

## Jella Lepman Medals

In 1991 International Board on Books for Young People is celebrating the centennial of the birth of Jella Lepman, who founded IBBY in 1953. To mark this occasion IBBY will present specially created Jella Lepman Medals to individuals and organizations that have made an extraordinary contribution to the development of IBBY. These medals will be given at a ceremony during the opening day of the Children's Book Fair in Bologna, 4 April 1991. The recipients will be

- **Richard Bamberger**, Vienna, founding member and Past President of IBBY
- **Jo Tenfjord**, Oslo, founding member and Past Vice President of IBBY
- **Fritz Brunner**, Zurich, founding member and Past Treasurer of IBBY (posthumously)
- **John Donovan**, New York, Past Treasurer of IBBY
- **Pro Juventute Organization**, Zurich
- **International Youth Library**, Munich
- **Biennale of Illustrations**, Bratislava
- **Children's Book Fair**, Bologna
- **Asahi Shimbun Newspaper Company**, Tokyo
- **IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People**, Oslo.

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Jella Lepman

### Jella Lepman, the Founder of IBBY

Jella Lepman was born in Stuttgart, Germany, 15 May 1891, and she died in Zurich, Switzerland, 5 October 1970. After the early death of her husband she became a journalist and was politically active. In 1936 she emigrated with her son and daughter from Nazi Germany to London and became a British citizen, working for the Foreign Office and the BBC during World War II and from 1941 for the American Broadcasting Station in Europe. She was engaged as advisor for questions relating to children and young people at the American headquarters in post-war Germany. Even without funds she went ahead and made an exhibit of children's illustrations and children's books from 20 countries in Munich, with initial funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, directing the library from 1948 to 1957. In 1952 Jella Lepman launched another major international idea. It was her belief that all those concerned with the creation, selection and distribution of children's books – not only

authors and artists, librarians and teachers, but also editors, publishers and booksellers – should know each other and work together. From this vision emerged International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), founded in Zurich, Switzerland, in October 1953. The Hans Christian Andersen Award was also created on the initiative of Jella Lepman and it was she who received the first medal, given at the IBBY Congress in Stockholm, 1956, for her contribution to international understanding through children's books. And it was also Jella Lepman's idea to start celebrating 2 April – the birthday of Hans Christian Andersen – as International Children's Book Day. Her firm conviction was that international understanding must be started with children and that children's books are the best means to achieve this. "We can place our hope in the children themselves", she said, "in their miraculous, rarely erring instinct. Their horizon is still without limits. They will find the solution."

*Leena Maissen*