

What is IBBY?

Ena Noël, IBBY liaison officer

IBBY is the International Board of Books for Young People, a non-profit organisation that was founded in Zurich, Switzerland in 1953. Allied to UNESCO it is an international network of people committed to bringing books and young people together. Some sixty countries are members of IBBY. A member is an organisation concerned with literature for young people. In Australia the national member is ALIA.

IBBY's policies and programs are determined by its elected executive committee. I have had the honour of being elected to the executive for two terms, 1982–84 and 1984–86. IBBY has an executive director who works from the IBBY secretariat in Basel, Switzerland and who is the only paid member of the organisation.

IBBY's mission is:

- to promote international understanding through books for young people;
- to encourage the publication and distribution of quality children's books;
- to provide support and training for those involved with children and children's literature;
- to stimulate research and scholarly works in the field of literature for the young.

Some of the activities of the Australian section include:

- organising four national conferences with distinguished international and national speakers. The proceedings of these conferences have been published as *Through folklore to literature; Able to enjoy: Books and the young disabled; Changing faces: story and children in an electronic age; and Brave new world: International understanding through books;*
- publishing *The Bologna Children's Fair* as well as annotated book lists on a variety of subjects;
- the section has combined with the ALIA School Libraries Section and the Children's Libraries Section to publish a first and second edition of *The new classics: a selection of award winning children's books;*
- has organised an annual Hans Christian Andersen dinner with a distinguished speaker to celebrate the birthday of the great master of storytelling;

- has organised storytelling workshops bringing to Australia some of the most renowned overseas storytellers; and
- has made periodic nominations for the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Awards and biennial nominations for the IBBY Honour Diploma's;

The Australian IBBY Encouragement Award for Children's Literature

In 1994 the Australian National Section instituted a biennial encouragement award for a young Australian writer or illustrator of children's books. The executive decided to name the award in honour of its foundation president in Australia. The award is to be known as the Ena Noël Award. The most recent winner of the Ena Noël Award is Catherine Jinks. Catherine was presented with the award at the recent ALIA biennial conference in Canberra.

Internationally, IBBY has a number of activities. The *Hans Christian Andersen Awards*, often known as 'The little Nobel prizes' are presented by IBBY every other year to a living author and to an illustrator whose complete works have made an important contribution to children's literature. The award, named after Denmark's famous storyteller, is the highest international recognition given to an author and illustrator of children's books. Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark is the patron of the awards. Patricia Wrightson, an Australian writer has been a recipient of the award for writing; and Robert Ingpen, Australian illustrator, has been presented with the award for illustration.

The IBBY Honour List is a biennial selection of outstanding, recently-published books honouring writers, illustrators and translators from IBBY member countries. The books are selected by the National sections. Some Australian writers to receive Honour Diplomas are Patricia Wrightson, Colin Thiele, Ivan Southall, Eleanor Spence, Lilith Norman, Ruth Park, Joan Phipson, Allen Baillie, and Peter Carey. Diplomas for illustration have been awarded to Ted Greenwood, Deborah and Kilmeny Niland, Robert Ingpen, Dick Roughsey, Heather Philpott, Pamela Allen, Julia Vivas, Bob Crahan, Jeannie Baker, Rodney McCrae, Pat Torres, Peter Gouldthorpe and John Winch.

The IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion

Award is endowed by the Japanese Newspaper Company Asahi Shimbun with the sum of one million yen. It is presented by IBBY every year at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in Italy to a group or institution that is making a significant contribution to book promotion programs for children and young adults.

IBBY-UNESCO workshops and seminars have been held on various aspects of writing, illustrating, production, publishing, promotion and distribution of books for children and young adults. The Board has also established the IBBY documentation centre of books for disabled young people at the Norwegian Institute of Special Education. The Centre promotes international exhibits, seminars and bibliographic surveys.

Each year, on or around Hans Christian Andersen's birthday on 2 April, International Children's Book Day is celebrated. IBBY initiated this day which is celebrated by all sorts of innovative activities to inspire a love of reading.

IBBY also produces a quarterly journal, *Bookbird*, which covers news from IBBY and the IBBY national sections. It is one of the major international magazines on children's literature. Periodically it features the various aspects of the literature of one particular country. Australia was featured in the first issue in 1999.

For *Bookbird* subscription information visit the IBBY international website at <http://www.ibby.org> or contact Evelyn Holmberg, University of Toronto Press, 5201 Dufferin Street, North York, ON M3H 5T8, Canada, e-mail: eholmberg@utpress.utoronto.ca.

Ena Noël is the foundation president of the Australian National Section of IBBY, a position she held for twenty-five years until her retirement in 1991. She now acts as an associate editor of IBBY's international journal, Bookbird.

Ena is the recipient of several awards for services to librarianship and to literature for young people: The Lady Cutler Award awarded by the NSW division of the Children's Book Council; The Ellinor Archer Award, awarded by ALIA; and the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours. She has been called the 'grandmother' of Australian children's literature.