

Focus IBBY

by CAROLINA BALLESTER

Happy New Year to all IBBY members!

This year, 2024, will be rich in exciting events for our community. As in all even years of the IBBY calendar, let us rejoice that the upcoming 39th IBBY Congress—to be held in Trieste, Italy, from August 30 to September 1—will bring us the opportunity to meet in person.

Prior to that, several landmark announcements on the 2024 IBBY international awards will take place, as usual, during the first day of Bologna Children’s Book Fair (April 8, 2024). To feed the suspense until that date, here is a sneak-peek into the great reading promotion projects and project leaders nominated for the IBBY Reading Promotion Awards:

Candidates for the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award 2024

Submitted by	Project	Scope of project
Argentina	Poesía en la Escuela (Poetry at school)	Buenos Aires and nationwide
Azerbaijan	Fairy Tale Craftmaster	nationwide
Canada	Forest of Reading	Ontario and nationwide
France	ATD Fourth World’s Street Libraries	nationwide
Germany	Tiny Books from Baltic Authors	Baltic countries and worldwide
Iran	Children Cultural Development Center	across 12 provinces
Netherlands	Stichting De VoorleesExpress (The Reading Express Foundation)	nationwide
Netherlands	De Verhalenweverij (Story Weavers)	Flanders, Belgium
Slovenia	Slovenia, Društvo Bralna značka Slovenije (Slovene Reading Badge Society)	nationwide
Spain	Ikusi Mikusi	Basque country, Spain
Switzerland	World in Books	Manca province, Mozambique
USA	Barbershop Books	across 23 states
Venezuela	Pez Linterna	Nicaragua, Spain, Colombia, Venezuela

Candidates for the IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promotion Award 2024

Submitted by	Nominee	Resident of
Argentina	Hugo Waldemar Cubilla	Buenos Aires, Argentina
Canada	Irene Vasco	Bogotá, Colombia
China	Sun Yi (Sister Xiaoyu)	Beijing, China
Cyprus	Angela Chalkiopoulou	Limassol, Cyprus
Dominican Republic	María Teresa Pérez	Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
France	Michèle Petit	Paris, France
Germany	Kirsten Boie	Barsbüttel, Germany
Iran	Ali Ashgar Seidabadi	Tehran, Iran
Iran	Nader Mousavi	Tehran, Iran
Pakistan	Basarat Kazim	Lahore, Pakistan
Slovenia	Darja Lavrencic	Ljubljana, Slovenia
Slovenia	Slavko Pregl	Ljubljana, Slovenia
USA and South Africa	Arthur Atwell	Cape Town, South Africa

The IBBY Community Welcomes New Members

In 2023, several new National Sections were added to the list of IBBY members. In July, Ethiopia and Nigeria joined the organization, and in September a new section emerged in the Philippines. Starting from January 2024, Morocco and Lao are members for the very first time in IBBY history. This will bring the number of IBBY members up to 83 National Sections.

IBBY Ethiopia

Ethiopia is Africa's second-most populous country. Literacy is only realized by around half of the population (less for women and girls), leaving tens of millions without this critical ability. Ethiopia has made great strides toward educational goals but still struggles with adequate teacher training and getting materials into the hands of students.

When Jane Kurtz won the 2022 IBBY-iRead Outstanding Read-



ing Promotion Award because of her work as the creative lead for Open Hearts Big Dreams (OHBD) and her decades of work supporting reading in Ethiopia, it became clear that Ethiopia could benefit from having a national chapter of IBBY. The Ethiopian National Section will build on the limited but growing activities focused on increasing access to quality books and creating a love of reading.



Some of IBBY Ethiopia’s missions and objectives are to support the creation of a reading and writing culture in Ethiopia; the promotion of Ethiopian children’s and youth literature in Ethiopia and internationally; and the development of projects to increase Ethiopian children and youth’s access to quality books and to develop a love of reading.

The new section is formed by members of OHBD, who have already published and distributed over 160 titles in twenty languages so far. The section also holds read-aloud programs and creative workshops for writers and illustrators.

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IBBY Nigeria

While Nigeria first joined IBBY as early as 1966, the existence of the Nigerian chapter has been intermittent over the years. After seven years of lapse, IBBY returns to Nigeria through the deeds of the Book Buzz Foundation.



Created in 2012 by writer and publisher Lola Shoneyin, the Book Buzz Foundation aims to promote literacy and reading through the development of reading programs for children; creating reading spaces; and organizing literary festivals in different parts of Nigeria. Currently, the Book Buzz Foundation curates Ake Arts and Book Festival—the largest book festival in the country—and Kabafest. Since KabaFest started in 2017, nine more festivals have emerged across the northern part of Nigeria—some of them in parts with a history of religious and ethnic conflict. One of the most important parts of these events is the festival bookstore, where books from all over the world are sold at affordable prices. Another highlight is TARF, The African Rights Forum, which aims to improve the weak presence of book copyright exchange among Sub-Saharan publishers.



IBBY Nigeria has set its priorities by emphasizing capacity-building through the training of children’s writers, illustrators, and editors.

IBBY Philippines

After fourteen years without a National Section, IBBY will once again have a presence in the Philippines. The secretariat of the new IBBY-Ph is hosted by Vibal Foundation, with children’s book writer Eugene Evasco representing the writers’ sector; picture- and comic-book artist and writer Randy Valiente representing the illustrators’ sector; Dolly Carungui representing the National Library of the Philippines; curriculum expert Br. Ricky Aguirre representing the education sector; and Mariel Hizon-Uyquiengco representing parents and book reviewers. The structure is headed by Kristine Mandigma, CEO of Vibal publishing group and program director of Vibal Foundation.

