Crossroads

I started working for IBBY 33 years ago, in 1970, when the 12th IBBY Congress was held in Bologna in conjunction with the Children’s Book Fair. Maurice Sendak and Gianni Rodari were the recipients of the Hans Christian Andersen Awards that year. My father, Niilo Visapää, who was a soon-to-retire school principal in Helsinki, was elected President of IBBY. There was no permanent secretariat, no budget for administration or travel. Previous presidents had been able to rely on the infrastructure and support of their own workplaces: publishing houses or institutions promoting reading research. My father, however, worked from home and needed help. As I lived in Switzerland, the seat of IBBY since its foundation in 1953, and as I knew many languages, he asked me whether I could assist him with secretarial work. Never did I think that what I then considered more or less a filial favor would soon develop into a deep commitment to last all my working life.

Now I am at the other end of that working life and it seems fitting that my IBBY career should end in Bologna where it started so many years ago. And as is often the case in such situations, I
am leaving with a mixture of feelings. There is the feeling of satisfaction to have witnessed the growth and development of IBBY, manifested so impressively at the recent Jubilee Congress in Basel. There is thankfulness for having had such a unique opportunity of cooperating with many wonderful individuals from all over the world, in building an international network serving international understanding across cultural and linguistic barriers.

There is sadness, inevitably, in leaving the familiar office, the various activities and the daily contact with dear colleagues; yet this sadness is mixed with relief in knowing that the work will be carried on by my successors with equal commitment and with new enthusiasm and energy. I wish Kimete Basha and Liz Page the same kind of friendship and support that inspired me during these many eventful years.

Leena Maisen

At its spring meeting during the Bologna Children’s Book Fair, the IBBY Executive Committee bade farewell to Leena Maisen upon her retirement after thirty-three years of service to IBBY. From among ten candidates, Kimete Basha of Brussels, Belgium, was elected to become IBBY’s new Executive Director as of September 2003. She will be working in close cooperation with Liz Page, who was appointed Administrative Director of IBBY. The international Secretariat of IBBY will remain in Basel, Switzerland.

Kimete Basha grew up in Australia where her Albanian parents had moved as refugees after World War II. She studied English Language and Literature and received a degree in Education from the University of Toronto and began her teaching career in Canada. After moving to Belgium in 1979, she started to work at the International School of Brussels as a teacher and librarian. Besides her professional activities, Ms. Basha has been involved with numerous projects contributing to democratic reforms and social justice in the Balkans.

IBBY in Bologna

The IBBY Executive Committee agenda in Bologna included many important decisions concerning the future of IBBY. After careful research and consideration, an agreement was found regarding IBBY’s policies concerning membership, thus paving the way for the acceptance of Palestine as an IBBY section—an issue that had been the subject of a heated and emotional exchange at the General Assembly in Basel. At the press conference, when this decision was announced, a statement was read by Vice President Nilima Sinha, reaffirming the ideals that IBBY stands for. IBBY is determined to cut through political complexities and show its care and concern for all children of the world.

Like the Membership Subcommittee, the Search Committee had been active after the General Assembly, interviewing the highly qualified individuals from seven countries who had applied for the position of IBBY’s Executive Director. The decision to appoint Kimete Basha of Brussels was taken by the Executive Committee on
March 31. She will take up the position as of September 2003 and work in close cooperation with Liz Page, who will be the full-time Administrative Director at the Secretariat in Basel.

Members of the newly established Italian Section invited the Executive Committee to visit their headquarters, the Sala Borsa Library, in the heart of the city of Bologna. After many years of complicated negotiations, the re-establishment of the Italian Section in Bologna, in cooperation with the Children’s Book Fair, was a happy moment for Leena Maissen, the retiring Executive Director of IBBY. She received many tokens of appreciation and affection from her IBBY friends and was honored not only by IBBY—who made her an Honorary Member, including an invitation to attend the forthcoming Congresses—but also by the Bologna Book Fair which presented her with an award for her long-standing cooperation and service to children’s books.

One of the highlights in the calendar of IBBY events during the Fair was the presentation of the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award on April 2, which this year went to the “Sister Libraries,” a project serving children in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and supported by the Library Science program of the Appalachian State University in North Carolina, USA. Gaby Vallejo, who is also President of IBBY Bolivia, and Linda Veltze of the Library Science program eloquently expressed their thanks for all support received for this project.

The IBBY stand this year seemed to be more than ever a riot of color. The 29th IBBY Congress poster reflected the vitality of Africa with its rainbow and animals running in front of the instantly recognizable Table Mountain of Cape Town. The rainbow itself also reflected the hundreds of peace flags flying from windows all over the city of Bologna. The Honour List 2002 books added to
this exuberance of color with books from forty-seven different countries in thirty-seven languages. The exhibition “Best of Books for Young People with Disabilities, IBBY Jubilee Selection 2002” attracted much interest from publishers, teachers, librarians and parents. Like the Honour List 2002, this exhibition was first shown at the Jubilee Congress in Basel last autumn, and again, like the Honour List, continues to fascinate visitors. This year we were happy to welcome for the first time to Bologna Heidi Boiesen, the new Director of the IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People, which has relocated to the Haug School and Resource Centre in Bekkestua, Norway.

