

Association for Library Service to Children

**ROBERT F. SIBERT  
INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD  
COMMITTEE MANUAL**

March 2005

## FOREWORD

The Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award was first presented in 2001. It came at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, yet well into the Information Age. In honoring distinguished informational books for children, the Sibert Award draws attention to fascinating content, but, perhaps more importantly, it draws attention to high standards in the presentation of that content.

This manual, based on two years of Sibert Award Committee experience, outlines practices, procedures and principles to follow in the selection and presentation of the Sibert Award. This manual is primarily intended as a guide for committee members and the Chair. It also serves to lay out for public view the orderly process that leads to the selection of winners.

Members of the Sibert Award Manual Task Force brought to bear direct experience on the Sibert Award Committee itself as well as invaluable experience on other major ALSC book award committees. This Manual reflects the good sense and sensibility of the Task Force, its firm command of policy, practice and procedure, and its deep commitment to the award's high purpose. This Manual outlines for future committees how to conduct an exhaustive, even-handed, and orderly selection process aimed at recognizing the highest standards in informational books for children.

To those joining a Sibert Award Committee, congratulations and enjoy! True pleasure and a busy year awaits you. To those not serving on a Sibert Committee but interested in learning more about its work, we invite you to enjoy informational books along with the committee itself.

Susan Faust

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May 1, 2002

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Notes:

This manual attempts to outline the practices, procedures and principles to follow in the selection and presentation of the Sibert Award. While as complete as possible, it cannot be exhaustive. Therefore, it is important to use the manual as a guide and to go further for guidance as needed.

Throughout this manual, the "Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award" is called the "Sibert Award." References to "the President," "Vice President," "Board," "Executive Director," and "Executive Committee" imply ALSC affiliation. The American Library Association "Public Information Office" is referred to as the PIO.

## **PART I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

HISTORY

COMMITTEE FUNCTION STATEMENT

THE COMMITTEE

PURPOSE, TERMS, DEFINITIONS, AND CRITERIA

PRIORITY GROUP CONSULTANT

ALSC POLICIES

**Membership on Awards and Media Evaluation Committees**

**Confidentiality**

**Relationship to Publishers**

**Electronic Communication**

## HISTORY

The Robert F. Sibert Award is given annually to the author of the most distinguished informational book for children published in English during the preceding year. The winner receives a bronze medal, and Honor Book authors receive certificates, which are presented at the ALA Annual Conference. The award, established in 2000 and first presented in 2001, is named in memory of Robert F. Sibert, long-time President of Bound-to-Stay-Bound Books. The award is sponsored by the company and administered by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association.

## COMMITTEE FUNCTION STATEMENT

To select annually the most distinguished informational book for children published in English in the United States within the terms, definitions, and criteria governing the award.

Established: 2000

Members: Chair + 8 members

Term: 1 year

## THE COMMITTEE

The Sibert Committee consists of eight members and one Chair. Four members are elected by the ALSC membership, with the remaining four members appointed by the President. They serve for one year. The term of service begins at the end of Midwinter in the year under consideration and concludes at the end of the committee's Midwinter Selection Meeting.

Per ALSC Board Action at Annual Conference 2002: "No individual may serve on either Caldecott, Newbery, or Sibert Award Committees more often than once every five years. This guideline will apply to Caldecott, Newbery, and Sibert Award Committees only. This guideline will not apply to the selection of nominees for Chair. This guideline will not apply to other prestigious ALSC award committees."

Adapted from ALA Handbook of Organization, 2001-2002, ALSC Bylaws, 1998, and "Major Actions of the ALSC Board," New Orleans, 1999, and Atlanta, 2002.

## PURPOSE, TERMS, DEFINITIONS, AND CRITERIA

### **Purpose**

The Sibert Award honors the most distinguished informational book published in English in the preceding year for its significant contribution to children's literature. The award is presented to the author, author/illustrator, co-authors, or author and illustrator named on the title page of that book. Honor Books may be named with recognition again going to the author, author/illustrator, co-authors, or author and illustrator named on the title page of that book.

### **Terms**

The Sibert Award is presented annually to the author of the most distinguished informational book for children published in the United States during the preceding year.

Terms include:

- Poetry and traditional literature (e.g., folktales) are not eligible. There are no other limitations as to the character of the book providing it is an original work.
- Honor Books may be named. They are books that are also truly distinguished.
- The award is restricted to authors who are citizens or residents of the United States.
- The award is restricted to original work first published in the United States.
- The committee is to consider in its deliberations only books eligible for the award as specified in the terms.
- The award may be given posthumously.

### **Definitions**

Informational books are defined as those written and illustrated to present, organize, and interpret documentable, factual material.

Significant contribution is gauged by how well the work elucidates, clarifies and enlivens its subject. The committee considers overall accuracy, documentation and organization. Although the award is presented to the author, visual material and book design also figure into the committee's decision.

