MAPPING THE IMAGINARY

Supporting Creative Writers
through Programming,
Prompts, and Research

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CONTENTS

7
PLACE AND SPACE   *117*

8
POETRY AND VERSE   *139*

CONCLUSION   *161*

FOREWORD

In some ways I made the most consequential decision of my life when I was fifteen years old, and walked into the Newton Free Library in Newton Corner, Massachusetts, to ask for a job shelving books. The rest of my life and all its forks in the road seem to lead from the day I decided to join my fortunes to the library's. I was put to work among books and book people, and there I have remained, in one way or other, ever since. In the rambling, odd-shaped old building, I was assigned to shelve fiction A–SM. The only bad thing I can say about my shelving beat is that the library interfiled authors whose surnames began with Mac or Mc, so that MacDonald and McDonald were next to each other, and I found this boneheaded. Insulting, even.

The Newton Free Library had a poetry series, which was how as a teenager I saw Maxine Kumin read in the All-Purpose Room (not a room at all, just a space upstairs constructed out of shelves, just off the 800s). I think this must have been the first poetry reading I ever attended, and the anthology from the library's spring poetry festival the first anthology I ever bought that was not assigned to me. Somebody at the library took poetry seriously: in 1982, while filling in for a fellow library page who'd called in sick, I shelved the new nonfiction, including an intriguing collection of poetry called *The Incognito Lounge,* which was the first time I ever read the work of Denis Johnson.

I think every aspiring writer should shelve books in a public library: there is no other way to develop the proper balance of awe and nonchalance at the physical object that is a book. Shelf-reading is excellent, too, for finding books you had no idea you were looking for. But serendipity is no substitute for a relationship with the librarians: reference, reader's advisory, and circulation librarians, who combine serendipity with a professional magnetism: they do not merely search for books, they attract them.

The library attracted writers, too, who came to research in the reference room, a place that in my memory is as soaring and windowed as a cathedral, though the only thing I can be sure of is that it led to the periodical room and the stacks. Certainly the first event I ever did as a published author was a fund-raiser for the Newton Free Library. I almost never put actual people into my work, but a version of that terrible old building appears in my first novel: its glass-floored stacks, its oddball patrons and employees, its possibilities and civic seriousness, its architectural lumbago.

The second public library of my life was the main library in Somerville, Massachusetts, where I was the circulation desk chief after getting my MLIS. The Somerville Public Library's All Purpose Room was an actual room, with a door, and there I had the good luck to teach a couple of creative writing classes, on both fiction and memoir, to, as it was always put, The Community. The community just meant writers. The classes were free. The only thing the students had in common was the library itself: they'd come in the front door and seen the sign. Public libraries are chock-full of people and books and recordings and art that have nothing in common except the library itself, which has collected and organized them. Those classes were among the most rewarding teaching experiences of my life, because nobody showed up who wasn't serious, and also game, the two requirements for any good writer. One class member was a serious writer who was homeless and went on to publish a book about his life on the streets; another was a woman whose daughter had just turned four, and who was returning to her dream of writing fiction.

This book is an excellent guide for what to do with the writers and readers who come through the door of your library—including those patrons who don't know they're writers yet. There is no greater necessity to writers than material, and no place warehouses more material than the library. This book will help bring material—and ideas, and methods, and new books—to creative writers of all sorts, so that they might in return dream of their own work in their own beloved library.

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—*Elizabeth McCracken*
November 13, 2018

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries and Writers

Everyone has a story to tell. Whether we consider archives of contemporary audio recordings, like StoryCorps; ever-increasing lists of new memoirs; or the exchanges that unfold through online media, sharing words and ideas with others is a facet of our lives. Librarians have been and remain associated with the world of stories—printed, bound, and shelved—among the holdings they help patrons navigate. Now, information professionals and educators can also help patrons find their own stories in libraries—not only as readers, but as writers, too.

Given the centrality of acquiring and preserving stories to our profession, it is worth considering the past in relation to this moment. Where authorship was once an uncommon enterprise, undertaken by individuals who were either daring or desperate, in the twentieth century it became a more attractive occupation. The legends and publicity that accrued to authors like Ernest Hemingway and James Baldwin, living as expatriates in Paris, evoked a sense of glamor and possibility. With the inception of creative writing programs in universities and their widespread growth during the second half of the century, it was increasingly normal to view the creation of fiction, poetry, and eventually creative nonfiction as professions like any other, the result of education and specialized training. While literary publishing has been permanently transformed by the program era, popular perceptions of the writing life have also continued to evolve, since contemporary writers of all genres and ages

can now easily create narratives of real or imagined lives, sharing them via myriad electronic and print outlets. How the activities that have defined our field might change in response to the new dynamics of authorship underlies this book.