IBBY-Ph will initiate and support literacy initiatives to promote the love of reading and children’s books in schools, communities, and among the public. IBBY-Ph’s flagship projects, among others, include opening a research library on children’s literature; publishing and funding a professional journal review of children’s books; organizing seminars, workshops, and conferences on children’s literature for authors, illustrators, translators, publishers, teachers, parents, and readers; and working with government agencies and private institutions to develop libraries for children.

IBBY-Ph was formally presented at the Asian Festival of Children’s Content Circle Philippines at the National Library of the Philippines last November.

IBBY Morocco

The first ever IBBY section in Morocco was formally presented at the first Casablanca International Children’s Book Fair in November 2023, in the presence of representatives of the Ministry of Culture and several invited IBBY colleagues.

Behind the emergence of the section lies the efforts of Ms. Amina Hachimi Alaoui, founder of Yanbow el Kitab publishing house. Besides its publishing activities to provide locally produced and high-quality content for Moroccan children, Yanbow el Kitab is experienced in running well-established and long-term reading promotion initiatives that have successfully reached remote and deprived areas of the country:



- “One Child, One Book” (2007 onward): distribution of one free book to Moroccan school children. Up till now, over 160,000 pupils have benefitted from this action.
- The Inclusive Reading Caravan (2017 onward): wide-scale distribution of books at an accessible price (10 Moroccan Dirham, i.e 2.5 US\$); 240,000 copies circulated across the country.
- One Family, One Library (2020 onward): distribution of a box set of books to Moroccan families.

These projects have been developed in close partnership with local NGOs, including Amis des Écoles, Shams, AED (Kareen Mane), l’Oum c’est la vie, and Oum El Ghait. IBBY Morocco will be a meaningful addition to this solid associative network in a difficult time during which all efforts are needed to alleviate the aftermath of the dramatic earthquake that hit Marrakech and its region back in September 2023.

IBBY Lao

In December 2022, a small number of Lao children’s publishers teamed up to form the Lao Publishers Group, aiming to take collective action towards the development of the book industry and the organization and promotion of book fairs and other festivals both in the capital city and in provincial areas. By joining IBBY, they hope to learn from and connect with international fellow members, standing ready to share their local knowledge and expertise about Lao and Lao reading statistics and cultures.

The group is looking forward to exchanging knowledge about book development processes; gaining experience in illustrators’ and writers’ training and promotion; launching book award initiatives; and increasing interest in Lao books among international publishing partners.

IBBY Lao has received kick-off support from Room to Read, a US-based non-profit organization for children’s literacy and girls’ education programs operating in Asia, Africa, and Central America.

Solidarity

The multi-faceted economic crisis exerts constant threats on the financial health of IBBY and its National Sections. Unfortunately, 2023 also saw the loss of National Sections in India, Tanzania, and more recently Albania.

Therefore, the IBBY Solidarity Fund—established to support sections experiencing short-term financial difficulties—has become critically important again. We wish to sincerely thank the IBBY sections that generously continue to donate to the solidarity fund and support the annual dues of other sections as well as their own.

Twinning programs and partnerships between IBBY sections can also be developed through other forms of collaboration, and we hope 2024 will bring new initiatives that will contribute to making IBBY an evermore cohesive and supportive community.

International Children’s Book Day 2024

The 2024 International Children’s Book Day (ICBD) is sponsored by IBBY Japan, which also celebrates fifty years of existence.

“Imagination” is the key word of ICBD 2024. Nani Furiya (Tokyo, 1961), an internationally minded Japanese artist based in Slovakia and former student of Dušan Kalláy, created a poster inviting children to “cross the skies on the wings of their imagination.”

Eiko Kadono (Tokyo, 1935), a prominent writer as well as winner of the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Award for writing, wrote a message to all the children of the world:

*Stories travel, riding on wings,
Longing to hear the joyful beat of your heart.*

I'm a traveling story. I fly anywhere.

On wings of wind, or wings of waves, or sometimes on tiny wings of sand. Of course, I also ride the wings of migratory birds. And even those of jet planes. I sit beside you. Opening the pages, I tell you a story, the one you want to hear.

Would you like a strange and wondrous story?

Or how about a sad one, a scary one, or a funny one?

If you don't feel like listening right now, that's fine too. But I know someday you will. When you do, just call out, "Traveling story, come. Sit beside me!"

And I'll fly right there.

I have so many stories to share.

*How about a story of a little island tired of being alone
who learned to swim and set off to find a friend?*

Or the tale of a mysterious night when two moons appeared.

Or the one about Santa Claus getting lost.

Oh, I can hear your heart. It's beating faster.

Flitter-flutter, thumpity-thump, pitter-patter, bumpety-bump.

The traveling story has jumped inside and set your heart racing.

You'll become one yourself next, spreading your wings to fly.

And so, another traveling story is born.

Carolina Ballester was born in Paris and studied in Spain and France, obtaining an MA in political science from the Madrid Complutense University and degrees in Chinese and Arabic from the French National Institute of Oriental Studies (INALCO). She worked as a translator and as cultural attaché at the Consulate of Spain in Shanghai. In 2013, she joined the Shanghai International Children's Book Fair team as programme manager, and over ten years she promoted and developed international interest in children's illustration as well as served on juries for children's illustration catalogues and contests. Carolina brings to IBBY an interest and wide knowledge in children's literature and illustration, as well as international experience and fluency in several languages, including French, Spanish, English and Mandarin. Carolina joined IBBY as Executive Director on September 1, 2022.