Children's literature is defined as the body of books published for a potential child audience. Such books display respect for children's understanding, abilities, and appreciation. Children range from birth through age fourteen. Books for the entire range are to be considered.

Distinguished is defined as noted for significant achievement; marked by quality, excellence, or eminence; distinctive.

Author may include co-authors or author-illustrators.

Original work means that books reprinted or compiled from other sources are not eligible.

First published in the United States means that books originally published in other countries are not eligible.

In English means that the committee considers only books published in English. This requirement DOES NOT limit the use of words or phrases in another language where appropriate in context.

Published in the preceding year means that the book has a publication date in the year under consideration, was available for purchase in that year, and has a copyright date no later than that year. An eligible book may have a copyright date prior to the year under consideration if it was not published until the year under consideration. The intent: that every eligible book be considered, but that no book be considered in more than one year.

Resident is defined as someone who maintains a home in the United States rather than someone who just visits.

The phrase only the books eligible for the award specifies that the committee is to consider only eligible books, not an author's body of work or previous accolades.

### **Criteria**

In identifying the most distinguished informational book for children from the preceding year, committee members consider important elements and qualities:

- Excellent, engaging, and distinctive use of language.
- Excellent, engaging, and distinctive visual presentation.
- Appropriate organization and documentation.
- Clear, accurate, and stimulating presentation of facts, concepts, and ideas.
- Appropriate style of presentation for subject and for intended audience.
- Supportive features (index, table of contents, maps, timelines, etc).
- Respectful and of interest to children.

Not every book relies equally on every element. The committee need not find excellence in every element listed above but only in those relevant to the book.

The book must be a self-contained entity, not dependent on other media for enjoyment.

The Sibert Award is presented to honor distinguished informational books for children. The award is not presented for didactic intent or for popularity.

## PRIORITY GROUP CONSULTANT

A Priority Group Consultant from Priority Group VI (Awards) is assigned to the committee to deal with questions from the Chair and the committee regarding procedure, personnel, and the eligibility of books.

### **Work with Chair**

The Priority Group Consultant works with the Chair to review annually the procedures of the committee and to make recommendations for improving the process. The recommendations range from those that can be implemented easily to those requiring action by the ALSC Board. The Priority Group Consultant also works with the Chair to resolve procedural and personnel issues as they come up and questions about the eligibility of books.

### **Work with Committee Members**

Committee members consult the Priority Group Consultant should there be unusual issues that the Chair cannot resolve, particularly issues regarding the Chair.

From the ALA Handbook of Organization, 2001-2002 and ALSC Bylaws, 1998.

## ALSC POLICIES

### MEMBERSHIP ON AWARDS AND MEDIA EVALUATION

#### **Conflict of Interest**

Conflict of interest: A term, the legal significance of which is confined to representation of the interest, as where a real estate broker is representing both buyer and seller, and an attorney of law attempts to act for his client and for one whose interest is adverse to or conflicting with that of his client in the same general manner. Ballentine's Law Dictionary, third edition, 246

ALSC affirms its confidence in the integrity of members who are invited to be nominated or appointed to serve on award and media evaluation committees, and in the integrity of the officers of nominating committees responsible for

selecting such candidates. However, because of the nature of the work of such committees, those who serve on them must be especially sensitive to conflict of interest situations and appearance of impropriety. The purpose of this policy is to clarify the eligibility and responsibility of candidates asked to serve on such committees.

### **Disqualification**

An ALSC member may not accept nomination or appointment to a committee if

- Employed by or advisor to any trade-publishing house or any company that produces children's films, filmstrips, recordings, software, and/or other types of non-print media to be evaluated by a committee.
- The author or illustrator of a children's book or creator of other materials to be published or evaluated in the year of committee service.
- Serving simultaneously on an ALA Division or Association Board.

### **Eligibility:**

All other ALSC members are eligible for nomination or appointment. The following situations do not usually lead to disqualification:

- Serving as a professional reviewer of children's books or non-print materials.
- Involvement in the selection of materials for professional tools such as Children's Catalog.
- Serving as a writer or editor of professional books in the field of children's literature.

### **Resignation**

All candidates for nomination or appointment have an affirmative duty to notify the nominating committee or appointing officer of any circumstance or event which would disqualify him/her under this policy or which would otherwise affect, or give the appearance of tending to affect, his/her ability to carry out assigned responsibilities fairly and without self-interest of any kind. A committee member must resign immediately upon the development of any circumstance or event which disqualifies him/her from committee service under this policy or which would otherwise affect or give the appearance of tending to affect, his/her ability to carry out assigned responsibilities fairly and without self-interest of any kind.

The President immediately accepts such resignations when tendered. In the event a committee member violates this policy, the Executive Committee shall request the committee member to tender his/her resignation. If a committee member refuses, the Executive Committee removes the member and informs the

Board of its action. The President then appoints a new committee member. Final decision rests with the Executive Committee.