Numbers are one means of documenting the profound contemporary interest in authorship, signaling a shift that libraries should consider as they evaluate their goals and strategies for community engagement. National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo, which began in 1999 and now sees well over 400,000 participants each November, is one manifestation of this broad contemporary interest.[1] From San Francisco to Chicago, there are poetry centers committed to supporting new voices and living writers. National Public Radio has drawn attention to Narratio, an online site that supports "young people from around the world," particularly those displaced by war and famine, by encouraging them to "submit poems, essays, and stories" and hosting workshops that facilitate their path to publication.[2] More generally, the number of blogs is beyond reckoning, with Tumblr alone hosting an estimated 345 million individual outlets.[3] These impressive signs of the writing impulse, together with indications that people are also reading more books, particularly poetry, offer a rationale for working with people who want to create as well as consume the written word.[4]

Information literacy experts advise that we prepare patrons to do more than evaluate texts produced by others. In delineating the evolution of information literacy, Christine Pawley urged us to "recognize that information 'access' is not just about information consumerism, but also about individuals and groups of people actively shaping the world as knowledge producers in a way that renders the consumer-producer dichotomy irrelevant."[5] Similarly, James Elmborg has called attention to the meaning of literacy itself as a reflection of "the ability to read *and write*" (emphasis added).[6] Long the province of academic librarians, this philosophy can guide a broader coalition of practitioners and educators.

Given popular interest in authorship, which reflects both deeply personal and broader cultural impulses, investing time and effort

in connecting with writers will bring about beneficial relationships. This shift in sensibilities is ongoing and incremental, represented in part by a smattering of articles in the professional literature that discuss how to work with self-published authors.[7] Welcoming writers to the library through informed programming and knowledgeable reference services, grounded in useful collections and information resources, is the next step. We believe that libraries can play a critical role in fostering writing in their communities, and NaNoWriMo's efforts to create partnerships with libraries is one signal of the possibilities.[8] This book is for those who want a fuller engagement with writers in their communities. In it we will look at how to communicate with would-be authors and potential programming partners, as well as what is involved in helping writers see the library as a core part of their writing experience.

Beyond explaining ways to think about what writers do and what they need when they take on specific kinds of projects, we want to give attention to the resources that can be helpful to someone who is still in the process of exploring the parameters of what they might write. Particularly when a writer says he is interested in writing a memoir or personal narrative, libraries are of value in widening the perspective and concepts that can form his story. Moreover, writers of poetry and fiction, who are more likely to see their work as imaginative rather than information-driven, can also benefit from library-based research. Because many writers want to connect with and learn from others as they struggle to shape their stories, we will also offer ideas about programming that brings individuals who are writing in a variety of traditions together at the library.

NOT MAKING THINGS UP
Research and Creation

Telling stories, whatever their origins, involves far more than imagination or invention. The classical concept of *invention* has been understood in various ways, including the "originality and independence" of an artistic creation, the "production of things

'fanciful' or incredible," pure fiction, and "the artful combination of historical truth and imaginative falsehood."[9] This long-standing discussion of creativity, however, typically ignores the role of research in creative writing. While research doesn't occupy much space in books that advise would-be writers, grappling with facts is often critical to the endeavor, though some literary critics issue cautions about the conventional limits and boundaries of realism.[10] These boundaries, of course, are always on the move. New facts erupt and a world that was flat becomes fiction. What was thought to have been overcome and left to the past, recurs. *What is there to say?* Writers keep asking that question. Librarians cannot ask it for them, but they are very well-placed to listen as more specific questions emerge that can create an image, scene, story, or book. Librarians can affirm that research is recursive but enriching, because becoming a better researcher means obtaining more options for the imagination and opening up more questions for literary exploration. In a broader sense, librarians can be there to affirm that writers' voices unfold and reveal themselves within this dynamic of balancing one's creative vision with the known world.

