

Focus IBBY

by CAROLINA BALLESTER

It has been a busy start of the year for IBBY. Preparation for the 2024 awards are underway, calls are being launched, and books are being sent and received to feed IBBY's great collections. Sadly, 2023 also brought moments of turmoil—a war still raging in Ukraine; civil unrest in Iran, Peru, and many more countries; and natural disasters in Anatolia and eastern Africa. Focus IBBY thus chooses to highlight various reading-promotion projects developed throughout our IBBY network.

Yamada Fund

The IBBY-Yamada fund has provided grants to projects aimed at promoting reading and access to books to children in all parts of the world since 2006. After two tumultuous years of the COVID-19 pandemic hampering the implementation of some projects, all the selected initiatives in 2022 managed to run as planned in Armenia, Cameroon, Cuba, France, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Peru, and Zimbabwe.

For 2023, the following projects have been granted funding.

IBBY Argentina

Primeros favoritos (First Favorites)

Reading program through a literary competition where children ages four to six act as juries and evaluate books together with their teachers.

IBBY Armenia

Defenders of every child's right to become a reader: the great role of librarians in creating readers

Workshop for librarians with foreign specialists.

IBBY Cuba

"Children, as soon as they can think, must think..."

International workshop for reading promoters as part of the Leer el XXI regional conference.

IBBY Haiti

Reading programmes for displaced children

Bibliotherapy with children from displaced families due to gang-related violence.

IBBY Lebanon

Library for refugees

Renovation of a library and training in library practice and bibliotherapy for educators of the Jusoor center for Syrian children refugees in Lebanon.



IBBY Malaysia

Literature Therapy for Malaysian Underprivileged Children

Training workshop for teachers, volunteers, librarians, and social workers working with underprivileged children in Selangor (west coast) and Terengganu (east coast).

IBBY Mongolia

Building a network and increasing the capacity of children's reading promoters in Mongolia

Creating awareness of children's reading and providing training to reading promoters, experienced or beginners.

IBBY Nepal

My environment, a clean environment

Creating awareness among children of the proper management of waste plastic in urban areas through books.

IBBY Zimbabwe

Enhancing children's reading rights through drama

Production of five audio and radio dramas to introduce local stories to children via community radio stations.

Regular updates about the 2023 projects will be provided on the IBBY website.

The projects supported by the Yamada Fund are developed by the IBBY National Sections, very often in close partnership with other local or international organizations. They are submitted to the IBBY Executive Committee once a year for approval upon the recommendation of its project subcommittee, which is currently formed by Sunjidmaa Jamba, Elena Pasoli, Doris Breitmoser, Ingrid Källström, and Denis Beznosov.

IBBY Sections can apply for funding until July 15, 2023, for projects to be developed in 2024.

Donate to IBBY Children in Crisis Fund



Children in Crisis: New Projects and Ongoing Initiatives

In the convulsed world we live in today, the number of projects embraced by the Children in Crisis Fund has increased. Designed to provide relief through books to children whose lives have been disrupted by wars, civil unrest, and natural disasters, the fund currently supports projects in Afghanistan, El Salvador, Lebanon, and Palestine and at the US–Mexico border, in addition to three new initiatives developed in the past twelve months.

Books Give Refuge: Work with Ukrainian Refugee Children in Poland

In March 2022, IBBY made an appeal to support the Fundacja Powszechnego Czytania (Universal Reading Foundation—URF), a Polish organization engaged in working with Ukrainian refugee children in Poland under the slogan #BooksGiveRefuge. Owing to individual donations and

solidarity from several IBBY National Sections, funds are being channeled toward this project via the Children in Crisis Fund. IBBY contacted Maria Deskur, CEO of the Universal Reading Foundation, to inquire about the latest developments of the project.

Carolina Ballester (IBBY): *How do you work on the ground with children and families of refugees?*

Maria Deskur (URF): With the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the Universal Reading Foundation launched a fundraiser to donate books to traumatized children, as well as to help Ukrainian publishers survive—having in mind the future of Ukrainian education and the formation of its future leaders. To date, URF has donated more than 160,000 books to children. Thanks to the generosity of our funders, we are able to use two large book warehouses to handle all shipments, and we are similarly supported by publishers who have helped us from the beginning, through book donations, and through logistical support in packing and shipping the books. We are mainly approached by schools, libraries, aid centers, shelters, and volunteers, often individuals who have contact with refugees. We distributed the books to them, who, in turn, donate them to those in need.



CB: *How has the project evolved from the urgency of the beginnings until now?*

MD: At the beginning, the books mainly went to aid centers, shelters, and even train stations—places where the first refugees arrived—and were redistributed along with other humanitarian aid. Now we try to operate through libraries of schools and preschools where children from Ukraine go together with children from Poland. We think that books, in addition to their role of alleviating trauma, also promote inclusion. These books are also often used by Polish children. We send packages with books in Ukrainian, Polish, and English.

