

IBBY World Congress 2008, Copenhagen

Yes, we were there! Six Australian delegates sat in the Glass Hall, Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen to see HM Queen Margrethe II of Denmark present the 'Little Nobel Prize' (Hans Christian Andersen Award) to Jurg Schubinger of Switzerland for the Author Award, and to Roberto Innocenti of Italy for the Illustrator Award. We were attending the 31st World Congress of the International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY) in the country of that wonderful weaver of tales for the young, and not so young—Hans Christian Andersen.

The biennial award is for a body of work and was first awarded to Eleanor Farjeon in 1956. For the first time since Patricia Wrightson and Robert Ingpen won these awards in 1986, Australia was represented among the candidates by Jackie French, writer and Shaun Tan, illustrator. The Spring and Autumn issues of *Bookbird*, IBBY's quarterly journal, contain further information about the winners and candidates. Kerry Mallan of Queensland is on the Editorial Review Board of *Bookbird*.

Nearly 500 people were at this significant international gathering which was the largest representation of the 72 National Sections for some years. To give delegates from so many sections a chance to have their voice heard, there were 12 plenary speakers, over 100 different 12 minute presentations and 21 storytellers in the tiny Storytelling teepee. This Congress was an opportunity to be stimulated by the passion and commitment of delegates as they strive to ensure their country's children have books to read.

The IBBY-Asahi Reading Award, established in 1986, is awarded to a group whose activities are judged to be making a lasting contribution to reading promotion programmes for children and young people. In 2008, it was awarded to The Reading Promotion Project by Action with Lao Children and also to Editions Bakame, Books for Children in Rwanda with both awardees giving fascinating presentations of their programmes. In Rwanda, the use of rucksacks was particularly innovative, with the rucksack unfolding to become a 'bookshelf' with pockets for paperbacks for children, and refolded to go from class to class and school to school.

Highlights included the Reception at the Town Hall hosted by the Lord Mayor of Copenhagen, with the Nordic Manners exhibition containing 100 original illustrations from picture books from the Nordic countries. There was a presentation of the IBBY Honour List with 169 titles in 48 languages from 59 countries, including a category for translation—and unfortunately no nominations from Australia. The coach trip to Odense included a visit to the HC Andersen Museum and the Tinder Box, a play centre for children to be inspired and respond creatively to the work of HC Andersen.

There will be many opportunities for Australians to respond to the theme *The Strength of Minorities* of the 32nd IBBY Congress to be held in Santiago de Compostela in 2010. Looking further ahead, the 33rd IBBY Congress will be held in London in 2012 with the theme *Crossing Boundaries: Translations and Migrations*.

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