



Bringing Books and Reading to Young People - Projects that Inspire



A selection of covers of the 'White Ravens' lists. Copyright © 2022 Internationale Jugendbibliothek.

In this issue

Editorial [3](#)

Unusual Birds in a Book Castle: The International Youth Library, its 'White Ravens' List and Other Treasures [5](#)

Claudia Söffner

The National Shelf Service: Recommendations by the Book [12](#)

Jake Hope

The Book Bus Speaks [17](#)

Basarat Midhat Kazim

Tools for Reading Promotion in Flanders: Beyond Campaigns and Activities [23](#)

Eva Devos

Doorstep Library: Words Take You Places [31](#)

Henrietta Yoxall

Read with Me: A Conversation with Zohrah Ghaeni [37](#)

Ferelith Hordon and Zohrah Ghaeni

Editorial

Here in the UK we live in a print rich society, books abound – in libraries, bookshops, even schools. The crisis predicted with the arrival of the computer and the internet linking us to the World Wide Web at the touch of a key has seen instead an explosion of printed material consciously offering a different experience. Young people today can access stories and information through a range of avenues, with the printed text now partnered with exciting illustration as an equal contender. However, even in our affluent world things are not always so rosy. We cannot make the easy assumption that access to books, to stories, to information is an easy path for all, nor is reading something that can be seamlessly learned. Not only that, faced with a multicultural audience who want – indeed need – to not just see themselves in the pages but also experience a variety of languages, how can practitioners find a way through the book jungle? How can librarians, teachers, parents – young people themselves – hear about one stand-out book that might just be what is required? Not something that is required for a test, just an exciting suggestion.

We are so lucky. What if books are a rarity? If reading, that essential tool in the contemporary world whether for technology or the imagination, is not the norm? What if your life is difficult in ways that are not easy to imagine? How can families in such situations be reached?

In this issue you can learn about some projects both in this country and abroad that aim to do just that.

Doorstep Library is an initiative in the UK that aims to help families that do struggle with reading and access to books. Using trained volunteers, the charity works to encourage and support families reading

together, making a reading culture not something that happens outside the home but becomes part of the home.

Supporting families is central to the ethos of the Read Me initiative founded by Zohreh Ghaeni. Now active not just in Iran where it began, Read Me is reaching communities and families in parts of Afghanistan. Books are important, but much more is needed. Here again it is the fostering of shared reading, shared stories and experiences, encouraging a range of literacies that is at the heart of all that Read Me does. It is an inspiring vision.

Reaching communities across Pakistan, the Book Bus brings a mobile library to many for whom such a phenomenon might be something out of a fairy tale. However, it is reality. It started with one, the brain child of Basarat Midhat Kazim – now there are many. And the work is not just a matter of dropping off a few books. The Book Bus movement works with schools, especially in areas hit by natural – or man-made – disasters to support traumatised children. The arrival of the colourful Book Bus in a rural community is a moment of joy; another inspiring story. The images that accompany these stories show the smiling faces of children.

We see similar happy faces among a box load of babies when Eva Devos describes the work of Iedereen Leest (Everyone Reads) organisation in Flanders. The aim is to encourage everyone to read and read more. They use projects that we will recognise here – Bookstart, Read Aloud Week – but also coordinate a project called Boekenzoeker (Book Searcher), which recognises the need for practitioners, parents – and most importantly young people themselves, whether readers or reluctant readers – to find suggestions that will attract the

attention, and because trusted, encourage them to at least try; the database can even offer a short audio taster.

Here in the UK, the National Shelf Service aimed to do just that during the void created by the pandemic, which saw libraries, shops and schools shut, and families confined to their homes. Using snappy YouTube presentations, members of YLG (CILIP Youth Libraries Group) volunteered to champion a book a day. These then ranged from young adult to picture books, and prize winners to personal favourites. And to ensure that readers could get their 'hands' on them easily, the presenters were asked to ensure that the books were available as digital copies in the library system so could be borrowed as e-books.

How can practitioners help readers who need – and want – stories and books in their own language? How can librarians, teachers and parents find information on books that can confidently offer something of quality?

Claudia Söffner introduces us to the work of the International Youth Library based outside Munich in a fairy-tale castle. In particular she draws attention to their 'White Ravens' catalogue. This annual catalogue showcases books from around the world and can be accessed both as hard copy and also through their website (and if you are lucky enough to get to the Bologna Fiera you can see the books themselves on show there).

These are just a few of the inspirational projects whose aim is to spread the joy of reading and create access to books themselves that can be found both close to home and around the world.

Ferelith Hordon

Unusual Birds in a Book Castle

Claudia Söffner is a trained bookseller and has an MA degree in English and Comparative Literature and English Linguistics from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Munich University). Since 2001, she has been the English literature specialist at the International Youth Library, where she enjoys working with a broad range of books from Australia, Canada, India, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK, the US and various other countries from around the world.

The International Youth Library, its ‘White Ravens’ List and Other Treasures

A medieval castle inhabited by thousands of literary ‘birds’? This sounds like a fairy tale from ancient times. However, Schloss Blutenburg (Blutenburg Castle), situated on the outskirts of Munich (Germany), is very much alive and kicking. It is the home of the Internationale Jugendbibliothek (International Youth Library – IYL), the largest library specialising in international children’s and young adult literature in the world. Founded in 1949 by IBBY co-founder Jella Lepman, the IYL has developed into a unique institution that has a lot to offer to its visitors.



A shot from the lake of Blutenburg Castle.

The IYL: specialised library, literary gallery, children’s literature venue and more

The library’s holdings of more than 650,000 children’s and young adult books in over 240 languages span five centuries. This includes about 67,000 historical books, 30,000 volumes of international research on children’s literature, as well as 130 current subscriptions

to research and trade journals. Thanks to the generous book donations the IYL receives from publishing houses, organisations, private donors, etc., its collection grows annually by around 9,000 books.

Literary and aesthetic quality are important criteria for inclusion in the archival collection, as are originality and diversity. Yet a representative selection of popular bestselling books is also taken in because, after all, one of the library's objectives as an international archive is to document the status quo of literature for young readers around the world, and to capture local and international trends and new directions in the development of children's and youth literature in their countries of origin.

As a public library, the IYL caters for both an international audience and the local community: on the one hand, its research library allows access to the entire archival collection of primary literature as well as all the secondary sources about children's literature; on the other hand, the children's lending library makes 30,000 children's books in over 20 different languages available to be borrowed free of charge.

Through the fellowship programme, funded by the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, the IYL encourages research about literature for children and teenagers in an increasingly networked world. Each year, up to 18 scholars are invited to spend several weeks at Blütenburg Castle to work on academic projects that they have already started in their home countries. For their research, they make use of the international collection of primary and secondary literature.

The promotion of children's literature

Merely collecting and loaning the books was never what the IYL was after. From the beginning, the collection has also enabled the library's team to perform outreach work aimed at children and adolescents as well as adults. The work is carried by the conviction that children's and young adult books form an essential part of the cultural life of a society, and that they must be preserved, documented and promoted. Thus, one of the IYL's top priorities is to further international cultural exchange through the promotion of international children's literature via various events and projects.

Extracurricular sites for education play an important role in children's development because children can engage creativity free from school pressures and expand their experiential horizons. Every year the IYL conceives a programme of in-house and travelling exhibitions, readings, workshops, artist and writer talks, panel discussions, presentations, conferences and other events. The aim is

to address current questions and topics in international children’s literature, to display the diversity of children’s literature and to celebrate the books’ high linguistic and aesthetic qualities.

In addition to these events, the library also contributes to the field of children’s literature from around the world via publications, such as the annual ‘White Ravens’ catalogue and the multilingual children’s poetry calendar ‘Der Kinder Kalender’.



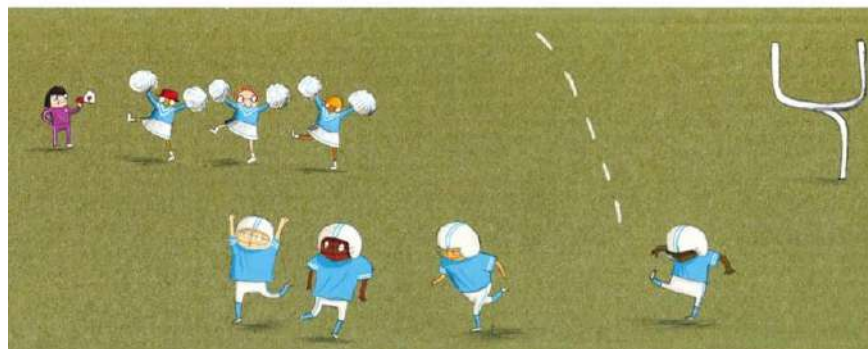
Ein englisches Gedicht aus den USA von
 Brian P. Cleary
 Illustration: Andy Rowland
 Deutsch: Sybil Gräfin Schönfeldt

Und ich?