CB: *How do you collaborate with Ukrainian publishers?*

MD: A dozen publishers from Ukraine responded to the appeal for book donations, and in total they have donated almost 30,000 books for Ukrainian refugee children in Poland. We also bought and gifted nearly 2,500 books for child refugees in Ukraine. Last year, we managed to create a grant system, to which more than fifty Ukrainian publishers applied. The jury, comprised of representation from the Polish Chamber of Books, Krakow Festival Office, Universal Reading Foundation, and the Association of Ukrainian Publishers and Booksellers, awarded grants for a total of \$150,000.

In the meantime, Russians have already bombed and burned more than 200 libraries in Ukraine. This is not just accidents but ways to undermine the future of Ukrainian democracy, which depends on the quality of the intellectual formation of today's youth and on the existence of a functioning publishing market, intellectual formation in well-functioning schools and universities.

We want to support Ukrainian publishers not only through direct financial aid, but also by bringing publicity to the issue. We are now raising funds to organize a first international conference around this issue.

Earthquake in Southeast Turkey: A New Initiative for Children in Crisis

On the night of February 6, a series of violent earthquakes shook the south-east of Turkey and the neighboring regions of Syria, affecting 15 million people (including more than 1.7 million Syrian refugees) in eleven Turkish cities. The death toll (reported to be over 50,000) is likely to rise further. Turkey has witnessed a major domestic migration, with nearly 2 million people having moved to almost every region of the country in a month.

It took no longer than four days for our colleagues of IBBY Turkey to come up with an initiative to support children in the affected areas. The



Children in Crisis Fund is now embracing a new project to support the setup of two libraries located in containers in the city of Gaziantep. IBBY Turkey is currently collecting and cataloging the books, and will lead the training of local volunteers for the libraries. A reading curriculum (including expressive art therapy, bibliotherapy, and storytelling) is being prepared for teachers and librarians, to be used not only in these provinces but also in the cities of immigration. Throughout the year, a dozen

writers and illustrators will travel to the most affected regions and work with children through reading and bibliotherapy activities.

Donations to this initiative and other Children in Crisis projects can be made on the IBBY website or directly via the QR code on page 82.

Pakistan

The floods of summer 2022 ravaged some areas of Pakistan that were already developmentally challenged, with Balochistan and Sindh among the worst ones. The raging waters washed away crops, cattle, and household goods, leaving the people distraught and hopeless. Schools were in the same predicament. Some were washed away; others were left with severe damage to the roofs as well as the walls. The children needed something to look forward to. This is where IBBY's Children in Crisis Fund came and funded the establishment of seven Humara KutubKhanas (Our Libraries) in schools that were being repaired.



In collaboration with the Indus Resource Centre, which has adopted government schools in interior Sindh and set up its own as well, IBBY Pakistan was able to move fast in completing the libraries for the seven flood-affected primary schools in Jamshoro, Sindh, with 2,355 students. The new, colorful libraries—entailing a complete redoing of the rooms, mended roofs, and newly painted walls with new furniture,

books, and learning materials—were received with joy from the children. The KutubKhanas remain a magnet, drawing community parents, officials from the government, and media, but most of all the children. There is demand for more of the same, for which another donor, after seeing these seven libraries, has come forward.

Thank you, IBBY, for bringing children and books together. You light up lives in ever so many countries.

Basarat M. Kazim

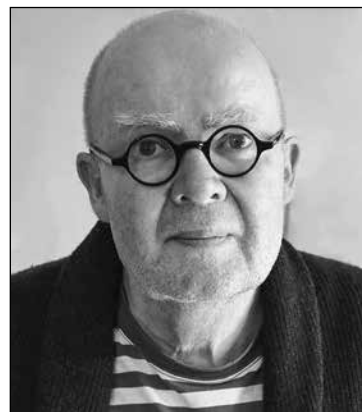
Director of Alif Laila Book Bus Society and IBBY liaison officer in Pakistan.

OBITUARIES

WOLF ERLBRUCH (1948–2022)

On December 11, 2022, Wolf Erlbruch passed away at the age of seventy-four. With his passing, we lose one of the most important picturebook artists, whose work and teachings are essential to the development of picturebooks.

“You are in the world to love life.” This is what Death answers the duck when asked what we are doing in this world in *The Big Question* (*Die große Frage*; Peter Hammer Verlag, 2004). All of Erlbruch’s books deal with similarly profound themes: love in *The Miracle of the Bears* (*Das Bärenwunder*; Peter Hammer Verlag, 1992); creation in *The Butterfly Workshop* (*Die Werkstatt der Schmetterlinge*; text by Gioconda Belli; Peter Hammer Verlag, 1994) and *In the Beginning* (*Am Anfang*; text by Bart Moeyaert; Peter Hammer Verlag, 2003); and ambivalent roles of a mother in *Mrs. Meier, the Blackbird* (*Frau Meier, die Amsel*; Peter Hammer Verlag, 1995).



