

Focus IBBY

by CAROLINA BALLESTER

Dear Colleagues and IBBY Friends,

With this first issue of 2026, the IBBY secretariat sends their best wishes for the New Year, which we hope will be filled with inspiring projects, beautiful books, and wonderful connections. A busy program awaits us in the coming months, with international award announcements, a World Congress, and a new Executive Committee to be elected at the IBBY General Assembly. In the start of this year, we are pleased to welcome new IBBY Sections in Bangladesh and Yemen. Sadly, we must say farewell to our colleagues from Brazil, Cameroon, New Zealand, and South Africa, hoping that IBBY Sections will flourish there again very soon.

In the next pages, you will read about the upcoming International Children's Book Day, delve into regional projects from Latin America, and hear echoes from our Section in Australia, who proudly celebrated their sixtieth anniversary.

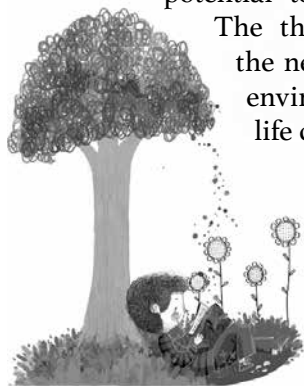
International Children's Book Day

We are pleased to introduce the poster and message of the next International Children's Book Day (ICBD), which will be celebrated on April 2, 2026, under the sponsorship of IBBY Cyprus.

As a theme for the upcoming celebrations, IBBY Cyprus chose "Plant stories, and the world will bloom," which recognizes the inherent value of stories, books, and reading and their potential to improve the world.

The theme also emphasizes the need for a shift to more environmentally friendly life choices.

It is worth noting the originality of the selection process for the text and image for ICBD 2026: both were chosen by children themselves



rather than through the usual practice of direct assignment. Following a procedure that ensured both quality and anonymity—with the identities of the artists revealed only after voting had concluded—children from nineteen schools chose the message of multi-award-winning author Elena Perikleous and the design of acclaimed illustrator Sandra Eleftheriou. The two had worked separately on the poster, using CYBBY's motto as inspiration.

The message is already available on the IBBY website in several languages, including Arabic, Galician, German and Italian, and more are to come.



Elena Perikleous and Sandra Eleftheriou

Plant Stories, and the World Will Bloom

(translation from Greek to English
by Despina Pirketti)

Once upon a time, a child was born, longing to live better than the heroes of fairy tales—who only lived happily ever after. The child grew and changed, read, and became Don Quixote, battling windmills; Alice, bringing wonder to life; Robin Hood, saving the forests; a wolf, gathering moon-singing packs.

Years passed, but the world remained untouched by the change once dreamed of. Yet—the child managed to put together a brand new world within a garden courtyard, filled with everything dear to the heart.

More years passed.
 And as books whispered wisdom into the
 soul, the child knew what had to be done.
 When autumn came, the earth was tilled and
 seeds were planted.
 Winter arrived.
 The child waited patiently for the
 white sheath to melt, nurtured by
 the company of budding books.
 Then it was spring. Tender leaves shot out
 from the stems.
 Trunks thickened, branches stretched,
 buds sprouted.
 The child's soul blossomed, filled
 with colours and scents.
 And summer?
 It was the time of boats, sailboats,
 hot-air balloons, bicycles...the time
 of travelling far and wide!
 Now the child knew—without a doubt:
 This was the way to change the
 world: by becoming a planter.
 A planter of magical stories, sowing words,
 cultivating images, harvesting wonder,
 watering imagination.
 And so stories began to grow and spread.
 Then?
 The child pruned with love, gifting bouquets
 to passersby—
 Bouquets of peace, hope, strength, and faith
 in the impossible.
 Bouquets of small miracles,
 for each and every one.
 Every spring, on the second of April,
 the stories the child had sown set
 the world ablaze with bloom.
 Oh, and through the gardening work-
 shops, reaping wisdom was passed
 on to young and old alike.
 And the child's garden became the Garden
 of Hope,
 the courtyard, the Courtyard of Wonders,
 as the magician always held his ground—
 unspooling red threads of story-
 telling into the breeze.

IBBY Latin America and the Carib- bean to the World: Joint Publications, Shared Realities

by Hazel Hernández Astorga

Culture and creativity lie at the heart of our society, and today, more than ever, we need to care for their growth. In a chaotic world, we need spaces where we can meet, connect, understand one another, and imagine brighter futures together. This is the reason why IBBY Latin America and the Caribbean (IBBY LAC) has built a diverse portfolio of joint publications that show how reading can become part of our shared heritage—a common space and a tool to envision a fairer world.

Through its range of recent publications, IBBY LAC carries out a model of collective management grounded in cooperation and the belief that literature for children and young people is, most importantly, a right.

