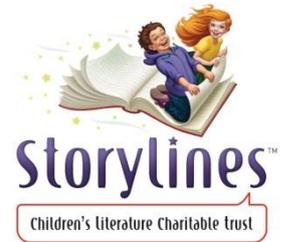


35th IBBY Congress in Auckland judged ‘a triumph’ – the ‘best-ever’



Messages of congratulation and praise are flowing into the inboxes of IBBY Congress co-directors Dr Libby Limbrick and Rosemary Tisdall, following the four-day international gathering held in Auckland between August 18 and 21.

The Congress attracted 445 delegates from 60 countries, plus 16 New Zealand and international speakers, six award winners and 25 IBBY personnel.

Six years in the planning, the Congress was organised by Storylines in its role as the New Zealand Section of IBBY, with the professional input of The Conference Company and a steering committee of library and literary sector representatives.

Early fears that distance and cost might produce a small Congress proved groundless, as registration numbers rose during 2016 and a bigger venue for the Gala Dinner had hurriedly to be sought.

Highlights from the full programme of plenary sessions, seminars and poster attractions at the Aotea Centre included:

- A magnificent opening powhiri on the ASB stage followed by keynote addresses by Joy Cowley, Kate De Goldi and Witi Ihimaera.
- Presentations by Sir Richard Taylor and Martin Baynton of Pukeko Pictures, on children's TV and the work of the famed Weta Workshop.
- Presentations by Markus Zusak, celebrated author of *The Book Thief*; Meshack Asare, winner of the prestigious 2105 Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature; and Leigh Hobbs, Australian Children's Laureate.
- The World Final of Wayne Mills' impeccably-run Kids Lit Quiz, won by New Zealand's all-boy team from Wellesley College, Wellington, from UK and Australia and teams from six other countries.
- A Gala Dinner at Auckland's Waterfront Shed 10, with Miriamo Kamo as MC and 550 guests acclaiming the 2016 winner of the Hans Christian Andersen Medal for writers, China's Cao Wenzuan.
- Performances of Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* by Tim Bray Productions.
- A moving closing ceremony featuring Joy Cowley's beautiful *Story of New Zealand*, the narrative linking choral contributions from Bayfield Primary, the boys of Dilworth School and the Choralation choir of Westlake Boys' and Westlake Girls' High Schools. (Dilworth and the Westlake Choralation choir went on to take major awards at the hotly-contested national Big Sing competition a week later).

Co-director Libby Limbrick, also Storylines Trust chair, admits she and Rosemary are thrilled with the 'overwhelming positive' feedback from participants. Some extracts are:

From Meshack Asare, Ghana, keynote speaker

I am back home now, and I just want to say, Thank You for inviting me to your beautiful city Auckland, to take part in the 35th IBBY Congress. With the rich highlights of culture, I must say, it is the best IBBY Congress that I have attended so far. Thank you very much - and to the rest of the team.

From Doris Breitmoser, IBBY Germany

Thank you again for the wonderful opportunity to discover New Zealand and congratulations – the congress was just perfectly organized, the programme was most inspiring and the atmosphere so welcoming and friendly. Thank you for six years of hard work! And greetings to the whole committee and all volunteers ... Hopefully you can now recover and feel proud. You should!

Find here a link to the fotos I have taken at the congress:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ed2en1zgbqgd95i/AABp6AxRjKQazYttvziSvYWta?dl=0>

From Dr Emma Kruse Va'ai, Samoa

Many, many thanks for such a wonderful convention. We so enjoyed ourselves very much and were inspired by the many wonderful people there. I think two of the many things that stood out for us were the importance of libraries and the work and involvement of the librarians themselves.

From Dr Robyn Sheehan-Bright, IBBY Australia

Just a note of personal thanks for the brilliant work you and your committee did in organising such a splendid Congress. I loved every minute of it. I particularly enjoyed becoming more familiar with New Zealand creators and their work; the opening and closing performances were deeply moving and quite spectacular. I came back with renewed zeal for IBBY and the work it does, inspired by so many stimulating sessions.

From Kathy Knowles, Canada

Although I thanked you in person I wanted to say again how much I enjoyed the IBBY Congress. You did an outstanding job. Now that I am back in Canada I am reviewing all the bits of paper I collected during the event. This includes the handwritten note from a child welcoming me to New Zealand. That was an extra special touch.

