

40 Years On

MILESTONES AT THE CCBC

Forty years have gone by since the Canadian Children's Book Centre opened its doors (and five years of preparation went into getting to that inaugural year in 1976). The intent of the planners was to set up an organization that would represent *all* facets of the children's book world, bringing together librarians, authors, booksellers, publishers and others in a broadly based group.

The past four decades have seen the growth and development of remarkable publishing houses, the ongoing careers of many superb writers and illustrators, the enthusiastic rise in and grinding challenges to fine bookstores supporting Canadian children's books, the building of children's magazines, the establishment of important awards, excellent family literacy programs and highly successful festivals — and the continued work of the Canadian Children's Book Centre.

Here are some of the milestones in the history of the CCBC and in the world of Canadian children's books.

1972–75

- Irma McDonough (later Irma McDonough Milnes) in a brief to the Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing, argues for the establishment of a Canadian children's book centre. Prof. Sheila Egoff, who prepared the background paper for the commission, makes a similar recommendation. Continued discussion over the next few years results in a pilot project, developed by the Book and Periodical Development Council's Task Force on Children's Literature, chaired by Irma McDonough.

1976

- During the International Year of the Child, the Centre's founders begin the six-month pilot project that establishes the Children's Book Centre. Irma McDonough is the project director.



1977

- Phyllis Yaffe, co-founder of *Emergency Librarian*, is hired as Executive Director.
- First *Our Choice* appears (12 pages; 50 new and classic titles); first Children's Book Festival (renamed Children's Book Week in 1988) with poster by Frank Newfeld; 12 authors tour, each giving four readings.
- The first Children's Literature Roundtable is established in Edmonton.



The first *Our Choice* Committee: Marg Evans, Shirley Coulter, Chuck Davis, Judy Sarick, Bob Homme (*The Friendly Giant!*), Phyllis Yaffe

1978

- There are 12 children's bookstores in Canada; the success of *OWL* magazine prompts the launching of *Chickadee* (now *chickaDEE*).



Dennis Lee on tour for the 1978 Children's Book Festival.

1979

- The Centre moves to 229 College Street; membership stands at 140.

1980

- 132 children's books are published in Canada this year.
- Phyllis Yaffe leaves to become Executive Director of the Association of Canadian Publishers and is replaced by Ellen Montzambert.
- The new *Our Choice* features 122 new titles and 24 classics (the classics are eventually given their own publication, *Too Good to Miss*).

1981

- Virginia Davis becomes the new Executive Director.
- 14 authors tour during Children's Book Festival; *Our Choice* has 163 titles.



CCBC leaders in the early 1980s: Annabel Slight, Irma McDonough Milnes, Virginia Davis, Leona Trainer, Claude Aubry, Ken Roberts, Judy Sarick

1982

- Toronto's Harbourfront Gallery hosts Images of Childhood, an exhibit of works by 17 children's book illustrators.
- After a survey shows that of the 124 titles in the 1979 *Our Choice*, teachers in Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan had heard of only 35 and used only nine in the classroom, the 1982 Book Festival kit includes an activity guide for teachers on using Canadian books.



1983

- 17 authors tour for Children's Book Festival.



Kathy Lowinger

1984

- Kathy Lowinger replaces Virginia Davis; the Centre hires its first regional officers: Marg Stephen (Alberta); Lynda Newson (Saskatchewan) and Jean Swift (Manitoba). Anne Connor Brimer becomes the first Atlantic regional officer in 1986.
- Annick Press is chosen Publisher of the Year by the Canadian Booksellers Association, the first children's publisher to win this award.

1984/85

- The CCBC issues its first seven audio-visual Meet the Author kits.

1985

- The Children's Book Festival theme is the Art of the Illustrator; although touring grants have funded only authors' travels, extra funding is found to send 10 illustrators on tour as well as the 17 featured writers.

1986/87

- An author exchange with the UK brings four British writers to Canada in the fall (Jan Mark, John Rowe Townsend, Jill Paton Walsh and Philippa Pearce) and sends four Canadians to England in the new year (Kathy Stinson, Jean Little, Monica Hughes and Camilla Gryski).

1987

- The Centre adds "Canadian" to its name to more clearly reflect its purpose.
- There are 11 Children's Literature Roundtables across the country.
- Science writers join this year's Children's Book Festival tour, for a total of 25 authors and author / illustrators. The government of Manitoba proclaims Children's Book Festival Week throughout the province.

1988

- Barbara Reid wins the UNICEF-Ezra Jack Keats International Award for her work on *The New Baby Calf* and *Have You Seen Birds?* She is the second winner of the biennial award established in 1984. Two years later, Jan Thornhill wins the award for *The Wildlife 123*.

- The first Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People goes to Carol Matas for *Lisa*.

1989

- Irma McDonough Milnes donates 300 books from her collection to the Centre's library.
- Kathy Lowinger leaves to start the children's publishing program at Lester & Orpen Dennys; Debbie Rogosin becomes Executive Director.
- The first Roundtable Information Book Award goes to Terence Dickinson for *Exploring the Night Sky*.



Opening Day at 35 Spadina Road, 1990: CCBC President Nicholas Hoare, Governor General Ray Hnatyshyn, Debbie Rogosin

1990

- The "Canada at Bologna" exhibit (displayed at the Bologna Book Fair) features 118 pieces of art by 43 Canadian children's illustrators.
- Governor General Ray Hnatyshyn officially opens the CCBC's new home at 35 Spadina Road.
- 24 authors and illustrators tour during Book Week, giving over 400 readings.