### **Attendance at Meetings and Access to Materials**

Persons elected or appointed to an award or media evaluation committee need to:

- Be able to attend all required discussion and decision meetings scheduled for the Annual Conference and the Midwinter Selection Meeting, and be able to follow procedures established by the committee.
- Have ready access to the major part of the current output of children's materials under consideration. It is recognized that there are occasional books under consideration that a committee member is unable to obtain. In such cases, the Chair may notify publishers according to guidelines. Refer to Part I, "Relationship with Publishers."

Although these requirements may limit membership on a committee, wise selection requires full participation of all members of the committee.

### **Full Participation**

To make wise selections, the committee depends on the full participation of all committee members.

#### Attendance at Meetings

Committee members are required to attend the Midwinter Selection Meeting. Attendance at the Annual Conference (prior to the Midwinter Selection Meeting) is also required. If unusual circumstances exist, a committee member may request permission for absence from the Annual Conference. Such a request must go to the Chair and the President. If a committee member cannot attend required meetings, an immediate resignation is necessary so that a replacement can be named as soon as possible. Letters of resignation are sent to the President with copies to the Chair, Priority Group Consultant, and the Executive Director.

#### Committee Work

Each member is required to read eligible books and participate fully in the work of the committee. A committee member who finds it impossible to do so is expected to resign as soon as possible. If the Chair does not hear from a committee member, the Chair contacts that committee member to determine if there is a potential on-going problem that prevents the member from full participation. If there is such a problem, the Chair, after consultation with the Priority Group Consultant, must request that the member resign for the good of the committee. The President immediately accepts such resignations when

tendered. If the Chair is unable to reach the committee member or feels that the participation problem is not likely to be resolved, the Chair requests the President to consider the situation. In the event that a committee member has not resigned and is not participating fully in the committee's work, the Executive Committee requests that the committee member tenders his/her resignation. If a committee member refuses such a request, the Executive Committee removes the member and informs the ALSC Board of its action. The President then appoints a new committee member. The final decision rests with the Executive Committee.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Committee members are urged to discuss books under consideration with others throughout the year to obtain a variety of opinions. Such discussion helps committee members refine their critical judgements about informational books. This does not mean that committee members vote to reflect the consensus of those consulted. Committee members are selected to exercise independent, critical judgement.

It is necessary to maintain the highest degree of confidentiality regarding all aspects of the committee's work. Confidentiality extends to face-to-face discussion, mail communication, e-mail, and any other communication the committee might have. It ensures privacy to all committee members. It also ensures the stature of the award: The winners are presented with unanimity—as the result of a thoughtful and thorough selection process.

Committee members are prohibited from public discussion of some matters prior to, during, and following the selection of winners. Committee members may not discuss in public:

- Reasons given by other committee members for suggesting, nominating, supporting, or withdrawing a book from consideration. Committee members may discuss their own personal opinions.
- Specific titles or lists of titles under consideration. Remember: All eligible books are under consideration prior to the Midwinter Selection Meeting.
- The number of ballots necessary for any decision or the vote in any balloting.

The committee's reasons for selection of the winner and Honor Books are explained by the Chair who is responsible for preparing information requested by the PIO for a press release.

The above rules are not intended to limit the free speech of committee members. Rather, the rules are intended to protect the privacy of committee members, allowing them to speak frankly in closed meetings and to speak for themselves outside of those meetings. Confidentiality is intended to foster debate leading up to selection and to present unanimity once the selection is announced.

Employees of the winners' publishing companies are informed of the committee's selections at the same time as the winners themselves. The employees work with the ALSC Executive Director and the PIO to coordinate the Press Conference and the subsequent press release.

It is imperative for committee members and for the winning authors and their publishers to keep secret the selection outcome prior to the Press Conference. Maintaining secrecy minimizes "information leaks" and misinformation. Maintaining secrecy also ensures the stature of the award and preserves the element of surprise.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH PUBLISHERS

### **Guidelines for Committee Members**

Members of the committee adhere to guidelines regarding their relationship to publishers. Important points:

- The ALSC staff makes the committee roster available to publishers as soon as possible in the year under consideration.
- Many publishers send committee members eligible books for consideration. Committee members may accept these unsolicited books.
- The Chair notifies the ALSC Staff when important books have not been received by committee members and works with the ALSC staff to solve such problems. The Chair surveys committee members regularly to ascertain which books have not been received.
- Committee members are not to solicit publishers for free, personal copies of eligible books. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of each committee member to obtain such books for reading.
- Committee members are cautioned to avoid any conflicts of interest that might grow out of personal contact with personnel involved in publishing children's books. It is not necessary to suspend these contacts so long as there is the express understanding that such contacts in no way influence how books are considered or the final choices made.
- Committee members are not to solicit publishers for favors, invitations, or the like. However, should there be such unsolicited offers, committee members

may accept with the express understanding that acceptance in no way influences how books are considered or final choices made.