After the IBBY press conference the traditional reception of cookies and champagne was given at the stand. Despite the press conference taking place in a new location away from hall 29, the stand was once again crowded with friends—old and new. The new Italian IBBY Section was a godsend, as the young librarians eagerly offered to help, not only throughout the reception, but also with the organization of the drinks and clearing away the debris afterwards.

The IBBY-Asahi winner, the “Sister Libraries” project of Bolivia, was presented by means of a photo montage as well as by informational flyers in English and Spanish. The Bookbird editors kept a lively corner of the stand, selling copies and subscriptions, as well as soliciting new articles for future issues. They were also active in promoting the forthcoming IBBY Congress in South Africa—the demand for the poster was so great that even the tattered display copies were snapped up! Other IBBY materials were also sought after, such as the 2003 International Children’s Book Day poster from Brazil, the ever-popular IBBY poster by Mitsumasa Anno, the various Jubilee Congress publications, the anthology produced by the
Indian Section of IBBY as a fund raising project and the IBBY information flyers. Also available at the stand was the beautifully produced book, *From Basel: To Those Who Bring Children and Books Together*. This unique volume contains the speech given by Empress Michiko of Japan at the opening ceremony of the IBBY Jubilee Congress. The photographs and words reminded us all of those sunny days in Basel last year.

The visitors to the stand come from all corners of the world, all with a common goal—books and children. The Bologna Book Fair is a very rich time for IBBY in many ways. IBBY’s presence reinforces old ties and forges new ones. It is a meeting place and whether it rains or shines—both this year—the IBBY stand welcomes everyone!

*Liz Page*

Palestine Becomes 65th IBBY Section

The Tamer Institute for Community Education in Ramallah will be the seat of the newly established IBBY Section in Palestine, which joins Palestinian organizations, writers, illustrators and specialists in children’s literature who have recently reactivated the Palestinian Committee for Books for Youth. Tamer Institute is a non-governmental organization established in 1989. It believes in children and youth as the core power to build the future democratic Palestinian state. The Institute aims at giving Palestinian youth the space and opportunity to develop self-confidence and empowering them through improving their skills and abilities especially in reading and writing. Tamer’s different programs focus mainly on non-formal education. Moreover, Tamer cooperates with the Ministry of Education to support the program Education for All in Palestine (EFA). The education system in Palestine has suffered enormously because of the political situation.

Children’s literature has always been a major focus of Tamer Institute. Four years ago, the Children’s Literature Resource Center was founded, with the support and cooperation of specialists and consultants and in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture. The Center supervises the development and activation of sixty-four children's libraries all over the Palestinian areas. The Resource Center library provides quality books and reference material as well as hosting workshops, training courses and lectures.

Tamer Institute has been recognized as the most important publisher of books for children and young people in Palestine. Already more than fifty-five books have been published, including two bilingual children’s books in Arabic and English. One of Tamer’s most significant current projects entails the publication and distribution of children’s books with the theme of diversity and equal opportunities. The Ministry of Education has agreed to include these books as supplements to the school curriculum.

Annually, Tamer pursues the National Reading Campaign, culminating in the National Reading Week. At the same time, International Children’s Book Day is observed. Various other activities include writing competitions and book donation projects.

Palestinian Section of IBBY
attn. Ms. Jehan Helou
General Director
c/o Tamer Institute for Community Education
P.O. Box 1973
Ramallah - Palestine
Tel/Fax +972 - 298 61 21/2
Email: tamer@palnet.org
www.tamerinst.org
The international Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury was elected by the IBBY Executive Committee at its spring meeting in Bologna. For the second time there will be two separate jury sections, one to judge illustration, another to judge writing. The deadline for nominations for the awards, made by the National Sections of IBBY, was May 31, 2003. The Jury will meet in Bologna, on April 13 and 14, 2004, in connection with the Children's Book Fair, to select the winners. The results will be announced at the IBBY press conference at the Fair, April 15, 2004. The awards will be presented to the winners at the 29th IBBY Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, September 5, 2004. The Jury will work under the chairmanship of Jeffrey Garrett, who is Assistant University Librarian for Collection Management at Northwestern University Library in Evanston, Illinois, USA. Peter Schneck, President of IBBY, is a member of the Jury ex officio.

The Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury 2004 consists of the following ten members:

Author Section

- Gunilla Borén, Assistant Professor at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science, and publishing consultant, in Borås, Sweden
- María Candelaria Posada, Editorial Director of Children’s Books, Grupo Editorial Norma, in Bogotá, Colombia
- Angela Lebedeva, Executive Director of IBBY Russia and Senior Lecturer of the Department of Children’s Literature and Library Work with Young People at Moscow State University of Culture and Arts, in Russia.
- Marianne Martens, Vice President and Director of Subsidiary Rights and Foreign Language Program, North-South Books, New York, USA
- Laura Sandroni, children’s book specialist and reviewer in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Illustrator Section

- Lona Gericke, Children’s Services Coordinator, Bellville Library, Western Cape, South Africa
- Zohreh Ghaeni, supervisor of “The History of Children’s Literature in Iran” project, Tehran, Iran
- Grazia Gotti, President of the “Giannino Stoppani” Cultural Association, Bologna, Italy
- María Cecilia Silva-Díaz, Editor and Marketing Director of Ediciones Ekaré of Venezuela in Europe. Currently living in Barcelona, Spain
- Truusje Vrooland-Löb, children’s book specialist and critic, Amsterdam, Netherlands