There are numerous examples of writers who connect imagined and real worlds, both light and dark. Authors acknowledge that the world around them factors into their fictions. Take this passage from Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl*, a conversation between a novice writer and her creative writing professor:

> "We write about the worlds we already know. I've written four books, and they all take place within a hundred and twenty miles of my hometown. Most of them are about things that happened in my real life."
>
> "But you write historical novels—"
>
> The professor nodded. "I take something that happened to me in 1983, and I make it happen to someone else in 1943. I pick my life apart that way, try to understand it better by writing straight through it."
>
> "So everything in your books is true?"
>
> The professor tilted her head and hummed. "Mmm . . . yes. And no. Everything starts with a little truth, then I spin my

webs around it—sometimes I spin completely away from it. But the point is, I don't start with nothing."

Rowell uses this dialogue between teacher and student to illustrate what is discoverable but less acknowledged: writers depend on research as well as imagination.

Another example appears in Margaret Atwood's discussion of renewed interest in her 1985 novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*. Her book is one in which, on a profound level, nothing has actually been invented. Here's how Atwood put it in the *New York Times Book Review:*

> I'd read extensively in science fiction, speculative fiction, utopias and dystopias ever since my high school years in the 1950s, but I'd never written such a book. . . . The form was strewn with pitfalls, among them a tendency to sermonize, a veering into allegory and a lack of plausibility. If I was to create an imaginary garden I wanted the toads in it to be real. One of my rules was that I would not put any events into the book that had not already happened in what James Joyce called the "nightmare" of history, nor any technology not already available. No imaginary gizmos, no imaginary laws, no imaginary atrocities. God is in the details, they say. So is the Devil.[11]

Atwood's entire commentary on the renewed readership for her novel is worth reading, but this aspect feels particularly instructive for writers, readers, and world citizens: her novel isn't a fiction made by giving free rein to the imagination, by trying to outdistance the darkest and goriest monsters conjured up by the next writer's open-ended "what if?"—it's an assemblage of things already done, moments in the history of what we have been and, on some level, still are.

In other instances, the role of research in creating a novel or a poem is more readily evident. Critics noted that Curtis Sittenfeld's *American Wife* (2008), a fictionalized account of a First Lady's life modeled on Laura Bush, at times hews rather closely to Bush's lived and documented experience. Particularly in the matter of a car accident that resulted in another driver's death, one reviewer observed, "Questioned about this incident by journalists, Alice Blackwell repeats verbatim the carefully chosen words in which Laura Bush replies when confronted with similar questions."[12] In

other words, Sittenfeld didn't invent the difficult dialogue; she researched it. Locating those words involved the use of databases and search strategies, expert knowledge, and evaluation of the records that represented the First Lady's history in news articles and other documents. In a similar vein, scholars and writers alike have observed Walt Whitman's inclusion of scientific discoveries in his poems as evidence that he, too, relied on research in creating his account of American life in the nineteenth century. Elsewhere, this has been described as the difference between the imperative to "write what you know" and the ability to "write what you can find out."[13]

Increasingly, contemporary authors acknowledge this tension between knowledge and imagination. Prior to the publication of her novel *Commonwealth* (2016), Ann Patchett expressed concerns about its reception—specifically where critics would place their focus: "I have a real fear that the whole publication of this novel is going to center around questions of autobiography, which isn't nearly as interesting as whether or not the novel is any good." Patchett openly acknowledged that "I certainly drew from things that were much closer to my life" in the new book, but she noted that her previous fiction had always been "about my family, but up until now I'd been very clever to hide everyone in giant costumes of chicken wire and masking tape."[14] Her worries were not entirely unfounded. Readers have long found parallels between a writer's life and work intriguing, and many professional critics and others find it possible to consider these echoes within the larger question of whether or not a book is any good. The exposure of the identity of the pseudonymous novelist Elena Ferrante and subsequent criticisms of her fiction focused on correlations between lived experience and the printed page highlights the dogged, even unkind, pursuit of these questions of truth and authenticity.[15] Perhaps these authors' books, with their rave reviews and readerly affection, provide an object lesson in how knowledge drawn from the past can be reworked into a vividly contoured act of storytelling that is not strictly tethered to the facts of people, places, and events.[16]

Accordingly, this book offers a broad, conceptual reconsideration of what a library can be, as well as offering specific sorts of

projects and prompts that can be offered to library users. We hope, ultimately, to reach individuals operating in different settings, and so we talk about what creative writing in libraries can do in very general ways, juxtaposed with examples of what this type of professional work looks like on the ground.

