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Online Writing Project Connects Students, Library

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By Lauren Barack December 7, 2010

Calling all young Southern scribes looking to flex their writing muscles. A new online writing project, [Southern Sketches](#), has launched to celebrate the flavor of Mississippi—while connecting students, the library, and the local arts.



Wayne Andrews, Yoknapatawpha Arts Council director, and Megan Fowler, Southern Sketches project coordinator.

A joint effort between the state's [Lafayette County & Oxford Public Library](#) and the [Yoknapatawpha Arts Council](#), Southern Sketches hopes to primarily draw middle school students and professional writers in the local area of Oxford, MS, to submit new chapters online every few weeks, with a single tale completed by May.

"We thought it would be unique to use technology that kids are familiar with to reinforce skills such as writing and reading," says Megan Fowler, project coordinator for Southern Sketches and a freshman in the Honor's College at the University of Mississippi. "We also hope to inspire other communities to create books."

Fowler's involvement with Southern Sketches stems from a community service mandate at her school. She wrote the first chapter, now live on the site, which sets a mystery in motion as two tweens, Annie Waters and Robert Blake, search for a book hidden in Oxford.

Young writers are invited to continue the story, but must keep each submission to 4,999 characters, avoid offensive language, complete their story thread in their entry, and not kill off the main characters. While Fowler hopes to hear primarily from local students, she says any and all are invited to submit their proposed chapters, which can be sent directly through the site.

With winter break just around the corner, Fowler plans to give students extra time over the holidays to visit their library to research those rich details that give flavor to any story. The winning chapters should be available online sometime in January.

"We definitely want to encourage students to use local resources at the Oxford and Lafayette County Library," says Fowler. "And when the story is finished it will be printed and available for the public to read in the library, too."

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