



the acorn

Newsletter for the North/Central California Region of the SCBWI

Third annual NY mid-year SCBWI conference

by Tekla White

Tony Stead, teacher, writer and Literacy Consultant, opened the conference with a humorous comparison of what teachers and children want in children's books. Teachers, he explained, want literature that includes important issues and good language structure. They choose short selections with good moral values and unusual art. Children prefer books about animals, naughty characters, and kid humor. Intriguing beginnings and surprise endings are favorites. Children are attracted to brightly colored, simple illustrations that are funny or scary.

A long list of editors and agents gave advice and offered their comments about the future of children's book publishing. Here are some highlights from the sessions.

Stephanie Owens Lurie, president and publisher of Dutton Children's Books, confessed that she couldn't predict the future of children's books. She said that libraries were not replacing worn, backlist books. They were buying new releases with their limited funds. She felt we should all enjoy the now.

Harold Underdown, vice president and editor of www.ipicturebooks.com, said successful Internet publishing was two or three years in the future.

Amy Griffin, Senior Editor at Orchard Books, stated that Orchard will concentrate on the backlist with some new titles. Griffin is interested in acquiring picture books and young adult poetry collections. The Orchard line, a Scholastic imprint, will publish fiction with fewer novelty, board, and chapter books.

Lauri Hornik, Editorial Director of Dial Books for Young Readers, publishes hardcover picture books as well as novels for children and young adults. Nonfiction books should be kid relevant. Hornik is interested in acquiring young adult contemporary and historical novels with strong main characters. She looks for universal issues and coming-of-age themes.

Christy Otaviano, Executive Editor at Henry Holt and Company, Books for Young Readers acquires picture books as well as middle grade fiction and nonfiction. She would like to see preschool stories with reader interaction and books that show the emotions and feelings of children.

Children prefer books about animals, naughty characters, and kid humor.

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Three events for the history file

by Tekla White

Many thanks to Verla Kay for coordinating and hosting our **first mini-conference of the year** in Soulsbyville. The weather was sunny at Verla's while the rest of the area soaked in fog. Verla

talked about picture books, Tricia Gardella told everyone how to get the most out of SCBWI membership, Linda Joy Singleton gave expert advice on writing series books, and Verla's colorful Australian parakeet just talked. There was time to schmooze, ask questions, and

receive manuscript critiques and suggestions. The admission price along with a potluck dish included sleepovers for those traveling from Texas and other parts of California.

(See "history" on page 2)

Regional Advisor's Corner



News, newsletters, and mini-events have kept North Central editors and organizers busy the first three months of the year, and there's more on the way. Thanks to Nancy Barnet and Julie Donahoo we are sending out our first North Central newsletter. Please send us suggestions and questions. We want to share your good news and ideas with our readers.

Writefully yours,

Tekla White

history

(Continued from page 1)

The North Coast SCBWI area offered a mini-conference in February in Eureka. The guest speaker was Mimi Kayden who gave an insider's view of the publishing industry. Mary Nethery, Barbara Kelly, and Natashia Wing hosted the conference.

By the time you receive this newsletter, the **Modesto, March 23rd conference** will be a memory. Tricia Gardella has announced that this is the tenth and last Modesto conference she will organize. We'll all miss Tricia's productions, which have helped many children's writers and illustrators. We'll miss her annual lunch, too. Her feeds were so successful that Tricia decided to go into the food business full-time. She opened a Jamestown ice cream parlor and gift shop featuring the autographed books of a local children's writer.

Conferences, workshops, networking

Conferences

April 13, 2002, Sacramento

Mini-conference includes: Writing for Children's Magazines, Plotting and Conflict, What Children's Librarians are Looking For, and critique group meetings. Speakers are Connie Goldsmith, Patti Newman, Laura Torres, and Louise Munro Foley. **Contact Connie Goldsmith** Goldwright@aol.com for information and space availability or go to the Web site www.scbwinorca.org

September 2002, Sacramento

Mini-conference, details TBA

March 2003, Davis

Conference, details TBA

October 2003, Fresno

North Central California SCBWI will hold a joint two-day conference with Fresno State University in October 2003. We'll be able to visit the new Arne Nixon

Children's Literature Center. As soon as the dates are set, we'll let you know.