Fans klatschen Kickern Beifall,
 wenn ich durch die Tore flieg.
 Und wenn ich gefangen werde,
 prahlen Fänger mit dem Sieg.
 Und schaut doch einmal ringsumher –
 trägt mich einer überm Strich,
 gilt der Jubel nur dem Spieler,
 warum jubelt niemand für mich?

FANS
 will clap
 for kickers as
 I'm sailing through
 the post. AND when
 I'm caught, receivers
 get to be THE ONES who
 AND when I'm carried
 past the goal, just look
 around and see - the cheerers
 are for the RUNNING
 back. but why
 AREN'T they
 FOR ME?

WHAT
 ABOUT
 ME?



Children’s Calendar of 25 June 2018 –Concrete Poetry.

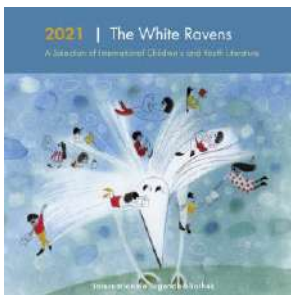
The ‘Kinder Kalender’ – a poem for every week of the year

Inspired by an exhibition of international illustrated children’s poetry that was curated at the IYL in 2009 for the library’s 60th anniversary, the children’s calendar was first published in 2011. It is a large-format weekly calendar featuring 53 poems in their original languages and a German translation, adorned by the original illustrations from the books in which the poems were published. In order to find the most suitable, varied and enjoyable poems, the IYL staff sift through dozens or even hundreds of illustrated poetry anthologies from the library’s collection every year and then collaborate with the calendar’s publisher (as of this year Moritz Verlag in Frankfurt) to make the final selection. A one-of-its-kind publication, which has garnered several awards and an enthusiastic

following, the 'Kinder Kalender' is a treat not only for families but also for teachers and their pupils. It offers a playful and visually attractive way of encountering different languages and allows children and adults alike a glimpse into the peculiarities and the diversity of children's poetry traditions around the globe.

The 'White Ravens' catalogue

The IYL's most important publication is the annual list, a catalogue that showcases books from many different countries. The IYL first introduced the German name 'Weiße Raben' ('White Ravens') in the 1960s to label outstanding books that it was keen to recommend for translation to publishers. At that time, there was no regular printed publication yet and the reviews were written in German. Initially created as simple lists or brochures, the 'Weiße Raben' were first published as a bound catalogue in 1984 to be presented at the International Children's Book Fair in Bologna, featuring 226 children's books from 40 countries. In 1986 the annual selection was published in English for the first time and renamed 'The White Ravens'.



Its target audience was – and still is – people interested in the field of children's literature, whether they are professionally involved in it in publishing houses, libraries, bookshops, the area of education and similar fields, or whether they simply engage with it as parents, book lovers or for other reasons. Publishers, for example, can find information on new books they might want to include in their list as translations, while librarians will find guidance for expanding their library's foreign-language holdings. It is true, of course, that numerous institutions and organisations around the world review and recommend children's books. What makes the 'White Ravens' special, however, is its international focus: The list does not feature books from just one language, one country or one region, but highlights many facets of the immensely diverse international children's literature market.

Its internationality is also the reason why, right from the beginning, the 'White Ravens' was designed as a recommendation list rather than a literary award. An award would require an award jury, but due to the fact that each catalogue introduces books in more than 30 languages, there was no way the IYL would have been able to appoint a jury whose members jointly judged the quality of children's books in all these languages. Consequently, each of the IYL's in-house and freelance children's literature specialists, who select the books, relies on his or her own expertise and experience, but also takes into account recommendations from experts from around the world, including several IBBY sections.

It is important to note that only a book that is physically part of the library's collection can be a 'White Raven'. As mentioned above, the collection development at IYL depends entirely on free copies donated to the IYL. Therefore, books that the library does not receive cannot be selected for the 'White Ravens' catalogue.

There are no fixed criteria for the selection, but, over the years, the IYL team has developed traditions regarding the evaluation of children's literature. Naturally, the experts share information about new books and their reading experiences with each other, discuss trends and follow the (international) discourse on children's literature. For the 'White Ravens' selection, the quality of text and illustration are crucial. Other aspects – such as innovation, originality, new topics or book design – influence the selection too.

Until 2013, the catalogue continued to be published in spring for the Bologna Book Fair, where the books were displayed at the IYL's booth, featuring short reviews of 250 new books. Then in 2014, major changes were implemented to render the list even more attractive and user friendly: the number of books promoted was reduced to 200 titles, allowing the printed catalogue to contain images of the book covers along with bibliographic information, reviews, subject headings and indexes; and it is now produced in a larger format with a modern design in full-colour print. In addition, the time of publication was shifted from March to October. Thus, each new 'White Ravens' catalogue is now first presented to publishers at the Frankfurt International Book Fair with an event in front of a professional audience; the following spring, all the 200 books featured in the list are then displayed at the IYL's booth in Bologna. Thereby the team is making the most of two powerful international book fairs to promote the books to children's literature professionals.

In order to provide an even wider audience with the chance to look at and work with the books selected for the list, each set of 'White Ravens' books is also available as a travelling exhibition. For a small handling fee, universities, schools, libraries and other institutions can order the most recent selection to be sent to their premises. Institutions often exhibit the books – with or without copies of the catalogue – for several weeks, with some even offering a number of workshops based on selected titles. The IYL's travelling exhibitions are not only available in Germany, they also journey to countries in Europe and other parts of the world.

The catalogue relaunch in 2014 also coincided with the implementation of the 'White Ravens' database, which can be accessed online from the IYL's website (<https://whiteravens.ijb.de/list>). The platform offers the data of all

‘White Ravens’ books from the 2012 edition onwards and allows users to search for titles, for example, by person, language, country, or subject. Today, each annual ‘White Ravens’ list presents books from about 50 countries published in over 30 languages, thus the data for a total of over 2,000 books is currently available on the database.

The latest feature to bring the ‘White Ravens’ books to the attention of an even wider audience was the creation of a special ‘White Ravens’ Instagram account in 2021. These days, once the list is launched at the Frankfurt Book Fair, the social media team starts posting each of the titles from the current list as #ravenoftheday with its cover picture and review at @thewhiteravens.books.

The ‘White Ravens’ Festival for international children’s and young adult literature

As the IYL is constantly searching for new ways to promote high quality international children’s literature, the team was delighted when, in 2009, a grant offered by the Bavarian government enabled them to curate a new children’s literature festival. Organised and run biennially since 2010, the ‘White Ravens’ Festival was conceived with a focus on international children’s literature – just like the majority of the IYL’s endeavours. Named ‘White Ravens’ Festival after the term the IYL has been using for many years as a designator for unusual and innovative children’s and young adult literature, the five-day event is connected by name to its ‘older sibling’, the ‘White Ravens’ catalogue. It offers a stage to a mixture of famous and lesser-known writers (as well as a small number of illustrators) from Germany and abroad.



Photograph from the 2021 White Ravens festival.

The 'White Ravens' Festival creates a forum for international children's and youth literature with Blutenburg Castle as its main venue; yet festival visitors can also experience invited authors and illustrators at a variety of teen and cultural centres, schools and libraries all around Bavaria. Aside from a series of public events in the evenings and at the opening weekend, the heart of the festival is its programme of author readings and performances for school classes.

The 'White Ravens' Festival typically features a diverse range of languages, topics and literary genres, which duly reflects the wealth of extraordinary contemporary children's and young adult literature from around the world. The festival's international roots are much cherished by its visitors both young and old. For children and adolescents, the festival offers a good opportunity to interact with a writer up close and thus gain a lively glimpse into his or her creative process. The authors welcome the chance to talk to their German readers, and to meet and discuss issues with colleagues from other countries.