Guiding Life-Writing

Some of us want, first and foremost, to write about ourselves. This is an individual endeavor, but it is not necessarily solipsistic or myopic. Beyond self-expression, this sort of narrative has the potential to engage with and add to the community's sense of itself by capturing part of its history through an individual's story—was she the first woman to hold a municipal office, or did she live through a distinctive time period, like the civil rights protests of the 1960s?—and we can encourage the writer to use the library's resources to refine and elaborate on her narrative. Whether by housing the resulting text or supporting its development, we can aid writers and their communities who want to tell their own stories in an encompassing way.

Such writing might align with several different genres, such as oral history, autobiography, or memoir. It might also fall into the category of a personal essay or a family profile. Walt Whitman's famous line, "I celebrate myself and sing myself," may be seen as warranting a long tradition of using verse to explain or justify oneself; more recently, in the twentieth century, a school of poets created what came to be known as confessional poetry or "poetry of the personal or 'I.'"[17] The author Maggie Nelson, among others, uses the phrase "life-writing" to describe works that adopt the aim of telling a personal story while adapting linguistic, cultural, and narrative conventions to one's own ends.[18] Regardless of the label, many individuals are invested in finding ways to tell their own stories.

One challenge may be getting people who are genuinely enthusiastic about telling their own stories to expand their scope a bit. Librarians looking for ways to encourage storytelling and self-reflection, relying on memory and research alike, can encourage patrons to use library resources to situate their individual experiences in a wider context. Research generates new perspectives and questions that can allow them to grow their writing into

something more dynamic, complicated, and compelling through activities and discussion.

Focusing on the pathway between these two places, between *my* story and a larger, impersonal one that unfolds with the assistance of an archive or a library, isn't actually all that difficult to undertake within the act of writing. No writer steps out of history and simply begins telling a fully independent story. What's more, an author who proceeds with a greater degree of care and urgency in naming the when and where that a story begins in often does so precisely because the broader circumstances surrounding this telling are so uncertain, verging on the chaotic, as they press in on the memory and the writing simultaneously. The opening three sentences of James Baldwin's essay "Notes of a Native Son" provide a powerful example: "On the twenty-ninth of July, in 1943, my father died. On the same day, a few hours later, his last child was born. Over a month before this, while all our energies were concentrated on waiting for these events, there had been, in Detroit, one of the bloodiest race riots of the century."[19] The scaffold of Baldwin's entire narrative is largely contained in these initial gestures, though the undertaking of his essay, which is arguably the greatest of the twentieth century, is to make sense of these intersections. In order to say what happened to his family, to his country, and to himself, he will not create a bird's-eye view of events or attempt to separate the personal and political but will let their entanglement frame his agonized meditation. While no one else can be James Baldwin, the point of personal narratives of any stripe is that they provide a lens onto the times and places they are describing. This is part of what libraries support. "You think your pain and heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world," Baldwin told an interviewer in 1963, "then you read."[20]

Librarians often begin their analysis of narratives in a comparable way, leading discussions for One Community, One Book events and other library-based reading groups. To move from reading and discussion into research-based writing related to the self, librarians could draw on the following short prompts to guide writers in exploring information that would contribute to their life stories:

Using a database to look into what else was happening in the world the day, week, or month that patrons were born. If your library has a popular EBSCO suite of research databases, you will first need patrons to switch from the basic to the advanced search mode. There it is possible to search for the month of one's birth only by setting both

month-year fields to the appropriate month and year within the Published Date field under Limit Your Results.

Directing participants to write their clearest, most detailed memory of an event from their life that other people witnessed. This could form the core of one in-library writing activity, with writers sharing passages from their work with one another. They would later, on their own, call one or more of the people whom they remember at this event in order to see how they remember the event.

Participants could be asked to write about a very public event or a cultural artifact that had a particular resonance for them and was bound into the fabric of their life narratives. This prompt could be used in numerous ways. For example, if the library holds artifacts or is hosting a display of artifacts, these items could serve as the basis for the exercise. Otherwise, participants can be asked to select their own event or artifact. As with the earlier prompt, you can ask people to write, allowing them to grapple for details, before turning to databases (whether a general, licensed resource or a more specifically applicable one), in order to compare and contrast their memories with documentary sources.

Essentially, the goal of these questions is to encourage a moment of double-exposure, creating a multiplicity of perspectives as a guide for literary composition. Archives and other sources can offer memory aids; importantly, they can tell us things we don't know about our own past, which actually belong to us as much as the things we feel capable of narrating without any help.