Workshops

September 21st, 2002, Soulsbyville

Verla Kay says, "The next workshop day/weekend at my house is scheduled for September 21st. It will be similar to this first one, except I've rented a clubhouse at the bottom of the hill for the day of the meeting so we'll have lots of room and won't have to limit the attendance the day of the meeting. (There's plenty of parking space at the clubhouse, too, along with a tennis court, fishing pond, and playground area for kids, in case families want to come along and play while we work.) We have a great professional storyteller arranged to talk about 'Giving Dynamic Presentations with Storytelling.' The second speaker hasn't been finalized yet, but if we get who I want to get, it's going to be fabulous."

Networking

If you are interested in forming or joining a critique group, contact one of the following critique group coordinators:

North Coast and the Sacramento area

Connie Goldsmith
Goldwright@aol.com

South of Sacramento

Verla Kay
verlakay2@mlode.com

Chico, Redding, Red Bluff and areas to the east and north

Alessia Cowee
acowee@pacbell.net

Illustrators: If you're interested in getting together to network with other artists who might be in your area, please contact Nancy Barnet at nancy@nancybarnet.com. We'll work on setting up volunteer coordinators in those areas where demand and proximity exists.

Market news, contests

The Carus group of magazines, which includes *Cricket*, *Spider*, *Ladybug*, *Babybug*, and *Cobblestone*, has changed their payment policy. They buy all rights (previously it was first time rights) and it seems that the amount of payment and the pay on publication policy remains the same. For those who have sold materials to Carus in the past for first time rights, Carus is offering a small payment when they reuse previously published articles. They buy all future rights in exchange for this small payment.

Editors on the move

Toby Sherry has left Dial. **Nancy Mercado** is the new Dial Editor (She left the Scholastic Trumpet Book Club). **Tamar Mays** has left Dutton. **Julie Straus Gabel** left Clarion. She is the new Dutton Editor acquiring picture books, novels, and nonfiction. **Amy Hampton Knight** left Simon & Schuster. **Steve Geck**, formerly VP and Associate Publisher at Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, has joined Greenwillow Books as Executive Editor.

If you sign up for the email SCBWI news and market report, you can receive up-to-date reports.

Contests

Delacorte Press Books for Young Readers

The contest is open to U.S. and Canadian writers who have not previously published a novel for middle-grade readers. Manuscripts must be post-marked after April 1, 2002 and before June 30, 2002. Send a SASE to Delacorte Press, Random House Books for Young Readers, 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036.

Delacorte Press contest for a First Young Adult Novel

Manuscripts must be postmarked after October 1, 2002, but no later than December 31, 2002. Send a SASE for guidelines to Delacorte Press, Books for Young Readers Department, 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036.

Winner of "Name the Newsletter"

Eleanor Portner wonders if A CORN on the cob she ate for dinner was the inspiration for her winning NORCA newsletter entry. Or was it because she recently turned A CORNER in her life and is now writing for children? Ellie is also a printmaker and colored pencil artist. She lives with husband Mike in San Ramon, California.

For her winning entry, Ellie receives a SCBWI pen and book bag, as well as an "I Love Creating Books for Children" window sign. Thanks to all who contributed some very worthy contenders!

January mini-conference in Soulsbyville



Part of the conference group gets ready to work in the downstairs meeting room.



(l. to r.) Tricia Gardella, Ellie Porter and Rojean Evans relax between sessions.



All attendees singed up to bring a potluck dish for the conference luncheon. Here (foreground to background) Marty Rice, Verla Kay and Tekla White look over the tempting faire.



Linda Joy Singleton advises the group on writing series books.

