Lotus
Linda Sue Park
9781432883249



Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism and You
Jason Reynolds &
Ibram X. Kendi
9781432876326



Wonder
R. J. Palacio
9781410457417

About Thorndike Press

As a leading large print publisher, Thorndike Press helps people of all ages enjoy reading. In 1999 we extended our offerings to include middle grade and young adult titles. Now our catalog consists of over 500 titles and grows monthly with high-interest fiction and nonfiction books, including contemporary classics, award-winners, and bestsellers. We're committed to producing high-quality, unabridged reprints, with a 100% guarantee on binding, that will support students as they develop the skills necessary to become successful, confident, lifelong readers.

LEARN MORE

 800.223.1244 Ext. 4

 gale.com/striving-reader

All statistics referenced are from a 2019 study sought to determine the efficacy of large print books on student reading skills and mindsets conducted independently by Project Tomorrow® at the request of Thorndike Press. Read more at gale.com/literacy-study

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