TRUTH, VERISIMILITUDE, AND VOICES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Anyone working with writers is likely to encounter both those who believe, unflinchingly, in the possibility of finding and representing truth, as well as those who bring the skepticism of the academy to this notion. The question we are considering is, in essence, this: if we are teaching patrons to do research, are we insisting that they must engage in realism as a literary mode or in personal truth-telling as a writing objective? The answer is both simple and complicated.

The question of truth and the related concept of verisimilitude have long literary histories that we'll explore briefly as a means of describing the centrality of these concerns to practicing, publishing writers. In short, our aim is to keep an earnest and well-meaning librarian from being blindsided by a potentially acrimonious debate through awareness of the differing schools of thought on truth, verisimilitude, and the resulting work with archival and primary source materials.

The question of truth and artistry emerges often in nonfiction and especially in what is referred to as creative nonfiction, where what's presumed to be creative is the fact-bending and distortions of the historical record. John D'Agata, the coauthor of *The Lifespan of a Fact* (2012), has become the most visible representative of a position maintaining that the term *nonfiction* is a misnomer, a fundamentally negative definition that doesn't tell you what a genre actually is, merely what it isn't. In place of this negation he has proposed, primarily over the course of multiple anthologies, a many-sided understanding of the essay as a form of art. The strictures of documented or knowable truth are secondary to its primary obligation, which is to extend the oldest sense of the term *essay*—an attempt, an experiment, a trying-out—into new territory. D'Agata's earliest proposals for this more hybridized work, drawing from fact, fiction, and poetics, were associated with what was termed the lyric essay, a concept that has continued to meet resistance and skepticism. That said, creative nonfiction also often functions more like a brand than a concept or object with clear outlines. The term *creative nonfiction* has a long-standing association with the teaching and editorial work of Lee Gutkind and is literally attached to a journal of that name which he founded in 1993, alongside the credo that "You can't make this stuff up." This is a sharp and recognizable catchphrase, but it leaves complex questions about human memory and historiography largely untouched.

While the breadth and flexibility of nonfiction are among its many virtues, the separate, overlapping traditions within it do not always tolerate the sorts of liberties with documented truth that D'Agata has endorsed. Recurring outrages over work published as autobiography that turns out to be exaggerated or fabricated is the

most obvious example. Few writers hope to become the next James Frey, though it should be noted that the royalties retained from his book did allow him to accumulate a significant personal collection of contemporary art. The shared crisis of civic (mis)understanding and anxiety around the status and legitimacy of facts in the "post-truth" era only serves to highlight and exaggerate these long-simmering tensions: it does not "prove" that it is time for lyric essayists to stop smudging the boundaries between genres any more than it confirms that investigative journalism is interchangeable with hallucinating. Verifiability and consensus are part of the picture, but so are contested imaginings of what information even *is* and how it should be treated. These are broad, thorny issues extending unevenly across the field of nonfiction, but autobiography particularizes them in ways that are both useful and limited.

Mary Karr, the author of three memoirs and a critical guide to that form, has offered comparatively straightforward directions for aspiring memoirists for whom vetting sources is a primary concern. First and foremost is the act of trying to write down one's memories with as much detail and life as possible. Then the writer asks others who were present at any of the incidents how, or even if, they remember them. Karr's own practice is to note in passing when the recollections of others differ from her own, but this is a qualification rather than an automatic grounds for dismissal. While it might be observed that writers like Gutkind are essentially trying to do story-based journalism with a strong personal angle, Karr pictures this search for veracity as inseparable from the attempt of the memoirist to render a life. "Truth is not their *enemy.* It's the bannister they grab for when feeling around on the dark cellar stairs. It's the solution."[21] It likely comes as no surprise that these writers have their analogues among academic historians and individuals interested in historiography. Roger Chartier has emerged as a staunch defender of telling historical stories with as much allegiance as possible to what he calls the voices in the archives; he contrasts his stance with that of critics like Hayden White, who sees historical works as essentially narratives that are constructed and plotted in much the same way that fiction is.[22]

Another related consideration is verisimilitude in fiction. Anyone who has participated in a discussion of a novel set in a familiar city has likely heard someone insist that a detail in the book is not the way it is in real life, that the building isn't where the author put it, so the action that follows isn't possible, and so on. While writers have to make their own decisions about the extent to which they wish to be true to facts, based on their personal ideals and the nature of their project, the library has many resources that allow people to engage this issue in nonconfrontational ways. One example of the modification of historical reality can be found in the director's cut of the film adaptation of Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*, when Nicole Kidman talks about her portrayal of Virginia Woolf. Kidman listened to the few extant recordings of Woolf's voice but observes that the voice isn't what contemporary Americans expect an Englishwoman from an earlier era to sound like, so there's divergence between how she played the character and what the real person represented by the character sounded like. In this case, the decision was to create an effect, rather than replicating what was. While we don't want to make those decisions for novice writers, in what follows we supply resources that show how creators with experience make these judgment calls.