Both its staff members and visitors from around the world often describe the IYL as a 'book castle' that protects a great literary treasure, a treasure that must be valued and promoted. It is for this reason that the library opens its doors and windows wide, to invite inside all those who have are passionate about children's and young adult literature to enjoy these literary gems.

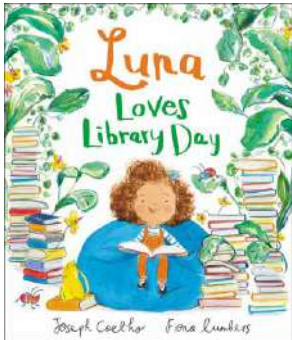
Acknowledgements

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The National Shelf Service

Jake Hope is a reading development and children's book consultant. He is a passionate champion of illustration and visual literacy and is the author of *Seeing Sense*. He is the Chair of the Working Party for the Yoto Carnegies and Kate Greenaway Medals.

Recommendations by the Book



Reading often offers a sanctuary, if not a salvation. This was certainly the case for many during the pandemic when through books we were able to connect with other more liberated ways of living, moving outside the restrictions and limitations that existed through lockdown and on into various aspects of life in its aftermath. Libraries in the United Kingdom reported a massive increase in demand for e-books and audiobooks during this time.

A social start

Towards the end of March 2020, it was clear that libraries were beginning to experience what would be an unprecedented use of their digital collections. This was partly from existing, traditional users of physical libraries, but was also from new members who had joined up specifically to access these resources.

Alongside all this, Joe Wicks was running his daily streaming exercise classes. This led Nick Poole, Chief Executive Officer of CILIP, the Library and Information Association in the UK, to send out a tweet on 20 March, asking:

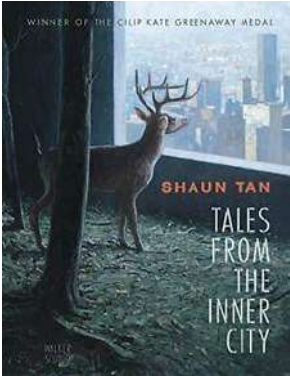
Is there a librarian out there willing to be a Joe Wicks for reading? Much like the daily PE lesson, can we get a #librarian to do a daily recommendation of amazing reading experiences while stuck @ home? #Nationofreaders.

The idea immediately captured the imagination and replies started to come in from library authorities and individuals who had ideas for people who might be interested and different formats the videos could take, everything from haikus to one-minute shorts.

The Youth Libraries Group (YLG), a special interest group within CILIP whose membership includes librarians with expertise and knowledge in working with children and young people, began discussing ways that it might be able to help organise such a programme. Alison Brumwell, Chair of the group, and I, Chair of the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals Working Party, met with CILIP to discuss options and explore how the idea might be brought

to fruition. Everyone was signed up to finding ways to connect readers with librarians and to providing a platform for the superb range of titles that librarians were in a position to recommend.

Mapping out our plans



Four key objectives were agreed for the promotion, these were:

(i) to celebrate the expertise and passion librarians have for connecting readers with books and e-books

(ii) to promote libraries and librarianship at a time when libraries were not physically open

(iii) to raise awareness and encourage greater access to the digital lending services libraries provide

(iv) to encourage more people to read more books and to discover a wider range of diverse and inclusive titles.

Forming an offer

After further meetings with Natalie Jones, CILIP's Head of Programmes, we agreed that the YLG would invite its members to select a book and record a short introduction discussing some of the key points about the title and helping to promote it to a wide readership. Titles would be shared on a specially created YouTube channel. The then current Libraries Champion, Bobby Seagull, would be invited to record a special introduction to the programme and there would be a call out for suggested names for the programmes and channel.

The National Shelf Service

Among the many suggestions which came in for names was the National Shelf Service. This felt a fun, playful and thematically appropriate homage to the National Health Service which plays such a vital role in the nation's health and wellbeing and whose staff had been exceptional with the extraordinary levels of commitment and dedication shown.

A call out

A call out was sent to judges of the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals with the intention being to focus in the first week on books that were nominated for or were past short listees or winners of the awards. There was a lot of interest, but also some uncertainty about what would be required. A briefing was put together which gave advice on selecting books and particularly on ensuring that these were available electronically, how to set about recording and optimum length. We also arranged that support could be offered through virtual meetings where the video could be recorded, if



needed, with the aim that this would take some pressure away from librarian presenters, enabling them to focus on their talks.

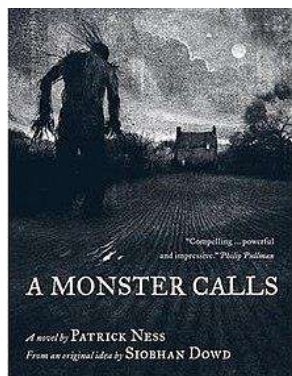
Establishing a design feel

We were keen to have book-related visuals for the channel and videos, and liaised with Andersen Press to enquire about permission to use some of Fiona Lumbers' artwork from *Luna Loves Library Day*. Andersen Press spoke with Fiona and with author Joseph Coelho and permission was kindly given.

Partners

CILIP and YLG agreed that a weekly release schedule would be produced and circulated amongst all partners. These comprised of Nielsen, who helped to promote the selected titles, H F Howes, BorrowBox, Rakuten OverDrive and Libraries Connected. It was agreed that the weekly release schedule would be sent to public library authorities in advance so that they could help to promote books and enable access to these, and that partners and library authorities would help to promote through social media.

A date is set



The first video was released on 6 April 2020 and featured Angela Foster from Stockton-on-Tees libraries talking about *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness, illustrated by Jim Kay. The book was selected for the first release on the channel as it marked the first and, to date, only time the same book has been awarded both the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals.

Press coverage

The initiative received press coverage from the BBC, *The Bookseller* and numerous other publications. Radio interviews were held and it was exciting to see the buzz of excitement caused around librarians doing what librarians do best, creating powerful connections between books and readers. Alison Brumwell, Chair of the YLG, commented:

Librarians have a unique ability to connect readers with unusual and diverse reading experiences that fire the imagination, build empathy and help develop their skills and confidence. This is a great opportunity for our profession to support the nation through this current crisis.'

Amplifying awards and initiatives

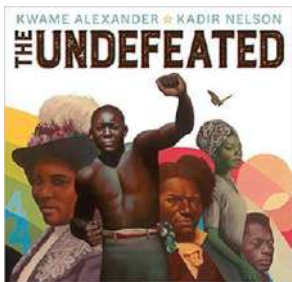
As part of the weekly release schedule, special recordings were released to help amplify award shortlists and winners. Although sterling efforts were made to maintain reading initiatives and awards through the pandemic, the opportunity to celebrate these and connect them with audiences was limited. Through offering

special themed promotions to tie in with prizes and initiatives we were able to help recognise these initiatives and to amplify them. We featured shortlists for the Klaus Flugge Prize for illustration, for the BookTrust Storytime Prize, for the Little Rebels Prize for Radical Children's Books, the STEAM Children's Book Prize and for the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals. Alongside these awards, we also partnered with Empathy Lab and paired with The Reading Agency to organise a special day of promotions in the lead up to World Book Night, culminating with a reading of *Luna Loves Library Day* by Joseph Coelho as a bedtime story.

International reach

The global pandemic saw a number of countries running internationally recognised children's book prizes connect with one another and explore ways of closer working. In the run up to the announcement of the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals, we invited librarians from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US to talk about favourite winners of their country's prize.

Lockdown loosens



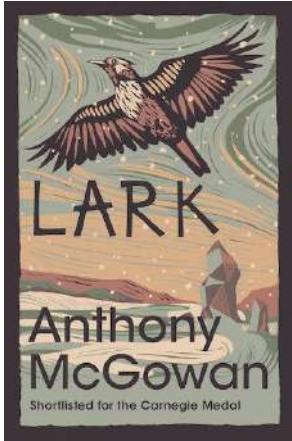
As lockdown loosened, it became clear that work pressures were making it increasingly difficult for librarians to commit to the daily releases. To try to reflect and ease some of these pressures, we moved to a weekly release structure and as part of that shift asked whether librarians could select an early years title, a middle grade recommendation and a young adult book thereby ensuring there was a good spread of suggestions for all ages across the week.