The underlying theme in the picturebooks that made Wolf Erlbruch famous is not easily revealed. Initially controversial among adult audiences, the success of *The Story of the Little Mole Who Knew It Was None of His Business* (text by Werner Holzwarth; Peter Hammer Verlag, 1989) led Erlbruch away from his path as a commercial artist and was equally decisive for the Wuppertal-based publisher Peter Hammer Verlag. At a first glance, the book is just about the feces of various animals. A closer inspection, however, reveals that the little mole is a courageous underdog who resists humiliation and runs his investigation with the meticulousness of a forensic scientist. This level of interpretation suggested by Holzwarth’s text is enriched by Erlbruch’s depiction of the mole’s energy and determination as he develops a number of pictorial elements that will remain influential in all his future work—the use of large white spaces, pictures focusing on the protagonists, and a collage technique that influenced picturebook art from the 1990s onward.

In an interview in May 2017, I asked Erlbruch what he wanted to do with the prize money (500,000 euros) he won from the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. He answered laconically that he wanted to buy a new

pair of trousers. He was not one to show off, but rather one who remained modest in his wishes and did not want to make a fuss about all the honors and prizes, including the IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Award he won in 2006.

Those who have met Erlbruch remember his quiet, reserved way of speaking. He settled his artistic estate early by setting up the Wolf Erlbruch Foundation in 2004. However, he found it disconcerting when every scrap of his work had to be kept. His artistic legacy is also reflected in his teaching activities, beginning in 1990 at the University of Düsseldorf before moving to Bergische University in 1997 and ending at the Folkwang University of the Arts in 2011. He also passed on his artistic talent privately—to his son Leonard.

Stephanie Jentgens

Dr. Stephanie Jentgens has been a professor of children's and youth literature at the University of Halle-Wittenberg since 2018. She was chair of IBBY Germany and still works as an author and editor.

The full version of this article can be read in German in *JutLit* 1/2023.

KVĚTA PACOVSKÁ (1928-2023)

Květa Pacovská was a truly original artist, a wonderful friend, and, with her checkered cat, IBBY's signature artist. Whoever met her was impressed by her gentle charm, her fine sense of humor, and her prolific creativity. With some sixty books and participation in numerous exhibitions, as well as one-woman shows spanning half a century, she established herself as one of the most important contemporary children's book illustrators. Květa Pacovská saw picturebooks as a child's introduction to art. She challenged them to look with fresh eyes, without prejudices or adult explanations.

Born in Prague in 1928, Květa grew up with music and books—her father was an opera singer and her mother was a language teacher. She was very close to her grandmother, who took care of the family and inspired her to appreciate art and see the beauty in everyday life. Květa graduated from the Prague School of Applied Arts, where her professor Emil Filla, an avant-garde painter himself, introduced her to modern artists, such as Kandinsky, Klee, and Mirò, who had great influence on her work.

After her marriage to the prominent graphic artist Milan Grygar, Květa started to create picturebooks when their two sons were still young. She first attracted international attention in 1965, when she received (*ex aequo* with Albin Brunovský) the Grand Prix for her illustrations to Carl Sandburg's *Rootabaga Stories* at the exhibition of contemporary Czechoslovak children's book illustration, preceding the first international Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB'67). While her books were first showcased at the 1969 Bologna Children's Book Fair, it was not until after her BIB Gold Medal for *Pimpilin pampan* in 1987 that Christian Stottele of the Ravensburg Verlag approached her with the request to suggest topics for a new type of picturebooks that experimented with paper, graphic elements,



Photo by M. Neugerbauer

and colors. The German publications of *Eins, fünf, viele* (*One, Five, Many*), *Grün, rot, alle* (*Green, Red, All*), and *Alphabet*, as well as the English, French, and Japanese coproductions, paved the way for Květa's international prominence, which culminated in her being presented the Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration at the IBBY Congress in Berlin in 1992.

In 1990, Christian Stottele became IBBY treasurer and initiated activities promoting IBBY's public image through high-quality publications and fundraising projects. He was able to convince his publisher colleagues and illustrators—including Květa—to donate artwork and printing to benefit IBBY. Another publisher who became important for Květa and IBBY was Michael Neugebauer, who in 1992 published *Midnight Play* and *The Flower King*, followed by Květa's interpretations of classic children's stories such as *The Little Match Girl* (2005), *Little Red Riding Hood* (2005), and *Hansel and Gretel* (2016).

While Květa Pacovská is no longer with us, she remains very much a part of my daily life as her artwork decorates the walls around my desk, and her picturebooks' covers are the first things I see when I wake up. I love her sophisticated way of playing with graphic and visual elements. I love her typical reds and greens and the drama of black and white when she fills a blank space with images, letters, and numbers and unexpected graphics. Sometimes a sheet becomes a unique piece of art, sometimes a page of a printed book; sometimes the flat two-dimensional transforms into a paper sculpture full of surprises. It was fascinating to witness the process of creation whenever she held a pen for a dedication or signature. The result was always an amazing and special gift to be cherished forever.

Leena Maissen

Leena Maissen was IBBY executive director from 1970 to 2003.

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 during 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.