Acorn Q&A

Putting a number on success

Q: *I have my first PB coming out in spring 2003. How many books does a PB need to sell to be considered a success? Does it depend on how big the publisher is? Also, I am getting increasingly interested in marketing tips these days, and would love to see something on this subject included in future events. Thanks, Pamela*

A: A *Washington Times* article (2-27-02) about the February 26th NY Mid-Year SCBWI conference reports Steven Mooser, the President of SCBWI, saying that even a good children's book may sell only 10,000 to 20,000 copies. The upside is they tend to stay in print longer than adult books.

As for ways to publicize your book, check out *How to Promote Your Children's Book, A Survival Guide for Published Writers* by Evelyn Gallardo, Morris Publishing, 1997.

Acorn submission guidelines

The *Acorn* would love submissions of articles of interest to children's book writers and illustrators, and photos of N. CA SCBWI events.

For articles, please query Julie Donahoo at jdccpoa@ix.netcom.com. Articles of 500 words or less are best, but longer pieces will be considered as long as we have space.

Send photos to Nancy Barnet at nancy@nancybarnet.com. Photos should be sent in JPG format as close to 150 dpi as possible. We'll need the usual who, what and where for the caption, and the photographer's name for the credit line.

Payment for one-time rights (or reprint rights) is not extravagant. In addition to a byline or credit line and the heartfelt gratitude of your peers, the *Acorn* can offer you a choice of A) a one-year subscription to NorCa SCBWI electronic services or B) an "I love creating books for children" car window sign and an SCBWI pen.

Tips for illustrators

The postcard mailer is a great promotional choice for many illustrators.

Sending a new image every three to six months keeps your work fresh in the minds of art directors without overwhelming them. Postcards with your contact information are easy to pin on a bulletin board or pass around at meetings.

Desktop color printers can do an excellent job of printing postcards in small quantities (dozens), but for larger print runs it's often more economical to have them produced by a commercial printer. A few companies to check for prices are:

- 4 Over Inc., www.4over.com
- Mitchell Graphics, Inc., www.mitchellgraphics.com
- CopyCraft, www.copycraft.com
- Modern Postcard, www.modernpostcard.com
- Color Q Inc., www.colorqinc.com

Tips for writers

from Lori Benton, Associate Publisher at Henry Holt, at the New York Mid-Year Conference 2002

- Word of mouth is the best way to build book sales.
- Authors should begin by searching for local reviewers in the media and parenting magazines.
- Tell everyone you have a book coming out.
- Visit all the local bookstores and libraries for show-and-tell sessions about your book.
- Sign books and read to library visitors.
- Join the local reading association.
- Ask the publisher's marketing department for help. Ask how to link your Web site to the publisher's site.
- Have bookmarks, postcards, and brochures made to advertise your book. One source for author/illustrator postcards is www.4over4.com

Tech Talk

An office in my pocket

by Nancy Barnett

Over the past few months, I've grown very attached to a little computer that slips into my pocket or handbag and has more processing power and RAM than did my first desktop computer. It keeps track of my appointments, contacts and things I need to do. But it can also run a color slideshow of my illustration work, track my business expenses on a spreadsheet, figure the tip for my business lunch and allow me to read an ebook. I can work on a manuscript or outline research notes at the library, download and send my email, get airline schedules from the Web, find out where I am via a Global Positioning Satellite, save a quick sketch and, yes, even play games while I'm waiting on hold on the telephone.

Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) have been around for many years, but the handheld computers available today offer capabilities that many writers and illustrators may find attractive. Prices have come down while computing power has gone up. Palm, Sony, Compaq, and Handspring are a sampling of companies that offer handhelds in a variety of price ranges, with monochrome displays running from about \$100-300 and color displays from \$300-600. Portability is key with handheld devices — the combined weight of the handheld and full-sized keyboard on which I'm writing this column is a mere 14.25 ounces, making it much easier to carry with me than even the lightest laptop computer.