Libraries week

As life began to slowly normalise and the priorities for the public and for librarians began to change, the decision was made to draw the programme of recommendations to a close. The final broadcasts were set for Libraries Week in October 2020 and we tied up with the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) British Isles branch, inviting a number of their illustrators and authors to share their choice of book which had helped to shape their world – this could be a book which had moved them, changed the way they thought, or even one which made them smile or laugh during a challenging time. Alongside these videos which were shared on the channel, authors, illustrators and librarians were invited to share the books which helped to shape them as part of a social media campaign. During Libraries Week, the 2020 winners of the Carnegie Medal, Anthony McGowan for *Lark*, and of the Kate Greenaway Medal, Shaun Tan for *Tales from the Inner City*, were invited to record an announcement of the shadowers' choices. These were won respectively by Dean Atta for *The Black Flamingo*

and by Kadir Nelson for his illustrations in *The Undefeated* written by Kwame Alexander.

A legacy



119 episodes were released on the National Shelf Service channel and they have amassed approaching 35,000 views. The videos all remain on the channel and have been collated into playlists with lists for early years, middle grade and young adult recommendations, alongside some for the special promotions which were held. The videos can be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPUIqIJMOaieXdq-LxKDvWA/featured>.

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The Book Bus Speaks

For decades Basarat Midhat Kazim has been providing meaningful education in Pakistan to children, especially girls, from disadvantaged, social and economic backgrounds. She is responsible for the growth of the Alif Laila Book Bus Society from a children's library to an entire educational ethos. She is currently working on Children Setting Up Children's Libraries, in the hope that the map of Pakistan will be dotted with such libraries where children are the enablers and implementers. She helped set up the first camel library in Pakistan in Mand, Balochistan, and a second one in Tharparkar; the camel caravans now numbers eight. She also initiated Pakistan's first Book Bike in October 2020. After Pakistan's devastating floods this monsoon, she has initiated playful learning spaces for children in tents, some of them going to those areas that have not yet received aid.

The name chosen for me was 'Alif Laila' from Alif Laila wa-Laila, The Thousand and One Nights. They say names wield strange power and so my destiny was to be similar to that of Scheherazade, who not only kept herself alive through her gutsy innovations, and cleverly spun tales, but also transformed the mindset of a king.

The year was 1978, the month, June, when I took on the all-important task of instigating the first children's library in Pakistan. Of course, months of careful planning had been invested to make this happen. I had been seen and chosen from the Punjab Road Transport Corporation's yard where double decker buses not considered road worthy, stood quietly. But before I could have children racing up and down my decks, looking for just the right book, I needed a safety check. Was I strong enough to remain in one place and support all that excitement? The engineers who examined me declared me 100% library fit and then began a flurry of activity. Out with the seats, in with the shelves, carpets, books, mural, colour, excitement . . . children.



Book Bus.

Fortunately, I tickled the imagination of adults as well. While children happily lost themselves in the world of fantasy and fiction, adults came to explore what it was that made an ‘old double decker bus so enticing’. Granted I instigated the first children’s library in Pakistan but even in the early 1980s some schools did have libraries. Why were the children not equally drawn to those? Was it the friendly air, the welcoming environs, the sense of trust that set the Book Bus apart, they wondered? The seed for transforming libraries into joyful living spaces was germinating!

On a lovely afternoon in April 1983 a young boy from the neighbourhood brought a small television and his family’s newly acquired video cassette recorder to the upper deck and invited other friends to watch a beautiful children’s film with him. What a delightful sense of community! I was enthralled.

The year 1986 marked another milestone. Appreciative of the work a small double decker bus was doing to draw children closer to books and reading, the Government of the Punjab first declared that ‘children’s libraries modelled on the Alif Laila Book Bus should be dotted all over Pakistan’ (unfortunately that has not happened yet) and then constructed and gifted a circular building in the park where I stood, to become the Alif Laila Reference Library and Audio-Visual Centre. The idea that libraries needed to become community centres was being welcomed.



Circular building – the Alif Laila Reference Library and Audio-Visual Centre.

The Story Teller or ‘Dastangou’ came in to do what I could not. 1997 saw the birth of this library on wheels that started visiting children in their schools, taking to them books they never knew existed. In one of Dastangou’s visits to a rural school on the outskirts of Sheikhpura a girl gleefully looked through a story book and remarked, ‘Books contain lovely stories and pictures too. I always thought they contained only texts to be learnt in school’.

What gives me immense pleasure is that more and more people started viewing me as a model on the ground, something they would like to adapt for their own communities so even though the ‘Charge of the Book Bus Brigade’ did not happen, libraries and community centres started mushrooming all over the country, and, more often than not, the colour and general excitement of Alif Laila were replicated.

In 2005 a massive earthquake struck Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The cities of Bagh and Muzaffarabad were razed to the ground. Thousands of school-going children were buried under the debris of collapsed buildings. Those who survived were traumatised and hopeless. Concerned individuals wondered how to make the children smile again.

The IBBY Foundation came forward with a grant to set up a children’s library in Bagh. This library was conceived keeping the rainbow in mind and took its name ‘Dhanak’ from the rainbow. Another agency supported the setting up of Play Buses called ‘Khushi’ or ‘Joy’. These mobile book and toy libraries scattered joy where they went and many a child looked to them for smiles and laughter.



Storyteller library.

Sheherezade's Khazana or Treasure Trove were 42 libraries of 1,001 books that went out to 42 different locations in four provinces of Pakistan: Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Like Scheherazade, these libraries carried the tales of different peoples and climes to children who became wrapped up in their fascination.

The place which has been home to me for over 44 years is a small park in Main Market Gulberg, Lahore. Just opposite the park is a large mosque which also houses a madrasa, a school where young boys are trained to read and learn the Holy Quran. Some of these boys have been frequent visitors over time and stories have held a special enchantment for them. What a moment of joy it was when five madrasas in Lahore agreed it was good for their students to peep into the world of stories and said that they would welcome small libraries for their students. With sponsorship from the IBBY Yamada Fund these became a reality.

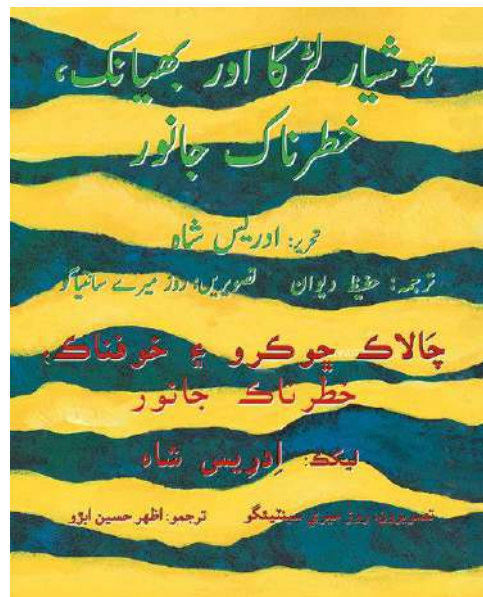
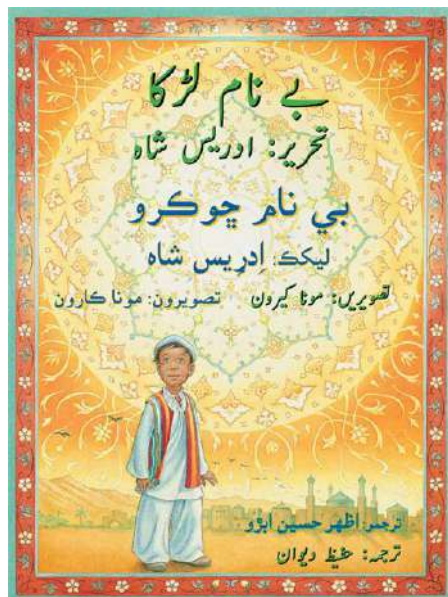
Word spread and I become a hub of activities related to books and children. One of the memories I hold dearest is the intense buzz of books coming in all day to be sorted out and distributed to 140 school libraries I helped set up in Southern Punjab.

Just five short years after massive earthquakes jolted Pakistan, the country was left reeling again. Floods, the like of which had never been seen before, washed whole communities away and made thousands of children homeless. When schools became operative again after this disaster, they needed succour for those who bore the scars of displacement and loss. The Books Build Bridges libraries, supported by IBBY friends from all over the world, found their way into a few hundred schools of the worse hit areas. These were simple, low-cost libraries that brought to children a range of stories and fables – books they read and enjoyed, books they discussed with their friends and books they held onto for dreams and hope.

