

## Join the Ranks of Judges

For a lover of children's books – and who joins the CBCA who is not? – there is nothing more exciting than coming home to find a pile of new books waiting to be read.

This is the (mostly) happy fate of a judge for the CBCA's renowned Book of the Year Awards and I urge you to apply to become one of their number.

Yes, the job requires a two-year commitment and a lot of reading; it is ideally suited to a librarian, teacher, bookseller, parent/grandparent – someone who has a resource-group of children to hand – but this is not a necessity (indeed if your 'control group' is one or two children with very individual tastes this can be a drawback) and with the internet there are ever increasing ways to tap into multiple people's tastes and opinions and their reasons for holding them.

It is good to remember that the job is a collaborative one: there are three judges for each section and the comprehensive online set up of the awards makes it easy to exchange comments and opinions; you are not making your judgements alone and they are not set in stone: there will be opportunities to sit on the fence for a while if you are undecided about the merits of a book even after discussion with your fellow judges, or to try and change your colleagues' opinion of an entry if you strongly disagree with it, and there are opportunities up to quite late in the judging process to change your initial yes/no/maybe vote.

It is also important to remember that you don't have to read every book from cover to cover. Conscientious judges have a tendency to say "it might get better later on" and to feel they have to read on in case it does. No child is going to say that. If the first 20 pages are boring, confusing, irritating, or poorly written, however worthy or well-intentioned it may be, put the book down and move on.

For anyone who enjoys or works with young people and/or their books the judging process is an interesting and ultimately enjoyable one. Every state needs representatives among the judges of these venerable and highly influential awards. Apply to be one of ours!

Katharine England

CBCA(SA) Judge 1993/4, 2017/18, Eve Pownall 1997/8