### **Guidelines for Publishers**

Publishers are encouraged to support the work of the Sibert Committee. Submission procedures are outlined for publishers on the ALSC web page.

To submit works for consideration for one of the ALSC media awards:

- Review the terms and criteria for the award.
- Send one copy of the work to the ALSC office (50 East Huron, Chicago, IL 60611-2795). Please indicate for which award the submission is intended.
- Submit one copy of the work to the award committee Chair. You have the option of sending a copy of the work to each committee member, but it is not required.
- A list of selection committee members for each award is available through a link on each award's Terms and Criteria page.

Deadline for submitting works is **December 31** of the publication year for all awards and notables.

### SELF-PUBLISHED /SMALL PRESS TITLES

If an author or representative of an author of book published by a small, independent press submits his or her Sibert- eligible book to the Sibert Committee for consideration, and that book is republished later by another publisher, then the book will not be reconsidered upon its commercial publication. The chair of the Sibert Committee will keep and pass on a current – year list of Sibert- eligible books received directly from authors or from small, independent presses (Adopted by ALSC Board of Directors, June 2004).

### ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

The Sibert Committee adheres to the “Guidelines for Electronic Communication for ALSC Committees,” as adapted by the ALSC Board and as posted on the ALSC web page.

## **PART II: COMMITTEE WORK**

WELCOME  
CALENDAR  
ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS  
ACCESS TO MATERIALS  
COMMUNICATION PREPARATION AND READING LIST  
IDENTIFYING, OBTAINING, AND READING ELIGIBLE TITLES  
ELIGIBILITY  
NOTE-TAKING  
SUGGESTION PROCESS  
NOMINATION PROCESS  
PARTICIPATION OF ALSC MEMBERSHIP  
COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE MEETING (PRIOR TO MIDWINTER SELECTION  
MEETING)  
MIDWINTER DISCUSSION LIST  
MIDWINTER SELECTION MEETING  
MIDWINTER: AFTER SELECTION  
AFTER MIDWINTER SELECTION MEETING  
AWARD PRESENTATION

## WELCOME

Once the committee is complete, it is recommended that the Chair send a letter of welcome to the membership. The letter might include an outline of the year's work and up-coming issues. It is usually accompanied by relevant enclosures (e.g., the year's calendar, the roster, guidelines for book discussion, etc).

## CALENDAR

It is the responsibility of the Chair to establish and distribute a calendar of the year's work as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of committee members to meet all deadlines to assure that the selection process is orderly and timely. Refer to Part IV, *Calendar: Sample*.

## ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

The Sibert Committee members are responsible for attending all required meetings at the Annual Conference and at the Midwinter Selection Meeting. Other events are optional:

Midwinter of the year under consideration. Refer to paragraph below.	Member attendance optional. Open meeting. Chair to attend to meet with PGC, attend Division Leadership meeting.
Annual Conference of year under consideration. (prior to Midwinter Selection Meeting). Refer to Part II, "Annual Conference Meeting (Prior to Midwinter Selection Meeting)."	Attendance required. Closed meeting.
Midwinter Selection Meeting of next year. Refer to Part II, "Midwinter Selection Meeting."	Attendance required. Closed meeting.
Annual Conference of next year (after Midwinter Selection Meeting). Presentation of award at membership meeting. Refer to Part II, "Award Presentation."	Attendance optional.

It is possible for committee members to meet informally at Midwinter of the year under consideration. Since the committee's year of service does not officially begin until the end of Midwinter, no official business takes place. At an informal meeting, the Chair may distribute the year's calendar if available. Books under consideration are not discussed, nor are any procedural issues decided.

## ACCESS TO MATERIALS

The Sibert Committee members are responsible for obtaining copies of books under consideration for the award. Publishers send many books; other books are obtained in a variety of other ways. Refer to suggestions in Part II, “*Identifying, Obtaining, and Reading Eligible Titles*.”

## COMMUNICATION

Electronic communication facilitates the distribution of information from the Chair to committee members and the regular discussion of procedural issues. The Chair will establish ground rules for electronic communication by the committee at the beginning of his/her term. At times, the Chair may invite open discussion on a matter of concern. The Chair facilitates such open discussion.

As a practical matter, e-mail is not used for substantive discussion. It is not a substitute for face-to-face book discussion. During the year, committee members may wish to discuss matters of concern having to do with eligibility or factual errors in a book. Questions on such matters are directed to the Chair who decides whether or not to bring a particular question to the full committee.

The Committee adheres to the “Guidelines for Electronic Communication for ALSC Committees,” as adapted by the ALSC Board and as posted on the ALSC web page.