Evangelia Kaliskami, Greece

I am writing this email to congratulate you on your hard work as far as the organisation of the 35th IBBY Congress is concerned and also personally thank you about the help you offered me while organising my trip to New Zealand. Although it was a particularly long trip, I am really happy I did it and had the opportunity to visit your beautiful country.

Dennis Yeo, Singapore

Just wanted to drop you a note to commend not just the amount of energy and effort put into the organization of the Congress but more importantly, the quality of that work. From the opening calls of the Opening Ceremony (and the children's performance) through the presentations to the performance of *Whale Rider*, it was a whirlwind four days spent in

your beautiful country. It was also genius to hold the Congress with the World Lit Kids Quiz and the Family Day at the Aotea Centre. And to think that you had to bid for this and plan this over five years ago. Thanks for a great gathering of people with common souls and do continue the good work at IBBY.

Joy Lawn, Australia

Thanks for the excellent IBBY Congress. I thought it extremely professional and there was a great atmosphere throughout. Congratulations and thanks to you both, as well as to your delightful team.

Yumiko Bando-Saito, Japan

This is just to thank you for your wonderful organization of the IBBY 35th Congress in Auckland and congratulate on this successful event. We Japanese participants have almost returned home safely and appreciated your kind hospitality and good services at everywhere during the congress. Anyway I enjoyed my experiences in your place which I visited for the first time ... I would like to send you all our very best wishes on behalf of Japan Section of IBBY, JBBY.

From Jennie Orchard, Australia

It was such an enormous pleasure to participate in the recent IBBY Congress in Auckland ... It was a conference of riches, characterized by an enormous generosity of spirit. This was evident from the opening ceremony and throughout the four days we spent together. I was reminded over and over again of the wonderful warmth of Kiwis. I was in tears at the closing ceremony. Joy Cowley was an absolutely perfect host and I loved the music, particularly the song which was sung to honour Margaret Mahy (I would love to know the title of this, and whether or not any recording is available.)

From Tommy Wilson, New Zealand

... When the supreme award winner of the Hans Christian Andersen tohu Cao Wenxuan (China) delivered his korero at the flash function, the barrier of language was removed as quickly as the gumboots, allowing the taonga of his pukapuka to reach out and across the audience, like a korowai – a cloak of cleverly-constructed words to cover our own vulnerability to criticism as authors trying to sprinkle a little joy on a sometimes sad world.

Cao painted a picture that creating a children's book is like building a whare brick by brick, each brick a word that will remain forever in the hearts and minds of those who need the message most, the tamariki of impoverished countries where many of the delegates had a whakapapa to. If we are to break the cycle of poverty and trauma let's help vulnerable children escape into a safe world of words, stories and books - preferably books from their own back yards.

And we reprint a piece by New Zealand independent publisher Peter Dowling (Oratia Media) which has appeared in *Publishers' Weekly*:

New Zealand publishers had a high profile at the 35th IBBY Congress held in Auckland's Aotea Centre from 18 to 21 August.

The biennial congress of the International Board on Books for Young People brought together nearly 500 international and local literacy experts, authors, illustrators, librarians, teachers and publishers at Auckland's Aotea Centre for a packed

programmes of seminars and presentations.

An exhibition space on the Aotea's fifth level enabled publishers and education providers to display their wares to the delegates.

PANZ organised a collective New Zealand Publishers stand grouping eight members: Allen & Unwin, Duck Creek Press (David Ling Publishing), Edify, Gecko Press, Global Education Systems, Oratia Books, Pottton & Burton, and Sunshine Books (Wendy Pye Publishing).

Other publishers took their own space, with Clean Slate Press, Huia Publishers, Lift Education and Penguin Random House featuring prominently.

For Dame Wendy Pye, joining the collective stand enabled exposure of its Sunshine Books range to delegates from around the world. "The congress was valuable for New Zealand publishers to showcase the range of our books to an international audience, even though it wasn't really a business event."

With almost 60 countries represented, this was a rare opportunity for direct exchanges with leaders in the international children's book world on the stands and around the busy Aotea Centre.

For Julia Marshall of Gecko Press, the event "was fantastic to network with librarians and key children's book advocates from our overseas markets."

On the opening Thursday, a group of six PANZ councillors and members headed by Melanie Laville-Moore met with a delegation of Chinese publishers, and enjoyed a useful exchange of information and leads.

Another highlight was the awarding of the Hans Christian Andersen Awards for children's writing and illustrating at a gala dinner on 20 August.

"It was a huge achievement by the congress organisers to pull this off, and feedback from those attending was very positive about New Zealand," Marshall said.