When Malala Yousafzai was attacked for her commitment to education, I spoke up. I couldn't visit her school in Swat, but I sent in what support I could – parcels full of books so the students could move through their shock and terror, to find laughter, escape, and proof the world can be a better and happier place.

Believing as firmly as I do, in books as a lifeline, I knew it was important to reach children in their native tongues, in words that are as familiar as their parents' voices. Translations expand our world, but there is a deep comfort in reading stories told in words you have known as long as you have known life. I was thrilled when Hoopoe Books reached out to me to help distribute the stories of Idries Shah across Pakistan. I love these stories for they contain invaluable wisdom from our Sufi traditions, but what made the

books extra special is that they are bilingual. Told in Urdu and English, or Urdu and Sindhi, Urdu and Dari, and Urdu and Balochi, these stories will truly land in the hearts of those for whom they are intended.



Urdu – Sindhi. Cover and first page. Copyright © 2021 Hoopoe Books.

In 2011 the neighbouring town of Shekhupura was inspired to set up a library shared among a cluster of nearby government schools. A small van went around to communities, sharing the joy of books with delighted children, and rickshaws, the three-wheeled small vehicles that whizz in and out of traffic and so common in our part of the world, became mobile libraries too! They proudly took boxes of books along dirt roads and out of the way places.

I had always loved the metaphor of books as vehicles, and started thinking about how we could combine books with other forms of transport. We already had libraries in buses and rickshaws, but we added two book bikes, and, very excitingly, camel libraries! Our first book camel, Roshan in Mand, Balochistan was so hugely popular that many community-based organisations reached out to start these libraries in their areas. We now have eight camels – Raunaq, Aman, Khushi, Mashal, Chirag, Umeed and Estaal – the latest addition having been sponsored by the IBBY Yamada Fund. Each of these camels traverse their own paths in individual regions across Sindh and Balochistan. Though separated by space, they are caravan in spirit, journeying towards a brighter, more literate future.

Mine has been an eventful life and while the wisdom of the East remains with me let me say what I have found worthwhile. Much as I have loved having children run to and from me with treasures they have found and stories they can build memories upon, I have revelled in the knowledge that I have been an idea, a harbinger of change.

Fortunately, the Book Bus has become a symbol in Pakistan for the rich colour and excitement books bring to the barren landscape some of our children inhabit. Libraries and reading programmes are now being developed all over the country, debates and discussions are taking place on how books transform thought and lives. To celebrate 65 years of IBBY I sent out a call for books, and so many people responded. Children, schools, publishers and friends brought in enough books that we were able to assemble 650 box libraries, each containing 100 books, for schools and organisations across Pakistan, in places where reading material for children was greatly needed. This project continues to date, and the change it brought about in attitudes is still being spoken about.

The Book Bus became successful because it believed in children. Operating consistently on a shoe-string budget, it was a risk taker, opening its doors to children, and trusting them all, irrespective of where they came from – glorious mansions or hovels in slums. No more looking at books as the far away creatures that remained on shelves gathering dust and mould. They were alive and belonged in the hands of children.

This trust we placed in children not only minimised book loss, it saw us through financially hard times with children donating their entire book collections to the library. The mutual affection between the bus and its visitors extended to a collaboration between the children themselves, as they often read to and with each other. Children understood the power books wield and became active in rallies for reading, creating posters, carrying messages and demonstrating to all and sundry that books are vital.

Can I now rest on my laurels and call it a day? Not yet. Not until every child in Pakistan is reading!

Websites

<https://www.aliflaila.org.pk>

<https://www.aliflaila.org.pk/libraries>

Reading Promotion in Flanders

Eva Devos (1974, Belgium) studied Comparative Cultural Studies, Communication Studies and Library Science. She started working for the National Centre of Children's Literature in 2000 and has worked since 2006 for the main Flemish reading promotion organisation, Iedereen Leest (Everybody Reads). There she is the librarian of a professional library on children's literature and reading promotion, and she coordinates Boekenzoeker, a reading advice website for children and youngsters. In 2002 she joined the Flemish branch of IBBY Belgium and since 2015 she has been its president.

Beyond Campaigns and Activities

Reading promotion in Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium, is done by many different people and organisations, big and small. The main reading promotion organisation is, however, Iedereen Leest (Everybody Reads), (<https://www.iedereenleest.be/>). It is a non-profit organisation founded by the Flemish government and is funded by Flanders Literature (<https://www.flandersliterature.be/>).

IBBY Flanders is a part of Iedereen Leest, and forms together with IBBY Belgique francophone the Belgian IBBY Section.

Iedereen Leest connects people and organisations in order to create (local) networks and communities that focus on improving the reading engagement of children, young people and adults in Flanders and Brussels.

In doing so, Iedereen Leest strives to inspire people to read and to read more. It wants to make reading accessible for everybody because being able to read is of absolute importance for personal development and participation in society. Iedereen Leest highlights the crucial role of reading for pleasure in the literacy discourse: it is the key to an inspiring reading climate and a broad reading culture.

It also coordinates campaigns, such as Children's Book Month (<https://www.jeugdboekenmaand.be/>), Read Aloud Week (<https://www.voorleesweek.be/>), Bookstart (<https://www.boekstart.be/>) and the Children's Jury (<https://www.deleesjury.be/>) to make reading more visible, and develops programmes for libraries, schools, child-care centres and other organisations to share methods and ideas to enhance reading engagement.

While enthusiastic and committed teachers, librarians, nursery attendants and parents are, of course, the best promoters of

reading, one can imagine, these intermediaries do need (and deserve!) all the support they can get in doing what they do.

I would like to introduce in this article two initiatives of Iedereen Leest that use digital resources to support the crucial work of the intermediaries in two quite different ways.

Boekenzoeker (Book Searcher)

When Iedereen Leest talks about reading pleasure, it is not talking about something non-committal. On the contrary. Reading pleasure strengthens motivation – from liking to wanting to read – so that young people will read more and better. Investing in the reading skills and (literary) competences of young people strengthens their position in today's knowledge society.

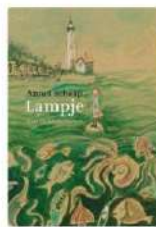
But more often than not, children and young adults find it difficult to find books that suit them. And reading a book that doesn't suit you is almost guaranteed to create frustration and reluctance.

To tackle this issue, the predecessor of Iedereen Leest started, back in 2004 (www.boekenzoeker.be). In 2020 the website underwent a major glow up, both structurally and visually, with illustrations by Belgian illustrator Eleni Debo.

Boekenzoeker is a curated database and offers reading tips for everyone from 0 to 18 years of age. Children and young people can discover books themselves by choosing categories and themes that interest them. The user can click on age, type (novels, non-fiction, photo books, poems, short stories, etc.), theme (history, science fiction, mourning and loss, nature and environment, sports, health and body, etc.), volume and extra (easy reads, books made into movies, true stories, etc.). Teachers and parents can also consult the site to find, among other things, read-aloud books.

Boekenzoeker is not a review website, nor is it an exhaustive database of all published books. You will find a wide selection of enthusiastic book recommendations, carefully compiled and annotated, at the reading level of the corresponding book and its assumed readers, by an expert editorial team.

While frequent and avid readers are Boekenzoeker's most regular users, beginning and reluctant readers are also welcome to use the website. For children and young people with reading difficulties (such as dyslexia or a visual impairment) and foreign-language newcomers there is a category 'easy reads' and customised booklists. You will also find links to audio books when available, wordless picture books, picture books for older children, graphic novels, comics, etc. There is really something for everyone.



