

Bologna, Books, Bellissimo! Professional development in Italy



Claire outside the International Youth Library

Bologna, the 'Fair' city, invites you to share its elegant colonnaded streets and its famous Children's Literature Fair. Visitors are free to roam and exhaust themselves in the enormous pavilions, and be overwhelmed by children's literature in every format and language imaginable.

Let's share some highlights:

The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators (SCWBI).

It was a pleasure to share some time with

Australian authors Catriona Hoy, Wendy Binks, and Susanne Gervay. Susanne had been a key note speaker at the preceding SCWBI conference and invited me to visit their stand. Here I enjoyed great discussion with John Shelly, Bridget Strevens, and many other authors and illustrators.

Illustrators Café. This area features artwork from the Country of the Year – Argentina. Large display cabinets showcased thirty illustrators' original artwork and completed picture books. The exhibition reflected a huge range of visual literacy styles. This diverse and stimulating presentation confirmed how vibrant and diverse the picture book industry is. The visit left me in no doubt: we should congratulate many Australian authors and illustrators on producing books that are of the highest quality.

One such Australian author Sonya Hartnett featured at the *Astrid Lingen Award* stand as winner of this most prestigious award. Awards judges spoke of the emotional impact of Sonya's work describing her as a "master of language"... "who lights a fire in you when you read her books".

Each day brought exciting experiences, and the presentation by Michael Rosen (British Children's Laureate) of the winners of the British *Picture Book* awards was but one international event.

Internationale Jugendbibliothek. It was great to meet librarians from the castle. A visit to the library during my stay in Munich was organised immediately. The institution promotes the *White Ravens Awards* each year. The stand featured titles from many countries and I was proud to see a large display of Australian authors noted in the awards. My visit to Schloss Blumenburg was professionally and personally rewarding.

International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). This stand was decorated to celebrate the *Hans Christian Andersen Award* and this year's nominees. The Awards announcement was a real highlight of the fair. Roberto

Innocenti was named as Illustrator of the Year. A huge cheer rang out as friends gathered around the winner. Our own IBBY network in Australia remains a small but dedicated band who participates in a rigorous email exchange. We are always looking for more participants!

International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). Hosted by Ingrid Bon (Chair of the C & YA group), the meeting heard from the IBBY president about Indigenous language programs. A speaker from Paris La Joie par les Livres outlined the programs of the institution. It was fabulous to exchange ideas with so many other children's librarians. Many expressed interest in coming to Brisbane in 2010.

Having enjoyed an interview with Peter Sis discussing *The Wall: Growing up behind the Iron Curtain*, I relished hearing Paul O. Zelinsky and Robert Ingpen sharing career highlights. Discussion centred on their contribution to *Artist to Artist: 23 major illustrators talk about their work*. What a finale.

International bookfairs are fabulous professional development venues and the book is far from dead! Authors, illustrators, publishers, and librarians all over the world are not only keeping the book alive, but breathing excitement, innovation, and artist integrity into their production and delivery to children of all ages.

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