Voces & Tintas Magazine (<https://ibbylac.org/revista-voce-tintas/>)

Since 2021, the digital magazine *Voces & Tintas* has brought together contributors from sixteen countries across the region. Conceived as an open and inclusive space, it serves as a source of inspiration for everyone involved in children's and young adult literature—mediators, teachers, illustrators, editors, and, above all, the reading communities that yearn to see themselves represented in its pages

What distinguishes *Voces & Tintas* is its collective approach, and a strong slant, with each issue focusing on a theme of global relevance that gains depth with the region's diversity of perspectives, experiences, and languages. Within its pages, critical essays, mediation testimonies, interviews, reviews, and original illustrations coexist with the voices of children and young readers. *Voces & Tintas* is available in digital format, both in Spanish and English on the IBBY website.

Issue No. 1: La lectura que acompaña (Reading That Accompanies)

This first issue set the tone for the magazine: accessible, with diverse voices, and

thought-provoking. It brought together reflections on how books accompany us through childhood in different contexts.

Issue No. 2: Ecosistemas del libro y la lectura (Ecosystems of Books and Reading)

With a cover designed by Roger Ycaza, this edition focused on the concept of the ecosystem to understand reading—not as an isolated act, but as the outcome of many social actors and forces. This issue serves as a kind of cartography of practices and alliances that keep books alive throughout the region.

Issue No. 3: Mujeres. Imaginarios y perspectivas (Women: Imaginaries and Perspectives)

Dedicated to the female creators of the region, this catalog explores how women have transformed and reshaped children’s and young adult literature and still continue to do so. Featuring illustrations from María Luque and *Círculo de voces*, in which Latin American girls reflect on female authors that inspire them, it fosters an intergenerational dialogue woven from memories, struggles, and hopes.

Issue No. 4: Migración (Migration)

With illustrations of striking visual power and selected key texts, this issue explores migration as one of the most defining human experiences of our time. It brings together different voices and perspectives that reveal how children’s and young adult literature address themes of uprooting and resilience and help build new bonds of belonging.

Issue No. 5: Solidaridad (Solidarity)

This issue invites its readers to reflect on solidarity as a daily practice, aiming to interconnect experiences and reconsider the role of books in shaping communities. Its pages contain stories from community libraries that have emerged as a response to moments of crisis, collective tales that spread empathy and resilience, and thoughts from specialists that show how this literature can favor care and companionship. It is, perhaps, the most intimate and necessary edition yet.

IBBY.ORG



Antología de tradición oral

Oral traditions and expressions encompass a vast diversity of forms—proverbs, riddles, tales, children’s songs, legends, myths, songs, epic poems, spells, prayers, psalms, dramatic performances, and other manifestations. All of these play an essential role in passing down knowledge, cultural values, and social beliefs, as well as in preserving common heritage and keeping cultures alive. Because of their significance and the need to protect cultural heritage, IBBY LAC developed the *Antología de tradición oral: voces de Latinoamérica y el Caribe (Anthology of Oral Tradition: Voices of Latin America and the Caribbean)*, coordinated by IBBY Costa Rica with the support of sixteen IBBY sections.

Through this initiative, identities are strengthened and diversity is celebrated and safeguarded, in alignment with the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The project passes down this knowledge to future generations through community workshops in schools,

cultural centers, and training programs for mediators, families, and teachers. In these spaces, stories are shared, listened to, talked about, and retold so children can recognize that literature also lives in the voices of their families, the languages of their hometowns, and the tales that travel from mouth to mouth.

The anthology is available for download on the IBBY website. You can also enjoy an audio version on the Spotify account of IBBY Costa Rica. Scan the QR code to access it.



CERLALC–IBBY Catalogues

The catalogs created in collaboration between IBBY LAC and the Centro Regional para el Fomento del Libro en América Latina y el Caribe (CERLALC) are highly valued tools that highlight the diversity in children's literature from the region. More than lists, they reveal what and how we narrate our realities to children.

Published since 2020, each of the catalogs is organized around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and gathers titles that focus on the great challenges of our time: health, education, gender equality, reducing inequality, climate change, and environmental sustainability. Beyond figures alone, they shed light on how Latin American children's literature joins the global conversation on these urgent topics from its own perspective—plural and committed.

These catalogs have become practical tools for mediators, teachers, and librarians to design educational programs and feed the funds of libraries and school libraries. The catalogs were also turned into a book exhibition that premiered at the Guadalajara International Book Fair in December 2025.

IBBY LAC's publications show that reading can turn into a common good, and that children's and young adult literature can strengthen identities, preserve memories, and shape a more just future. We can meet one another, keep generations connected, and share a language that helps us reflect on the global issues that we face. The region, known for its inequalities and its cultural and linguistic richness, needs such initiatives to ensure that literature for children and young people is not only a right but also collaborative and socially inclusive.