Tet op jouw leeslijst

★★★★★
3 stemmen
Wat is jouw mening?
Quaerdo | 2017 | 224 pagina's
ISBN: 9789045120379
Deel dit op: [f](#) [t](#) [p](#) [e](#)
Dit boek staat in de lijsten
Scribnor debuten
Popsboeken
Jeugdboekenmaand 2022

Lampje

Annet Schary

[Leesboeken](#) [Voorleesboeken](#) [Familie](#) [Fantasie en Fantasy](#) [Fictie en denken](#) [Gewoelens](#) [Scaarste en avontuur](#) [Reisverhalen](#) [Boeken](#) [Oorspronkelijk Nederlandstalig](#) [10 tot 12 jaar](#)

Emilia, bijgenaamd Lampje, is de dochter van een vuurtorenwachter. Iedere avond beklimt ze de eenenzestig treden om het licht aan te steken. Ze moet wel want haar vader is diepbedroefd om zijn gestorven vrouw. Het meisje houdt zich sterk, totdat op een stormachtige avond de lucifers op zijn een kostbaar schip vliegt. Lampje wordt als huishoudster naar het monsterlijke Zwarte Huis gestuurd. Daar ontdekt ze dat ze tot meer in staat is dan ze ooit had gedacht.

Lampje is niet alleen een sprookjesachtig zeeavontuur. Het is ook het aangrijpende verhaal van een dooper meisje dat ondanks alles in zichzelf en het bijna onmogelijke blijft geloven. Lampje is een dik boek. Maar de schrijfster trekt je zo het verhaal in. Het lijkt net alsof je een film aan het kijken bent! Lampje schittert.

LEES een stukje

Hallo, hallo vriendin, ben je weer terug, kom je nu echt spariën?
Kind kind vuurtorenlind.

Ben je zo sterk als de zee, als de wind?

Joi! Joi! Lampje boven de storm uit. Toevallig wel! Dit kind wel!

Ze zwoegt van steen naar steen. Het oorspronkelijke water klokt om haar heen, komt steeds hoger, bijt met zijn kou in haar kuit, naar knieën, haar bovenbenen. Haar hart klopt als een razende.

BELUISTER een stukje

▶ 0:00 / 2:45

Nood aan ondersteuning bij het lezen? Een Daisy-luisterversie van dit boek vind je bij [Luisterpuntbibliotheek](#).

🔍 Postcode van je gemeente

🔍 Staat dit boek in jouw bib?

LEES ook deze boeken



Het geheim van het Nachtegaalbos
Lucy Strange
Aldo van Bavelen-Bandais
11 tot 13 jaar



Rania de roversdochter
Astrid Lindgron
Ron Wilbrand (ill.)
Ema Verschuer (vert.)
9 tot 11 jaar



De geheime tain
Frances H. Burnett
Linde Foss (ill.)
Imme Droschewitz
9 tot 11 jaar



Het mysterieuze horloge van Walker & Dawn
Dwayne McDunnott
Marco Simo (vert.)
Pietar van der Drift (vert.)
10 tot 12 jaar



Lepel en Lijder
Margrijn Hof
10 en 11 jaar



Achtste-groepers hullen niet
Jacques Viersma
Annet Schary (ill.)
10 en 11 jaar

Wat andere LEZERS vinden

Score van de lezers
★★★★★
9 stemmen
4.3/5

Anoniem
12/05/2022
★★★★★

Het is een superleuk boek. Als je begint met lezen, kom je niet meer uit je boek omdat je zo mee genomen wordt. Echt een aanrader.

Wat vind JIJ?

Naam

Je naam

Aantal sterren
★★★★★

Jouw mening

Book recommendations.

While the website was deliberately kept as simple as possible, with a rather minimalistic structure and style, content-wise it is quite rich. It contains about 5,000 book tips (and an extra 2,500 'sleeping' tips, that can be found only if searched for directly) and every year another 500 recently published books are added.

The recommendations themselves are also chock full of information: not only the predictable bibliographical information and a short description of the content written specifically for Boekenzoeker, but also a short excerpt from the book – this quote illustrates the atmosphere and style. If the book is available in the Flemish library serving persons with print disabilities, you can also listen to a short audio fragment. If you live in Flanders or Brussels, entering your postal code will enable you to check instantly whether the book is present in the catalogue of your local library.



Laat je INSPIREREN door onze lijsten



- Populair**
- Top 10 2022
 - Top 10 2021
 - Top 10 2020
 - Top 10 2019
- [Alle lijsten](#)

- Actuele onderwerpen**
- Leesjaar 2022-2023
 - TikTok boeken
 - Hoebe!
 - Reclame

- Ontdek**
- Boeken voor aankijkers
 - Meertalige boeken
 - Boeken voor OIKAN
 - De leukste Boekstart-boeken

Bestemming: Bib!

Ga je mee op boekenreis deze zomer? Dat kan met **Bestemming: bib!** Haal een reispas met vier leesstops of in een deelneemende bib. Voor elke bestemming lees je een boek en krijg je een stempel. Wie aan het einde van de zomer een volle reispas inleverd, maakt kans op een prijs!

Inspiratie voor de vier bestemmingen vind je in deze boekenlijsten. Veel leesplezier!

- [Naar de zon](#)
[Naar het museum](#)
[Onderweg](#)
[Op onderzoek](#)



Opening page of Boekenzoeker.be.

Furthermore, tags show in which search categories the book belongs. Clicking on a tag will immediately get you a number of related book tips. If a book is included in a curated list on Boekenzoeker, like 'Power girls', 'Tik Tok books', 'Refugees' or 'Boy, girl, X', it will also be shown. Clicking through will allow you to discover the other books in that list.

Below each book tip, you will also be offered extra reading tips. These are chosen mostly by our editorial team because they have a similar style, theme, atmosphere or author.

It is possible to give 1 to 5 stars to express your (lack of) appreciation and also to leave a comment. Comments will be published only after approval by the moderator of the site to avoid hurtful or irrelevant comments.

The book recommendations can be shared with others via Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest or email, and the site allows users to add the books they want to read to a printable book list. This can also be saved as a PDF or sent by email.

Boekenzoeker is a very labour-intensive program, but it is also quite unique in its purpose and scale – at least in the Dutch speaking area of the world. And that seems to be appreciated, since in 2021 we had 970,000 unique visitors. In that same year, Iedereen Leest started with Boekenzoeker webinars: in eight webinars per school year, Iedereen Leest staff members introduce a varied selection of recent children's books to help teachers, librarians and parents choose books for children and young adults. These webinars will become a yearly tradition.



Promotional poster.

Online learning trajectory for multilingual libraries for babies and toddlers

Throughout its discourse, Iedereen Leest advocates a positive attitude towards multilingualism, for example in libraries. But during the implementation of Boekstart, Iedereen Leest realised that to be a multilingual-friendly library, it is not enough to buy a few books in different languages or to organise an occasional multilingual reading hour. Libraries need to adopt a real multilingualism policy – and they need support to do that. While Iedereen Leest does have the knowledge to guide libraries in this quest, it does not have the (wo)manpower to coach each individual library in Flanders or Brussels. We found a solution in the digital world.

In 2019 Iedereen Leest joined Pro-M, a study conducted by KU Leuven, UGent and VUB, the three most important universities in Flanders, on multilingualism in early childhood. As part of this study, Iedereen Leest developed an orientation program for libraries and their staff on multilingualism, parental involvement and diversity in the book offer. This trajectory started from the existing practices of the three participating pilot libraries and ultimately resulted in an online learning path for library professionals on how to build a multilingual library for babies and toddlers that was launched in July 2022.



Babies in boxes. Copyright © 2022 Bibliotheek Heist-op-den-Berg.

The online learning trajectory contains all kinds of information on growing up multilingual and the role the library can play in this, but it also zooms in on some crucial building blocks for a successful policy on multilingualism, such as how to build a multilingual collection for very young children, how to improve the accessibility

of your library for (multilingual) families and a range of possible initiatives to stimulate reading pleasure among babies and toddlers who grow up multilingual.

Furthermore, the online learning trajectory talks about six key factors for success: commitment, local collaborations, a structural policy, communication & digitalisation and professionalisation.

A step-by-step plan helps libraries reflect on their attitude towards multilingualism and develop a sustainable action plan towards a multilingual-friendly library.

In this way, each library can develop a comprehensive approach to growing up multilingual – always based on the local current situation.

A first and very important step is the *preparation*. In this phase libraries should collect as much local demographic and socioeconomic data as possible: what languages are spoken in the municipality, what is their distribution by age group, what do the statistics say about the poverty rate? etc. The online learning trajectory of course points the way to where this government data can be found.

This needs to be done not only to get an idea of the local situation, but also to be able to identify the needs when choosing priority actions.

The second step is a *brainstorming session*, in which the staff team must determine how the library already responds to the multilingual context, especially at preschool age. In addition, the brainstorming helps to identify local barriers and needs.

