

CWIG AGM Report from outgoing Chair

Nicola Morgan



Thanking the committee

The CWIG committee this year has consisted of Shoo Rayner, Miriam Moss, Dawn Finch, Lucy Coats, James Mayhew, Daniel Blythe, Dianne Hofmeyr and Candy Gourlay. Anne Rooney has generously given up her time to attend our committee meetings as Chair of EWG.

My thanks to all the committee for their phenomenal hard work, dedication to the causes, warmth of spirit and sense of humour. We would normally be saying goodbye to Shoo Rayner and Miriam Moss but we are delighted that Shoo is staying on as Chair and Miriam has recently agreed to fill in for Di who has had to take some time out for illness, so there is great continuity in the committee, with me as the only person leaving at this time. (And even I am not completely leaving, as I'm staying on the Management Campaigns Sub-committee in order to support some campaigns particularly close to my heart.)

I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank Val Bloom and Patrice Aggs, who finished their term on the committee last year but we still remember their really valuable contributions.

As always, heartfelt thanks to Nicola Solomon and Jo McCrum, who both work so hard to hold everything together, and help us push forward our various campaigns. They have the ears of the most senior people in publishing and are a phenomenal source of information and ideas, as well as being able to tell us which of our wishes are worth pursuing and how best to achieve our aims.

New committee members

We are delighted to welcome Curtis Jobling and Keren David to join us from today and I have pleasure in ratifying their appointment at this AGM.

What have we done in the last year?

Campaigns

One thing I realised once I started to focus on the campaigns I wanted to lead as CWIG Chair was that each SoA campaign was put together from scratch and on an ad hoc basis. This meant that we found it too easy to go round in circles a few times before getting to grips with the issue coherently. I felt that we could be more effective and more easily accommodate various changes in committee make-up during what might be a long campaign if there were an SoA-wide template that any committee could quickly refer to when putting together a campaign and which could become a clear record of aims and evidence to pass to new committee members. Martin Reed, in charge of SoA Comms, drew up a draft template, which he and I then worked to perfect, and CWIG tested this on both our main campaigns (see below). This was, I believe, time well spent. Anyone on any committee can now see easily what is happening, and why, and tactics can swiftly be changed if new circumstances arise.

School libraries

We spent a great deal of time developing this campaign, so that it could be a long-running mission and adapt to changes in Government and other circumstances. The support of school libraries and, we believe crucially, dedicated librarians, is more complex than might seem. We needed to be careful not to alienate those schools – including primary schools and very small secondaries – which cannot afford much in the way of library funding and yet which do a great job with what they have. Generally, our aim is that staffed and funded school libraries will be widely recognized (by school management, governors, teachers and parents) as essential to education and reading expertise as well as in creating lifelong readers for pleasure. Please see the [Where We Stand on School Libraries](#) page for more details.

CWIG Reading for Pleasure Award

To support the above campaign, and at the suggestion of Shoo Rayner, we have created a new award scheme whereby visiting authors can nominate an exceptional school library for a CWIG Award. This award has just gone live so if you do school events please see the website for details, so that you can nominate a school you believe deserves it. You are allowed to award three schools during the academic year that has just begun. Read more [here](#).

Special Sales and Buying Choices

This was originally to be one campaign but it became two. *Special Sales* seeks to tackle the growing problem of our books being hurled into the world at rock-bottom prices often without strategy and most often without consent. *Buying Choices* seeks to inform the book-buying public of the effects of buying at rock-bottom prices and tries to suggest healthy alternatives.

The committee developed these campaigns from scratch, spending a great deal of time and effort, and we have now handed them over to the SoA Management Committee and specifically the Campaigns Sub-committee. But you can be sure that CWIG will remain extremely engaged with this, not least because it was James Mayhew who set the ball rolling. I was delighted to pick this ball up, as it's something I'd tried and failed to get going several years ago. The climate has now changed, not least because social media allow us all to spread messages and ideas more quickly.

Again, please do visit the [Where We Stand on Special Sales](#) and [Buying Choices](#) pages where you'll find the facts and actions that you can (and should, please) take. Show your agent, if you have one, and your publishers. I can tell you that we have had a pleasingly positive response from several major publishers to the idea that authors should always be consulted and approval sought for any special sales.

Also, please do let us know when you come across any evidence that your sales have been affected. This really helps us show publishers that such sales do not have the solely positive effect that they have suggested in the past.

Supporting public libraries

This is something CWIG will always do. Please send us any examples of threatened closures so that we can join your shouting.

World Book Day

You will probably have seen the fracas about the appallingly narrow and celebrity-heavy list for 2018. We have been vocal in our dismay and at our committee meeting immediately before the AGM we had the Chair and Deputy Chair of the WBD trustees, who are respectively CEO of the Publishers' and the Booksellers' Associations, to discuss how this can be improved for 2019. It must be, otherwise WBD risks losing the so-far incredibly strong support of children's authors over the years.

Always supporting authors' rights

E.g. festival payments, fair payments for events, the rights of illustrators (Pictures Mean Business) and translators to be [properly credited](#). I have just written an article for The Author on how to make more money from events, a topic for which I need little encouragement. We have recently stood up against – and will continue to do so – schools creating awards and expecting “shortlisted” authors to turn up and work for free and organisations trying to put us onto payrolls, deduct tax, withhold VAT or not pay us at all or fairly. It is highly unlikely that I will stop shouting about this any time soon.

CWIG Facebook Group

This is very recent innovation which we hope will be a good place to air concerns and feel part of the community of children's authors. If you're on Facebook, please let one of the committee or staff know and we will see that you are added.

Events we've held:

Empowering Day Conference in June 2017

This was a huge success, full of the warmth, collaboration, generosity and spark for which children's authors are known. Our format was three extended panels of 80 minutes, each with three people speaking to a fixed time, followed by a Q& A guided by a chairperson. Timing was strictly enforced (to both amusement and wide-spread relief) and the pace was fast. Our topics, keeping to the theme of empowerment and focusing on the business side of our careers rather than the creative side, were *Earning More From What We Do*, *Making the Most of Events* and *New Publishing Opportunities*. As well as committee members sharing a vast range of expertise, we benefited very much from the involvement of Tony Bradman, Chair of ALCS. We were delighted to have Nicky Singer talk to us about her experiences with her crowdfunded and highly successful novel, *Island*. The business part of the day was brilliantly rounded off with a talk by Justin Somper, well-known children's author and professional publishing publicist and. We then enjoyed wine and canapés, with thanks to ALCS who gave us money both for this and also so that we could offer bursaries to some attendees from outside London, who otherwise might not have felt able to come.

Authors North are interested in collaborating next year with a day conference to be held in the North of England.

Other events:

- Jonathan Emmett delivered an excellent workshop on “visiting” schools via Skype
- We had a very popular event on children's historical fiction, in association with Hysteria

- Jenny Alexander and Lucy Coats delivered two inspiring creativity days
- Shoo Rayner provided a popular series of workshops on creating YouTube videos
- Several committee members were invited to a day with EmpathyLab, an organization looking at links between story (including true story) and empathy and how to develop children's empathy and understanding of story at the same time. We have some future collaboration planned with them.

Your committee relies on you to bring us problems to tackle and ideas to carry forward and to tell us what you want us to do. If there's anything you think we should be doing differently, please tell us. Or, to be more accurate, tell Shoo Rayner and his committee, because I've gone!

Thank you so much for your support and comradeship over the last five years that I've been on the committee and the last two as Chair. It's been a privilege and a genuine pleasure. I will continue to fight for the rights of authors and readers wherever I am.

Nicola Morgan
2 November 2017