Since the committee’s electronic communication is generally confidential, there are several ways to better insure confidentiality. For e-mail, include the word “confidential” on the subject line or as part of the transmission options. For FAX communication, include the word “confidential” on a cover sheet.

## PREPARATION

Committee members are urged to prepare for the year’s work in many ways:

- Review the terms, criteria, and definitions governing the award.
- Take part in book discussions of informational books. Book selection meetings, workshops, classes, and professional associations provide opportunities for such discussion.
- Read informational books from previous years and look toward defining and refining a critical viewpoint.

- Write critical analyses of informational books based on the award terms, criteria, and definitions.
- Read books and articles about evaluating informational books. A suggested reading list follows.

Aronson, Marc. "Acceptance for Boston Globe-Horn Book Award in Nonfiction," Horn Book. January/February 2001, 49-52.

Bamford, Rosemary and Janice V. Cristo. Making Facts Come Alive. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon, 1998.

Billings, Charlene W. "Writing Creative Nonfiction Books for Children," Writer. February 1994, 22-26.

Bober, Natalie. "Writing Lives," Lion and Unicorn. 1991, 78-88.

Carter, Betty. "Reviewing Nonfiction Books for Children and Young Adults: Stance, Scholarship, and Structure," Evaluating Children's Books: A Critical Look (ed. Betsy Hearne and Roger Sutton). Champaign-Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1992, 59-72.

Carter, Betty. "A Universe of Information: The Future of Nonfiction," Horn Book. November/December 2000, 697-707.

Cianciolo, Patricia J. Informational Picture Books for Children. Chicago, American Library Association, 1999, 1-27.

Faust, Susan. "In Quest of Excellence: Robert F. Sibert Information Book Award," School Library Journal. June 2001, 42-3.

Freedman, Russell. "Bring 'Em Back Alive," School Library Journal. March 1994, 138-141.

Freedman, Russell. "On Telling the Truth," Booklist. September 15, 1998, 224-5.

Fritz, Jean. "The Known and the Unknown: An Exploration into Nonfiction," Zena Sutherland Lectures 1983-1992. NY: Clarion, 1993.

Giblin, James. "More than Just the Fact: A Hundred Years of Children's Nonfiction," Horn Book. July/August 2000, 413-424.

Horning, Kathleen T. From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books. NY: Harper, 1997, 22-45.

Lasky, Kathryn. "Reflections on Nonfiction," Horn Book. September/October 1985, 527-532.

Lindsay, Nina. "If Only...!" A Librarian Looks at How Even Great Books Fall Short," School Library Journal. July 2000, 34-35.

Meltzer, Milton. "Selective Forgetfulness: Christopher Columbus Reconsidered." New Advocate. Winter 1992, 1-9.

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. "Science Books for Children: An Endangered Species?" Horn Book. May/June 1998, 309-314.

Rubin, Susan Goldman. "How to Research and Write Nonfiction for Children," Writer. August 2000, 16-19.

Weinberg, Steve. "The Critic's Role in Reviewing Non-Fiction Books," Journal of the National Book Critics Circle. Vol.26, Issue 3. [www.bookcritics.org](http://www.bookcritics.org).

## IDENTIFYING, OBTAINING, AND READING ELIGIBLE TITLES

Committee members are responsible for **identifying**, **obtaining**, and **reading** eligible books throughout the year under consideration. It is wise to begin as soon as possible. The pace of publication increases throughout the year. It is important to keep up with these three responsibilities at all times.

### **Identifying Eligible Books**

Committee members are responsible for identifying eligible titles to read and consider. Ways to identify eligible titles:

- Examine publishers' catalogs.
- Read review journals.
- Check Spring and Fall publishing announcements (e.g., the announcements in *Publishers Weekly*).
- Check ALSC Notable Children's Books discussion lists as available. Contact an ALSC Notable Children's Books Committee member and/or visit the ALSC Notable Children's Books Committee web page.
- Attend ALSC Children's Notable Books Committee discussions at Annual (prior to the Midwinter Selection Meeting) as schedule permits.

### **Obtaining Eligible Books**

Committee members are responsible for obtaining eligible titles to read and consider. Many publishers do send books to committee members for

consideration, although committee members often do not begin to receive books until April or May. Other ways to obtain eligible titles:

- Pick up galleys at the Midwinter and Annual meetings and at any other conferences.
- Examine review copies received in the work place.
- Browse new titles at bookstores.

Committee members are not to solicit publishers for free, personal copies of eligible books. (See Part I, “*ALSC Policies: Relationship to Publishers*”

### **Reading Eligible Books**

Committee members are responsible for reading eligible titles—those to consider as potential contenders, those suggested in the suggestion process, and those nominated in the nomination process. The reading load is heavy, and often re-reading is required.