The brainstorming will be organised with the whole library team in a practical workshop. All aspects of the library's operation should be covered (collection, communication, building, etc.).

The result of this brainstorm is a list of possible actions (activities, adjustments, training, etc.), distinguishing between the existing actions that can be optimised and new actions.

Since it won't be possible, nor would it be necessary, to implement all the ideas that came up during the brainstorm, step 3 is *identifying priorities* through a priority matrix, and through that selecting a couple of actions that fit the library's vision and mission.

Then the real work can begin: step 4 is *establishing an action plan*. Guiding questions like why do we want to do this, who is the target group, which actors are involved in this action, and does the staff need additional training and help to formulate the action plan?

The next step is *drawing up a timetable*, to decide when which action is going to take place, after which the *concrete implementation* of all the selected actions takes place. That, however, isn't the end. *Adjusting and evaluating* is the last step in the whole process. For this, it is necessary to think about which data have to be monitored and how that can be done, for example a satisfaction survey, lending figures, etc. Adjusting where needed is an important part of success.

All this is explained in detail in the e-learning trajectory, in short videos and informative texts – often with a link to more information both offline and online – and best practices. There are self-corrected quizzes, checklists, templates and to do lists.

Iedereen Leest recommends to allocate at least six days, spread out over at least six weeks, to complete the course. In addition, there should be enough time to reflect and prepare assignments.

Libraries are encouraged to tackle this learning process as a team – at least for certain parts of the process. Two staff members of Iedereen Leest, Geetha and Simon, function as digital coaches, who can be contacted during the course when participating libraries have questions – and who are also open for feedback.

With this online learning pathway – the first but not the last online learning course that Iedereen Leest is launching – we want to encourage many libraries to create a welcoming place for multilingual parents and children. We hope to be able to present excellent results in the foreseeable future.

Doorstep Library

Henrietta (Henri) Yoxall is Head of Marketing and Communications at Doorstep Library. She is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, as well as being a qualified secondary school English teacher. She is passionate about ensuring every child's right to education and learning and has worked within the charity sector with a focus on children's education and skills for many years. Previous roles include Director of Marketing and Communications at Booktrust and Director of Marketing and Communications at the Institute of Imagination.

Words Take You Places

Are you sitting comfortably – good – then let's begin ...

Doorstep Library is a community-focused charity dedicated to bringing the magic of books and the joy of reading directly into the homes of children who need our support. With one in four 11 year olds leaving primary school unable to read or write properly, we recruit and train home and online reading volunteers to go into some of the most disadvantaged areas of London, and beyond, to help introduce young children (aged 0-11 years) to the pleasure and benefits of reading.



Enjoying a picture book. Copyright © 2022 Doorstep Library.

The charity began as a pilot project back in 2008, coordinated by the anti-poverty NGO ATD Fourth World, run by Agnes Paroissien and funded by Hammersmith and Fulham Council. In October 2010 Doorstep Library was officially born with just one project and a small team of reading volunteers. Fourteen years later we now run 20 reading projects, across five London boroughs. We work with over 145 reading volunteers who visit 300 families and share books and stories with over 550 children. We also have a long waiting list of families who need our support and are working hard to train up more reading volunteers to help us meet the ever-growing demand.

Why we're needed

Our work is concentrated in areas where we know opportunities for reading are restricted – there may be limited access to books in the home, or language barriers may be preventing parents or caregivers from being able to provide additional reading support to the children in their care.



Helping a beginner reader. Copyright © 2022 Paul Yule.

By the final year of compulsory schooling, the reading skills of children from disadvantaged backgrounds are on average almost three years behind those from the most affluent homes. We also know that the pandemic accelerated that educational inequality at an alarming rate – in the summer of 2020, only 43% of disadvantaged pupils in primary school had met age-related expectations for reading, compared to 63% of their more affluent peers ([Juniper Education, 2021](#)).

Over and above the socioeconomic circumstance of the parents or caregivers, strong predictors of children's secondary school achievement are seen in home learning environments where the parenting behaviours encourage their natural curiosity. In other words, parental involvement has a marked effect on a child's literacy. In order to help a child discover the world of reading, they need inspiring stories, interaction and encouragement from a supportive caregiver, and a positive home learning environment. Whilst these may seem like simple requirements for many, almost 25% of 11 year olds in the UK's poorest families have fewer than ten books in their home ([National Literacy Trust, Children's Book Ownership, 2019](#)), and 28% of parents say they are too busy to share a bedtime story with their children ([Booktrust, 2019](#)).

At Doorstep Library we work to 'level the playing field' for children, who are increasingly overtaken academically by their more affluent

peers, by encouraging whole families to read together for pleasure from a young age. Unlike other literacy interventions supporting children in school or community settings, our simple but effective model provides weekly in-the-home support to introduce reading to the entire family.



Following the illustrations. Copyright © 2022 Paul Yule.

We ensure children have access to books and equip them with essential literacy skills, a love of reading, and the confidence to thrive at home, at school, and in their future lives.

‘The only way I learnt how to read was because of Doorstep Library. It makes me really happy that Doorstep Library exists. I would never like reading, now I do. Thank you!’ (Doorstep Library child)

What we do

We recruit and train reading volunteers to go directly into homes in some of London’s most disadvantaged areas, to bring the magic and joy of reading to children and families there. Equipped with two little reading stools and a backpack brimming with books, our volunteers are right there ready to help and inspire. Our unique home-based service, whether in person or online, enables us to find the most appropriate books for every child we visit and build a relationship with the whole family. We use books to fuel children’s natural love of stories, fire their imaginations and encourage their appreciation of reading.

Our goal is to help children develop the self-confidence and essential skills they need to access all the opportunities that will come their way in life. We also empower parents/carers to create and maintain a supportive environment by signposting them to local services and community support. Our projects not only improve literacy but also increase family wellbeing and bonding.



Reading together. Copyright © 2022 Paul Yule.

Alongside our traditional in-person reading sessions we now have an Online Reading Corner. This enables us to run online reading visits for families who are referred to us, through schools, children's centres or other organisations, ensuring that we can meet the needs of even more families. In this scenario families are gifted books through the post and share e-books with the volunteers during the visit. This new service has enabled us to reach out to families, even during the pandemic, bringing the magic of books and reading directly into homes and helping those children who are most in need.

Our volunteers

Our volunteers are incredibly special and we couldn't do what we do without them. Our volunteers go out in pairs, or meet online, for one night a week during term time. In this way they get to know the families they visit. Whatever the motivation for volunteering, our volunteers all tell us that one of the main reasons they love volunteering with us is because of the relationships they build with the families. With the range of families each volunteer sees weekly, no two visits are ever the same. In one visit they might be playing peek-a-boo and reading touch-and-feel books with a two year old or doing their best scary dinosaur voice. Whereas in another visit, they could be helping a nine-year-old child to build their confidence reading aloud and discussing what the story is about.

Being a Doorstep Library Reading Volunteer doesn't just mean you are bringing books into someone's life. You are actually bringing knowledge of distant planets and faraway galaxies. You are inviting wizards and witches and tigers to tea, and you are creating magical moments of bonding between children and their parents as they share a story or two before bedtime. As a Doorstep Library Volunteer, you are there to show the fun that

can be had from reading. You don't have to give tests or assess progress. It's all about the enjoyment of seeing where words will take the children you visit. (Doorstep Library Volunteer)

Doorstep Library Reading Volunteers also work to empower and equip parents with the skills they need to encourage their children to enjoy reading for pleasure in the home. Volunteers leave books behind for families to share in between visits, inspiring the whole family to spend time reading together.

In many cases our volunteers befriend the families and are warmly welcomed into their lives. They are there to lend a listening ear, to offer support, to have a friendly chat with parents and caregivers.



A volunteer equipped with two reading stools and a backpack of books, visiting a home. Copyright © 2022 Doorstep Library.

Having reached out and established a trusted link with the family, Doorstep Library is able to help families form bonds with the wider community through our signposting of local services. Books and reading form the basis of a contract of trust – it gives us a valuable platform to help fill in social gaps and forge community bonds that might otherwise be lost. Of course volunteering locally is also a huge benefit to the volunteers themselves and we know that 98% of them say they feel more connected to their local community.