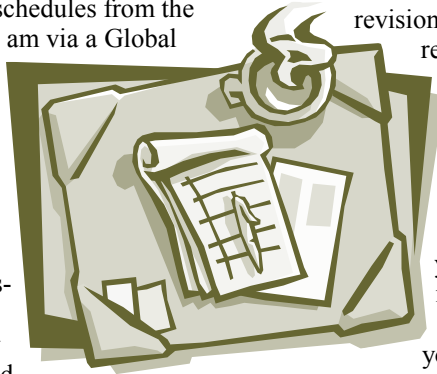
The beauty of these little computing dynamos is how much information they can hold. Most handheld computers offer anywhere from 2-16 megabytes of RAM. Many have expansion slots that take a card that's slightly larger than a postage stamp and that stores from 16 to 128

megabytes of documents, pictures, spreadsheets — you name it. You can “beam” your contact information, documents, programs and pictures to someone else's handheld by way of an infrared port. In a similar fashion, you can print to a desktop printer capable of receiving infrared signals.

Writers and illustrators will find endless ways to take advantage of pocket-portability. Keep up with an email critique group you joined by taking your mail with you to your child's dance practice or t-ball game. Finish the revisions on your current easy-reader manuscript. Jot notes for an upcoming school visit and view maps to get you there. Show the cover of your latest book to the manager of the book store you hope will host your next signing event. Calculate exchange rates on your next trip to the Bologna Book Fair. Beam your electronic business card to the handheld-savvy editor at the next conference you attend. You'll still be on your own for a double, no-fat latte. Wait a minute — you might be able to order one on the Web . . .

Big things come in six-ounce packages.

Do you have electronics or equipment you use for writing or illustrating that you couldn't stand to give up? Tell us about the creative ways you put your tools to work. If you use some software that goes beyond the call of duty, please share with us! If you want to know how other members deal with technical issues, ask! Send your email to nancy@nancybarnet.com with “Tech Talk” in the subject line and your comments or questions in the body. (All other newsletter article queries should go to Julie Donahoo, Editor, at jdcppoa@ix.netcom.com)



Handy postage calculators



US Postal Service:
<http://www.usps.gov/>

Canada Post:
<http://www.canadapost.ca/>

Britain Royal Mail:
<http://www.royalmail.co.uk/>

Australia Post:
<http://www.auspost.com.au/>

Meet the new Acorn staff

Julie Donahoo lives in Elk Grove, CA, with her husband Michael and her son Brendan. She has a Bachelor's Degree in English from CSU, Sacramento and a Master's Degree in Organizational Management. Currently, Ms. Donahoo works in the field of Health and Safety but is making a career change to teaching at a nearby University. She will be teaching English Composition. Ms. Donahoo is very pleased to be getting back to what she truly loves...writing!!

Nancy Barnett has been a freelance illustrator for fifteen years, but an artist since she was old enough to hold a pencil. Drawing for countless hours, over many years, on paper her dad brought home from his office, Nancy honed her craft. All that drawing came in handy when, as a young mother, she was tasked with creating Cinderellas and Smurfettes on her daughters' birthday cakes. After the *Cake Years*, she went on to illustrate children's books — five so far — and dozens of magazine articles. With daughters grown and on their own, Nancy currently lives in Elk Grove with her husband and three small hairy children some refer to as cats.

North/Central CA Region of
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Good news!



From Pamela Turner: *Hachiko*, a picture book, is coming out spring 2003 from Houghton Mifflin. *Cousins in Crisis* (on great ape conservation) was in the October 2001 *Odyssey*, and *Inventing an Alphabet, Real or Pretend* was in the November 27, 2001 *Kidspace* column in the *Christian Science Monitor*.

From Linda Singleton: My young adult cloning series, *Re-generation*, has been reprinted in a dynamic hardback Swedish edition, and French rights have been sold, too. The series is also being reprinted in a hardback large-print library edition. I always have bookmarks and will mail them free to teachers and librarians. There's an ongoing contest to win a free book on my website (www.LJSingleton.com), too. ljscheer@inreach.com

From Verla Kay: *Tattered Sails* has received another accolade. It's been named to the 2002 NCSS-CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People list (the same list *Iron Horses* made). The list is sponsored by the National Council for the Social Studies and the Children's Book Council. A full list will appear in the May/June 2002 issue of *Social Education* and the books will be on display at the NCSS annual conference in late November.

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