## ELIGIBILITY

It is important for committee members to check on the eligibility of titles—the year of publication, the citizenship and/or residency of the author (U.S. citizenship and/or residency is required), and the locale of the publisher (the publisher must be located in the U.S.). In ambiguous cases, committee members notify the Chair who consults with the Priority Group Consultant on eligibility questions. The Chair and the Priority Group Consultant decide eligibility questions, and the Chair informs the committee of their decisions.

## NOTE-TAKING

From the outset, committee members need to develop some convenient system for taking notes about each book that is read. Some prefer a file card system; others keep a binder with notes, sometimes organized with tabs.

No matter what system is used, the notes themselves need to speak to the Sibert Award criteria. Succinct and specific notes clarify thinking and aid in the Midwinter Selection Meeting discussion. In addition, some committee members keep complete bibliographic information on each book, a short summary, and a critical statement, noting both strengths and weaknesses based on the award criteria. As the year’s work begins, the Chair sometimes asks committee members to share ideas on taking notes with the whole committee. Refer to Part IV, “*Note-taking Form: Sample.*”

It is recommended that notes be taken on each book that is read. Notes about books not thought to be serious contenders may shorten as the year progresses. It is important to remember that a book not impressive on first reading may prove more interesting later on. Re-reading is frequently required. Notes record first impressions and measure changes in thinking.

Committee members do not usually bring a personal copy of every book under consideration to the Midwinter Selection Meeting. Therefore, notes need to include references to specific page numbers and/or quoted passages to justify specific points to be made during discussion.

Many committee members collect professional reviews of titles under consideration. Although reviews are not to be quoted during discussion, they raise questions and clarify opinion.

## SUGGESTION PROCESS

The Chair solicits suggestions of eligible titles from committee members, usually on a monthly basis. Each time, committee members are asked to suggest books deemed to be strong contenders based on the award criteria.

The suggestion process serves several important functions. Of course, it encourages committee members to identify strong contenders. It also alerts committee members as to which books merit consideration by the group. Then too, the suggestion process helps committee members begin to weigh relative strengths and weaknesses of books based on the award criteria.

Committee members often recommend a book previously suggested. This practice allows the committee to develop an early gauge of support for titles—a gauge that becomes useful in identifying titles to consider in the nomination process.

Suggestion deadlines are listed on the calendar established at the beginning of the year. Suggestions are submitted to the Chair by e-mail to meet designated deadlines. The Chair needs to receive notification should a committee member have no suggestions to add. Suggestions sent by U.S. mail or FAX must be **received** by the designated deadlines.

After each suggestion deadline, the Chair compiles a list of suggested titles, indicates the number of suggestions for each title, and distributes the list to committee members. After the second round of suggestions, the Chair

distributes a cumulative suggestion list along with a monthly list. (These two kinds of lists may be combined). Suggestions remain anonymous.

The Chair works as quickly as possible to get the suggestion lists distributed to committee members. Turn around time is a week or less. At the same time, suggestion lists are also forwarded to the ALSC staff.

Serious consideration is to be given to all suggested titles including those with minimal support. Sometimes only one committee member has seen a particular book. Sometimes support grows after re-readings or in comparison to other books under consideration.

As the suggestion list grows, it becomes easier for the committee to make comparisons among suggested titles and to begin weighing relative strengths and weaknesses with regard to the award criteria.

It is possible to make further suggestions once the nomination process is complete. Such suggestions appear on the Midwinter discussion list. These further suggestions allow committee members to move forward books published late in the year, and in rare instances, a strong title previously overlooked.

Committee members are urged to suggest all strong titles for consideration, and they are also urged not to overload the suggestion list. Overloading the list undermines its function to focus attention on strong contenders. Committee members need to consider each title with regard to the award criteria and suggest only those titles deemed to be strong contenders.

There are no set parameters as to the number of suggestions a committee member may make. Some members suggest more titles than others. In the suggestion process, it is important for committee members to move forward only those titles deemed strong enough to merit careful consideration by the whole committee.

The suggestion process focuses attention on particular titles. It does not limit the committee's reading. Committee members are expected to identify, obtain, read, and consider other eligible titles as a matter of routine. Committee members are expected to suggest strong titles as a matter of routine.

In summary, it is the responsibility of committee members to make suggestions by the designated deadlines and to consider carefully all suggested titles.

## NOMINATION PROCESS

Twice during the year the Chair calls for nominations. Each time, committee members are required to nominate three books deemed to be the strongest contenders based on the award criteria. They are also required to provide a written justification statement for each book nominated.

