



Editorial 218

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Comment from the editor

Bologna was buzzing. It always is since it is one of the most attractive of cities with its arcaded streets, tradition of great food, enticing shops and the oldest university in world. It teems with tourists, students and locals. Then there is the Fiere ? the centre for trade fairs. There are great exhibition halls where people can show off their wares, which could range from funeral and cemetery art to innovation in butchery ? to children?s books. [Bologna Children?s Book Fair](#) [3] is the showcase for publishers from around the world to display their books, not principally to the public but to other publishers. The aim is to sell foreign rights or identify an author or illustrator to add to their list. Visiting the Children?s Book Fair is fascinating and really brings home the global nature of publishing books for children. It also makes one aware of the gaps. While the UK, USA and Europe have an enormous presence as does, increasingly, the Far East, there are very few publishers from the African countries ? though lovely books are beginning to emerge from there. Walking down the aisles is like walking through a fantasy land. The publishers? stands, some enormous (especially those dedicated to the conglomerates), others very modest ? but all bright and beautiful ? often display great imagination in their design. One Croatian publisher had a castle!

Though this is not really a Fair for the general public, there is plenty to attract them. There are seminars and presentations, as well as exhibitions; this year Germany was the guest country, and there was a brilliant and innovative display of German illustrators. There are also a bewildering number of prizes. The Bologna **Ragazzi Awards** ?acknowledge and celebrate publishing excellence in terms of innovative drive, graphic skill and general ability to capture young readers? attention?, and there are four categories: Fiction, Non Fiction, New Horizons and Opera Prima. They are international, and the entrants and the winners really are drawn from around the world; it was great to see Flying Eye achieving two honourable mentions. Then there is the **Disability Award**, the **Digital Award** ? congratulations to **Nosy Crow** for their appearance here ? and the **Bologna Prize for Best Children?s Publisher of Year (BOP)**; **Andersen Press** was the winner in the European group. There is also the **International Award for Illustration** ? last year the young British illustrator, Maisie Shearring, won this prestigious award, this year it was the Mexican, Juan Palomino. Yet who will hear of many of these winners in this country? Why has **Mallko y Papá** , for instance a moving account of a father?s relationship with his Down?s syndrome son by the illustrator Gusti, and which won the **Disability Award**, not been published in the UK? And when will we see the work of the brilliant Juan Palomino?

So what? one might say. These are just prizes awarded by a small select group of judges. Similar criticisms are often aimed at our own national prizes ? esoteric, out of touch, no popular appeal. Some people think there are too many prizes. But book awards are important because they focus attention on a select number of books drawn from the thousands that are published each year.

Getting on a long list, a short list, hopefully winning, is a way to stand out and attract attention. Awards can draw attention to particular concerns or areas. In the UK the [Little Rebels Award for Radical Fiction](#) [4] aims to draw

attention to important themes including diversity, gender, ecology and identity. Attention is directed to debut authors and their editors in the [Branford Boase Award](#) [5], while the newly established [Klaus Flugge Award](#) [6] does the same for debut illustrators. There is the [YA Book Prize](#) [7], the **Lollies** (a relaunch of the **Roald Dahl Funny Prize**), the [Children's Book Award](#) [8] run by the **Federation of Children's Book Groups** which involves children in the judging and the [UKLA \(United Kingdom Literacy Association\) Award](#) [9] run by teachers. There is the [CLiPPA](#) [10] award for poetry, and the [CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Awards](#) [11] for outstanding writing and illustration respectively. All of these prizes have similar, yet very different, aims and all can, and do, court argument, disagreement and discussion. I would suggest that this is where the true value of awards lies. Of course, they reward the creators of the books, but there is only one winner of any prize. However, book prize long lists and short lists invite important conversation and debate; there is rarely such a thing as an agreed 'best' book. Prizes are celebrations of books and should provide an opportunity to reflect, think, and make new discoveries. We should take notice of our national prizes for children's books, but it is crucial that we take notice of international prizes too.

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