At Doorstep Library we don't just bring books and share stories, we also encourage family bonding and community engagement. We aren't there for a quick fix. We visit families for as long as we're needed and that's how we know we're creating change that will last a lifetime. (Katie Bareham, Doorstep Library CEO)

What works best

At Doorstep Library we believe in children having fun. Children who read for pleasure in the home and families that share reading together, are proven to have better mental health and general

wellbeing. We also know that books can help children to process emotions and to identify with the world around them.

We provide a broad range of diverse titles, featuring characters from a variety of backgrounds and situations, for volunteers to choose from. We know that reading books with identifiable characters helps to create empathy and foster aspiration. Children become more aware of the richness and vastness of the world, which opens their eyes to other cultures, backgrounds and life experiences.

We often get feedback from our volunteers about children who are delighted to see characters that resemble them:

‘That hair’s like my hair!’ Aryam is a reluctant reader, but books with characters that resemble her never fail to spark interest. We continue to search for books that will elicit those wonderful words from her . . . ‘That looks like me!’ (Doorstep Library Volunteer)

To support this need for diversity and stories children can relate to, we also write blogs and produce lists of book recommendations on varying topics including:

- [Talking to children about conflict and war](#)
- [Mental Health Awareness Week](#)
- [Greater Diversity in Children’s Books is Needed](#)

For all of us at Doorstep Library we believe that words really do take you places and that our interaction with every child is the start of a journey. We know our impact is long lasting and, for us, the ‘happy ever after’ is when we know the power of literacy and the joy of reading are helping a child change their own story for good.

Every story shared is a story changed.

Further Information:

To find out more about Doorstep Library’s work, see: doorsteplibrary.org.uk.

We currently have a long waiting list of families who are desperate for a visit from our reading volunteers, either in person or online- if you are interested in joining our volunteer team, see: volunteer.doorsteplibrary.org.uk.

Read with Me

Zohreh Ghaeni is a Children's literature expert, translator, lecturer, researcher and historian. She is the co-writer of the ten-volume research book on the History of Children's Literature in Iran. She founded Read with Me, a reading promotion programme in Iran for children in deprived areas of the country and children in crisis. Currently she is the director of the Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature in Iran, heading the Historical Childhood Studies in Iran research and leading the Read with Me project.

A Conversation with Zohrah Ghaeni

Just briefly how did Read with Me begin? What was your inspiration? What are the aims and practice?

Reading literature with the aim of intellectual, emotional and social development of children is not an integral part of the Iranian education system. This problem is bolder in deprived communities, where children live in poverty, have to work and often their rights are violated.



A mother-child workshop at Koosha Kids House. Copyright © 2022 Read with Me.

In the deprived regions of Iran, where in the border villages and cities most of the families are poor and unemployed, many of them are involved in drug trafficking and their children experience neglect, abuse and violence. These children need much more than access to books.

They need to be read to and share quality books, they need to speak about their stories and their lives, they need to be able to construct a fantasy world, they need to be healed of their injuries through books, they need to be prepared to face big and serious problems.

Based on this reality, the Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature in Iran (IRHCLI) developed the Read with Me project aiming to make a meaningful change in the lives of deprived children through books and reading.

About 15 years ago we designed and implemented Read with Me as a reading promotion to promote reading for/with disadvantaged children who are generally at risk.



Shokoofan House of Children which is located in a marginal part of Tehran where kiln workers live with their families. Copyright © 2022 Read with Me.

As the project was designed to be implementable for groups of children of different ages and in all environments, Read with Me was carried out in locations as diverse as preschools located in remote villages, centres for working children in cities, nurseries, orphanages, hospitals, children affected by earthquakes and even in a factory for the family members and children with no ID card who are living mostly in Sistan and Balouchestan Province.

By now, about several hundred children and 1000s of teachers/tutors in 25 provinces have joined this project.

You mention the history of writing for young people and children in Iran – is this a very contemporary movement? Or is it something evident in the past? There are some wonderful stories coming from Iran – I think of the Shahnameh in particular.

More than 20 years ago (in 2000) we established the IRHCL, which is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation. The institute's primary goal was to explore the history of Iran's children's literature and childhood studies. Hence, it has published the ten-volume researched books on the history of children's literature of Iran consisting of information about children's literature from ancient

Persia to the Islamic Revolution era. They compile some facts on the history of children's literature of Iran and the historical development of the children's culture and education in different periods (<https://koodaki.org/en/content/history-children%E2%80%99s-literature>).

In setting up this project I know you were reaching out to communities that through circumstances (poverty, lack of access to education) had no access to books or reading. How did you identify or select a community to work with?



Red Cross first aid training with members of the Read with Me library. Zalan village Kermanshah. Copyright © 2022 Read with Me.

The Read with Me volunteer promoters from different provinces around Iran are the most reliable and informed group who can identify the eligible centres or communities to join this project. They introduce the centres to the project-manager team. After surveying the applications, the centres or communities would be selected.

Could you describe your experience with one – or even two such communities? How you approached them? Did you have to create different approaches to meet specific needs?

As I have already mentioned, Read with Me works in different fields. One of the first and important fields is collaborating with educational institutions such as schools and kindergartens. The Read with Me project is implemented in the schools and educational centres of many parts of Iran, mostly in deprived provinces of the country such as South Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchestan, Lorestan and Khouzestan as well as some schools in Afghanistan.

In Sistan and Baluchestan Read with Me has focused on basic literacy, and reading and writing skills improvement of children, especially bilingual children in this deprived province, through literature and book reading since 2015. The experts have evaluated the effects of the method on basic literacy improvement during this period as 'amazing'. They believe that the project has improved reading and writing skills and expanded the vocabulary knowledge

along with bringing joy and self-confidence to bilingual and nomadic students in the region.



Preschool children of a Nedaye-Mandgar Empowerment Institute in the southern part of Tehran. This centre supports low-income Iranian and Afghan families. Read with Me is implemented in this centre for preschoolers and also has workshops for mother–baby and toddler groups. Copyright © 2022 Read with Me.

Read with Me started the project in **South Khorasan province** with 800 preschoolers in 26 villages. The villages were located in remote areas close to the Iran–Afghanistan border. Since 2012 about 7,000 of 5–12-year-old children in preschools and schools have benefited from the quality books provided by the project. South Khorasan is another successful experience of the Read with Me project, where, by the efforts of compassionate and creative teachers, vast long-lasting effects on children’s learning process have been observed, especially among the children in preschools.

Do you have any anecdotes that you can relate that illustrate the impact this amazing programme has had on individuals or communities?

Seven years ago, children from the Ameneh Nursery (an orphanage centre) were visiting the Children’s Cultural Museum in Tehran, their silence and inability to express their needs and feelings sounded a serious and alarming problem. They had poor oral skills and a limited range of vocabulary. In nurseries, such as Ameneh, systematic neglect, lack of language communication and interaction has cast an overwhelming shadow on the children. Due to these deprivations, they exhibit odd behaviours that are interpreted as psychosomatic disorders, therefore, the Read with Me experts and staff decided to implement their reading program and activities in Ameneh Nursery.



Reading with families at a Read with Me library. Zalan village, Kermanshah.
Copyright © 2022 Read with Me.

The psychologist of this centre believes:

Now, after a few years of implementing this project, children are aware of their own emotions and express them appropriately. Before the reading programme, older children bullied and beat younger ones, banging heads was frequent, repeated bedwetting was prevalent, but now they talk and bring up their problems. Their stress and anxiety have decreased, they appreciate feelings and emotions and when a caregiver upsets them, they complain – all these traits are incomparable to the past.

(<https://khanak.org/en/2021/content/seven-years-with-ameneh-nursery/>)



The UK section of the International Board on Books for Young People

The next issue of *IBBYLink* is *IBBYLink* 64, Spring 2023 and will be on voices from the Arabic world.

Articles on other subjects are also welcomed. Contributions to Ferelith Hordon: fhordon@btinternet.com.

If you are interested in becoming a reviewer for *IBBYLink*, contact Lina Iordanaki: reviewseditor@ibby.org.uk. New reviewers are always welcome.

Titles for Review

Publishers and others with books to be reviewed in *IBBYLink* (books on children's literature) or to be reviewed on the IBBY UK website (books for children and young adults) should send them to Lina Iordanaki at University College London, Institute of Education (Room 650, Bay 1), 20 Bedford Way, Bloomsbury, London WC1H 0AL. Pdfs are welcome and should be sent to reviewseditor@ibby.org.uk.

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