The nomination process serves several important functions. It requires committee members to identify the strongest contenders. It also measures support for titles. The written justifications serve as preparation for oral discussion at the Midwinter Selection Meeting by providing practice in how to succinctly state points that speak to the award criteria. (Justification statements are usually no more than 100 words). Refer for Part IV, “*Justification Statement: Sample.*”

Nominations are submitted according to an established nomination ballot form. The Chair either provides a template of the form by e-mail or asks committee members to re-create the form for themselves. Refer to Part IV, “*Nomination Ballot (#1): Sample*” and “*Nomination Ballot (#2): Sample.*”

In submitting their ballots, committee members do not rank their nominations in order of preference. This practice helps discourage early judgements, and it underscores the importance of Midwinter discussion. Nominated books form the core for the Midwinter book discussion list.

In the second round of nominations, committee members sometimes nominate titles previously nominated by others on the committee. This practice allows the committee to measure support for titles.

Nomination deadlines are listed on the calendar established at the beginning of the year. Nominations and justification statements are submitted to the Chair by e-mail to meet designated deadlines. Nominations and justification statements sent by U.S. mail or FAX must be **received** by those designated deadlines.

For each set of nominations, the Chair compiles a list of the nominated titles, indicates the number of nominations for each title, attributes nominations to committee members, and distributes the list to committee members. After the second round of nominations, the Chair distributes a cumulative list of nominated titles. (These two lists may be combined). For each set of nominations, the Chair also sends the justification statements to committee members.

The Chair works as quickly as possible to get the nomination lists and justification statements distributed to committee members. Turn around time is

a week or less. At the same time, nomination lists are also forwarded to the ALSC staff.

Serious consideration is to be given to all nominated titles including those with minimal support. Sometimes only one committee member has seen a particular book. Sometimes support grows after re-readings or in comparison to other books under consideration.

After the second round of nominations, it becomes easier for the committee to make comparisons among nominated titles and to weigh relative strengths and weaknesses with regard to the award criteria.

It is possible to make further suggestions once the nomination process is complete. Such suggestions appear on the Midwinter discussion list. These further suggestions allow committee members to move forward books published late in the year, and, in rare instances, a strong title previously overlooked.

The nomination process focuses attention on particular titles. It does not limit the committee's reading. Committee members are expected to identify, read, and consider other eligible titles as a matter of routine. Committee members also are expected to move strong titles forward through the suggestion process and the nomination process as a matter of routine.

In summary, it is the responsibility of committee members to make nominations and submit written justification statements by the designated deadlines and to consider carefully all nominations, justification statements, and further suggestions moved forward after the nomination process is complete.

#### PARTICIPATION OF ALSC MEMBERSHIP

Because the Sibert Award was presented for the first time in 2001, it is especially important to develop interest in the award and in informational books in general. ALSC members-at-large are encouraged to participate in the selection process by submitting titles for consideration to the Chair.

It is the responsibility of the Chair to call for titles to consider several times during the year through the ALSC listserv, the *ALSCConnect* Newsletter, on the ALSC website, and in *Children and Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*. In addition, the Chair may call for titles to consider on other listservs having to do with children's literature. On an individual basis, committee members also may call for titles to consider from members-at-large.

Titles submitted for consideration by members-at-large are forwarded to the Chair. The Chair distributes this information to committee members in a timely manner. Titles submitted for consideration by members-at-large are accepted up to two weeks before the Midwinter Selection Meeting.

The committee is not obligated to include titles submitted for consideration by members-at-large on the Midwinter discussion list. Committee members consider these titles along with all other eligible titles when making monthly suggestions, nominations, or, late in the year, further suggestions. At the Midwinter Selection Meeting, only titles nominated by committee members are considered, along with further suggestions from committee members moved forward after the nomination process is complete. Refer to Part II, *Midwinter Discussion List*.

The Chair and other committee members promote interest in the award in a number of ways. They:

- Encourage ALSC members-at-large to submit titles for consideration throughout the year.
- Encourage and/or organize mock Sibert Award book discussions. (Results are welcomed by the committee).
- Talk about the award within the children's book community, at schools, and at state and local library conferences.
- Encourage discussion of eligible books on appropriate listservs before selection and of the winners after selection.
- Interest local news media in covering the award.

It is recommended that the Chair establish contact with the Chairs of Newbery, Caldecott, and Notable Children's Book Committees in order to share common concerns and provide mutual support.

## COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION

The selection process depends on the full participation of committee members. Therefore, it is important for all committee members to identify, obtain, read and consider eligible books; meet designated suggestion and nomination deadlines; communicate with the Chair as needed; participate in electronic discussions as needed; and contribute to discussion at required meetings.

ALSC is grateful for the full participation of committee members. In recognition of their commitment, the Chair sends two letters of appreciation to the employers/supervisors of committee members—one at the outset and one at the conclusion of committee service. Refer to Part IV, “*Employee Address Request Form: Sample*,” “*Letter to Committee Members’ Employers/Supervisors (#1): Sample*,” and “*Letter to Committee Members’ Employers/Supervisors (#2): Sample*.”

