

## Message from IBBY EC

Dear Friends

The world is in turmoil and we are living through extraordinary times. The novel coronavirus that has caused the COVID-19 pandemic, is affecting all of us, directly if not indirectly and it does not discriminate between people or stop at borders.

As IBBY members, we all work towards bringing books and children together. This state of emergency will test our resources and imagination. Schools have closed and children have to stay at home. Many parents have been sent home from their jobs, often without pay, adding to the general discomfort and anxiety.

Libraries have also closed and groups are discouraged from meeting in large numbers – the numbers are down to a maximum of five people here in Switzerland! But even in these difficult circumstances there are many projects that manage storytelling online or via mobile phones; even utilizing local newspapers! We can make contact through the internet and find online sites that recommend titles or virtual story sessions; use your social media and websites, and discover the many resources online. Or, set up your own!

IBBY President, Mingzhou Zhang has initiated a global book project in China, where digital books for children that explain the Coronavirus will be freely available online. Eleven books have been selected and he is working with the publishers to make sure that they will be available in over ten languages. This special online site will be opened before International Children's Book Day. We shall let you know when it is up and running.

The IBBY Executive Committee will meet online at a virtual meeting at the beginning of April and we shall report on what you are doing. So please send us news of your current activities. The IBBY Office in Basel is closed, but Susan, Franca and Liz are working from home and can be reached as normal through the IBBY emails.

The traditional IBBY press conference at the annual Bologna Children's Book Fair has sadly been cancelled. In its place we shall pre-record a virtual press conference and air it on Monday, 4 May at 2:30 CET. This will include the announcements of the winners of the IBBY 2020 Awards: IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award; the IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award; and, the Hans Christian Andersen Awards.

The spirit of IBBY is indomitable. When this passes, as it will, we shall continue working towards our goal of bringing children and books together everywhere.

Be innovative, be imaginative, be kind and understanding. Above all this, be safe and follow your national and regional recommendations for staying healthy and how to behave during this pandemic.

With warmest wishes to you and your families,

Mingzhou Zhang

IBBY President

Liz Page

IBBY Executive Director