1991 CBA Children's Book Gala at 35 Spadina Road: author Tololwa Mollel, illustrator Barbara Spurrill and editor Kathryn Cole

1991

- The first Manitoba Young Readers' Choice Award goes to Gordon Korman for *The Zucchini Warriors*. This is the first children's choice award in Canada, now one of many children's choice awards across the country.

1992

- Debbie Rogosin leaves to become picture book editor at Kids Can Press.

1992/93

- A difficult time for the Centre; heated debate over future directions results in hiring of consultant who meets with many of the Centre's users and supporters across the country; *Our Choice* and Book Week are maintained throughout this time through the hard work of the single Centre staffer Nancy Pearson, and volunteers in several parts of the country; Young Alberta Book Society takes on editorship of *Canadian Children's Book News* for two and a half years.

1994

- Consultant's report is presented to the membership at the AGM and directions for the future are approved; Charlotte Teeple is hired as Executive Director.



1995 Canadian Children's Book Week official launch in Vancouver — Kit Pearson, Judith Saltman and her daughter Anna.

1995

- 125 pieces of art by Canadian picture book artists are auctioned to raise funds for the CCBC; this is the first of several art auctions held over the next 13 years (1997, 1999 and 2006 in Toronto, 2008 in Vancouver, 2009 in Ottawa and 2012 in Montreal).

1996

- *Our Choice* has over 200 titles, plus audios, videos, CD-ROMs; *Too Good to Miss II* highlights 150 classic Canadian books; 23 authors and illustrators tour during Book Week.
- Tenth annual Guadalajara Book Fair, Mexico, highlights Canadian publishing, including an exhibition of work by 47 children's book illustrators.
- The CCBC gets a website.



1997 Canadian Children's Book Week official launch in Halifax — bookseller Trudy Carey and Sheree Fitch.

1997

- National Library of Canada exhibition

“The Art of Illustration” opens, presenting the original art of 29 contemporary Canadian children’s book illustrators.

1999

- The first Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction is awarded to Deborah Pearson and Andy Turnbull for *By Truck to the North: My Winter Adventure*.
- *The Storymakers: Illustrating Children’s Books*, an expanded version of the CCBC’s 1995 book, *Writing Stories, Making Pictures*, is compiled by the CCBC and published by Pembroke Publishers; the companion volume, *The Storymakers: Writing Children’s Books*, appears in 2000.

2000

- The CCBC moves to its current location in the Toronto Public Library’s Northern District branch.
- The first annual TD Grade One Book Giveaway, administered by the CCBC and sponsored by TD Bank Group, sees over 400,000 copies of *Nicholas at the Library* distributed to children all across Canada.

2001

- CCBC adds Nunavut to the Book Week tour; Robert Munsch is the first author to tour the territory.

2002

- The Imperial Oil Foundation becomes the sponsor of the new Writing Contest for children in Grades 2 to 6, held in conjunction with TD Canadian Children’s Book Week.



2003

- The Fun of Reading: International Forum on Canadian Children’s Literature brings national and international participants to Ottawa to explore Canadian children’s literature.
- *Canadian Children’s Book News* changes from newsletter to colour magazine; first cover features an illustration from Wallace Edwards’ *Alphabeasts*

2005

- The first TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award goes to Marthe Jocelyn for *Mable Riley: A Reliable Record of Humdrum, Peril & Romance*. The first Prix TD goes to François Barcelo and Anne Villeneuve for *Le nul et la chipie*.

2006

- The first Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award goes to Marie-Louise Gay for *Caramba*.



Children’s Book Awards Gala 2008: Hugh Brewster, winner of the Norma Fleck Award for Children’s Non-Fiction with David Fleck and Charlotte Teeple.

2008

- TD Canadian Children’s Book Week celebrates the 100th anniversary of the publication of *Anne of Green Gables* with the theme “Classic Canadian Reading.”
- *Our Choice* becomes *Best Books for Kids & Teens*, featuring a lively and expanded format, and is sold through the newsstands.
- A French-language tour featuring Prix TD winning and shortlisted authors and illustrators is added to TD Canadian Children’s Book Week.



Illustrators’ exhibit at the National Gallery of Canada in conjunction with 2009 Art Auction

2009

- The TD Grade One Book Giveaway now includes a national tour for the author and illustrator of the selected book.

2010

- CCBC discontinues positions of Regional Officers.

2011

- The first John Spray Mystery Award goes to Y.S. Lee for *A Spy in the House*.

2012

- The first Monica Hughes Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy (established in 2011) goes to PJ Sarah Collins for *What Happened to Serenity?*
- *Best Books for Kids & Teens* becomes a semi-annual publication.



Author Loris Lesynski on the TD Grade One Book Giveaway 2013 Tour

2014

- Amy Mathers conducts a cross-Canada reading marathon, reading one YA book and writing a review every day of the year. Beginning with books set in Newfoundland or written by Newfoundland authors and ending with BC settings and authors, she raises \$20,000 towards a teen book award.
- In partnership with Historica Canada, the CCBC creates a Teachers’ Book Bank featuring titles related to Canadian history for readers in Grades 4 to 8. Eight classrooms win a visit by one of four Canadian authors.



Marathon of Books reader extraordinaire Amy Mathers, with Library Coordinator Meghan Howe, early in 2014.

2015

- The first Amy Mathers Teen Book Award goes to Marthe Jocelyn for *What We Hide*.



Sharon McKay, with students in Lumsden, Saskatchewan, on the first Teachers’ Book Bank tour

2016

- The CCBC celebrates its 40th year! The Book Week theme is 40 Years of Great Books! The Centre gets a new website design. A special fundraising dinner is planned for September.