Hazel Hernández Astorga is a trained librarian and cultural manager. She is currently the regional coordinator for IBBY in Latin America and the Caribbean, the president of IBBY Costa Rica, and a member of the Executive Committee of IBBY International.

Happy Sixtieth Anniversary to IBBY Australia

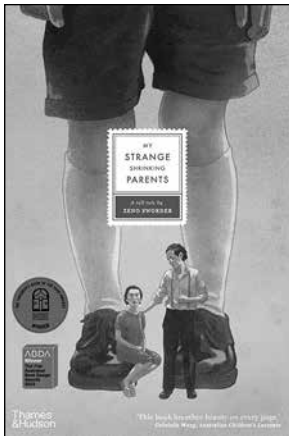
by Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM

This year, IBBY Australia celebrates its sixtieth anniversary! In 1966, it was established by founding president Ena Noël, who was the driving force behind its activities until 1990. In 1983, IBBY Australia hosted a landmark conference in Sydney, at which UK critic and writer Aidan Chambers spoke presciently on the influence of the media on narrative. In 1986, at an IBBY Congress in Tokyo, both Hans Christian Andersen Awards were presented to Australians, Patricia Wrightson and Robert Ingpen. (Shaun Tan and Jackie French were the next HCAA 2008 nominees, and since 2012, IBBY Australia has nominated in each two-year cycle

[<https://ibbyaustralia.wordpress.com/awards/hans-christian-andersen-awards/>.]

Between 1990 and 2009, Juliana Bayfield, Dr. John Foster, and Dr. Margaret Ziegers held the position of president, until Dr. Robin Morrow AM took the helm, with Jenny Woodroffe as vice president, and in 2011, IBBY Australia was incorporated. Under Robin's inspiring leadership, IBBY Australia raised its profile and organized signature events including, in 2016, a golden anniversary celebration. I was honored to assume the role of president in late 2018. Shortly after her retirement as president, Robin Morrow was elected a member of the HCAA Jury for two terms (2020 and 2022)—the first Australian jury member since Maurice Saxby in the 1980s.

In 2019, the IBBY Australia Annotated Honour List (1962–1918) was released with an exhibition displayed at the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Conference, Canberra, supported by the National Centre for



Australian Children's Literature (NACL). On being selected for the 2024 Honour List, Zeno Sworder said,

It has been a career highlight. It is an incredible honor to have my book, *My Strange Shrinking Parents*, recognized alongside the work of some of my favorite international authors and artists. The kindness and generosity of the people at IBBY, and their dedication to building bridges of understanding and peace, makes this recognition

even more special. Thanks in part to this honor, my book has now been published in five languages, including Mandarin Chinese, the native language of my mother.

In 2024, IBBY Australia's biennial Ena Noël Award for emerging creators celebrated its thirtieth anniversary, becoming two awards—one each to an emerging illustrator and author.

In recent years, we have nominated titles for Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Book Club and posted extensive booklists of Australian titles on our website. We arranged for a Silent Books exhibition at the State Library of Queensland and at Lost in



Books, Sydney, in 2020. For the IBBY/UNESCO Remarkable Books in Indigenous and Endangered Languages, we're working on our own list.

International Children's Book Day (ICBD) was for several years celebrated at an event in Strathfield, Sydney. Since 2022, we have released an ICBD video. Congresses have regularly been attended by Australian delegates, six



of whom attended the latest in Trieste, Italy, in 2024. Regional conference attendance has included attendance at a range of conferences hosted by the United States Board on Books for Young People's (USBYY). At the Asia Pacific Regional Conference held in Suwon, South Korea, in August 2025, Jeannie Baker was a keynote speaker, and Claire Stuckey delivered a paper. In 2023 and 2025, two Mini Masterpieces auctions were held online to raise funds for our membership.



A quarterly newsletter (established by Jenni Woodroffe in February 2009) has since 2020 been edited by Claire Stuckey, supplemented by irregular bulletins, the website, Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest. Professor Alyson Simpson is our *Bookbird* correspondent, and several members have published in it.

IBBY Australia has for sixty years successfully promoted Australian creators and fulfilled IBBY's post-WWII mission of "bringing books and children together." IBBY's commitment to the Universal Rights of the Child is currently being sorely challenged by the deprivations caused by military conflicts, climate change, and natural disasters, so this work seems ever more vital.

Robyn Sheahan-Bright is an Australian author, editor, and publisher of, and on, children's literature and publishing itself. Since 2018, she has served as president of IBBY Australia.



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 program 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 catalogs and contests. She 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. She joined IBBY as executive director on September 1, 2022.