Finally, there is the concept of poetic license, which originated as a way of describing poets' prerogative of deviating from formal elements of verse and now refers, more colloquially, to someone's deviation from facts for effect. (This principle is central to a hilariously credible story that John Green tells about learning to tell stories while at Kenyon College.)[23] At the same time that there is a core definition of the concept of poetic license, different writers have offered significantly varying takes on it. Their voices reveal that writers think about these things, set up rules for themselves, and pursue relationships to the truth that they are trying to make resonate on the page. For some, this might be above all an emotional truth that is going to happen because we feel like we're in the presence of a human being we could never otherwise know, one who has been created, essentially, through fiction. On the other hand, there are people who can work, in extraordinarily creative

and imaginative ways, with an absolute devotion to not saying anything they cannot prove, that wasn't said, observed, reported in peer-reviewed journals, and so on. John McPhee, who has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction, has adamantly affirmed this philosophy, exemplified by the title of his recurring course at Princeton: "The Literature of Fact."

Librarians need an awareness of these different schools of thought and work; they need not take sides, but they should be equipped to offer options in response to the demands that different aspiring authors will make of them. This pertains both to questions that individuals might ask and the possibilities for library-based writing programs.

For instance, we might encourage a writing exercise in which authors commit to writing a piece in which they are devoted, in a pinky-swear kind of way, to telling nothing but the truth. Alternatively, writers could be given a prompt to write three separate scenes: two of them factual, one fictional. Their peers can guess which is which, and the writer may feel better informed about how and when he created a piece of language that felt particularly authentic for an audience. Furthermore, librarians can present the tools for learning or backing up the claims to the truth as a writer knows it. There are many ways to do this: instruction in using library resources and acts like citing and triangulating sources; locating specific information, such as eyewitness accounts of historical details; or dealing with writers' queries about how to confirm that this building was built on that street, that people in the country where they've set their story had access to dogs of that particular breed, and so on. Additionally, librarians can host a discussion, perhaps with an invited author from the community, that addresses how and why it is fun to write a piece that starts with research (in order to find out what you don't know and maybe can't know, or in order to tweak it for a particular reason), and then build on that in a variety of ways. Discussions of these prompts, in the end, reveal why contortions of fact can be just as (or even more) interesting than making things up out of thin air, but they require writers to know something in order to twist it and show another angle or unexpected detail.

CONCLUSION

One strategy we will use in the chapters ahead is to show how a particular work pulls off a particular effect and then discuss how librarians can connect that to a prompt or exercise in order to anchor a creative writing program in your library. We'll do this even though it might be more useful, at least initially, for you to simply offer a well-known book—maybe a Community Reads title—as a starting point and build from there, using whatever momentum or interest the book created to lead to the next thing—signing folks up for your program or getting prompts out to the patrons who responded strongly to that book.

We're hoping to offer strategies for thinking about how to lasso a general enthusiasm for literature and direct it toward creative writing and the research that strengthens it, but doing this means making an effort to create another option within the library space. For those who see creative writing as a nice extra that competes for a library's limited time and staff, we will offer guidelines to help facilitate how libraries can reach out to writers and teachers in the community, potential partners who might volunteer to support this type of programming. We want to map out how writing gets connected to research, so we show you how those volunteers can collaborate with the library and incorporate elements into programs that will help would-be writers to become better at gathering information, not just competent storytellers or sonnet-makers.

Following this introduction to the idea of libraries, archives, and databases as supports for various sorts of creative writing, using finding aids and other search principles form a final chapter, along with guidance on using interviews as part of the research process. The tools that librarians have long used to answer homework questions, to help entrepreneurs, to satisfy a patron's curiosity, and more are all tools that writers can use to build characters, envision worlds, and create the stories that form in their imaginations.

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INDEX