In addition, committee members sometimes notify employers/supervisors about their work on the Sibert Committee independently. Also, they often notify local newspapers, professional organizations, and/or their own alumni organizations of their work. The resulting notice underscores individual participation as well as the work of ALSC and ALA. Refer to Part IV, “*News Release Form: Sample*.”

At the Annual Conference, the committee usually practices book discussion. At the Midwinter Selection Meeting, full discussion of books under consideration is central to the selection process. For these book discussions, committee members are asked to adhere to helpful guidelines:

- Speak loudly and clearly.
- Speak to the group as a whole. Refrain from private conversations during the meetings.
- Speak briefly and to the point. That is, speak only to the terms, criteria and definitions of the Sibert Award. Avoid plot summaries, personal anecdotes, and generalities such as “This is a nice book.”
- Listen openly to other committee members.
- Respond thoughtfully to what others have to say.
- Make comparisons but only in relationship to other eligible books. That is, do not compare a book with an author’s body of work or with books published before the year under consideration.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE MEETING  
(PRIOR TO THE MIDWINTER SELECTION MEETING)

The Annual Conference is important. It allows the committee time to prepare for the work ahead. The committee does not engage in the actual selection process. Selection takes place at the Midwinter Selection Meeting. The Chair will provide a short list of suggested titles that will allow the committee to practice its discussion process.

**Preparation**

Committee members and the Chair are responsible for making careful preparations for the Annual Conference Meeting.

Committee Member Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of committee members to:

- **Obtain, read, and consider all books on the practice discussion list prior to Annual.**
- **Bring**

	Sibert Award Committee Manual.
	Pertinent committee communications.
	Personal notes about all books to be discussed.
	Reviews of books to be discussed (optional).
	Notes on books to be introduced formally into practice discussion. (In advance of Annual, the Chair assigns committee members to introduce books into discussion. Usually committee members are assigned books that they themselves suggested).
	Copies of books to be introduced for practice discussion.

Chair Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Chair to:

- **Notify**

	The ALSC staff about which books have been suggested on an on-going basis and as soon as possible.
	The committee members about the times and locations of meetings.

- **Establish**

	A short list of suggested titles for practice book discussion.
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- **Check on**

	Meeting schedule as soon as possible. Work with the ALSC staff on scheduling concerns.
	Meeting room arrangement as soon as possible. Work with ALSC on a comfortable arrangement with a table conducive to discussion.
	Books under consideration. Work with the ALSC staff. One copy of each book on the practice discussion list is to be sent to Annual by ALSC. Sometimes books are missing in which case the Chair specifically arranges for them to be on hand. It is necessary to have a book in hand for practice discussion of that book to take place.

- **Arrange for**

	Access to the meeting room. Work with the ALSC staff to obtain key.
	Secretary to take minutes on procedural matters, but not on practice book discussion.
	A second set of books under consideration. Work with the committee. The Chair asks committee members to bring books that they are introducing formally into discussion.

- **Provide**

	A proposed agenda (distributed prior to Annual).
	A short list for the practice book discussion (distributed prior to Annual).
	Information packet for committee with a final agenda, discussion list, discussion guidelines, etc.
	Name labels for discussion table.

### **Agenda**

The agenda at Annual Conference includes:

- An opportunity for committee members to become re-acquainted.
- Discussion of terms, criteria, and definitions for award and Honor Books.
- Discussion of procedures to be used by the committee during the remainder of the year and at the Midwinter Selection Meeting.
- Review of responsibilities for committee members and the Chair.
- Discussion of the importance of full participation by committee members and the Chair.
- Discussion of what steps to take should full participation be impossible (e.g., how to tender a resignation).
- Review role of the Priority Group Consultant. At the discretion of the Chair, the Priority Group Consultant is invited to address the committee.
- Discussion of criteria for evaluating informational books in general. At the discretion of the Chair, an expert is invited to address the committee.
- Practice book discussion using a short list of suggested titles.

The secretary takes minutes on the order of business and on procedural matters. No notes are taken on the practice book discussion. After Annual, the secretary prepares the minutes and sends them to the Chair. The Chair reviews the minutes and distributes them to committee members.

### **Book Discussion**

It is important to remember that only the book discussion at Midwinter leads to final selection. Book discussion at Annual is for practice only. Therefore, it is not necessary to discuss a long list of books at Annual. The Chair establishes a short list well before Annual to allow committee members time to prepare. This exercise serves several functions. It allows the committee to practice meaningful

book discussion based on the award criteria, to raise and clarify procedural questions, and to become comfortable working together as a group.

### **Report**

After the Annual Conference (prior to the Midwinter Selection Meeting), the Chair prepares and submits a report about the committee's work for the Board on the Post-Annual Conference Meeting Report form (see the Division Leadership Manual and the ALSC website) and by the designated deadline.

## MIDWINTER DISCUSSION LIST

All eligible books are considered throughout the year leading up to the Midwinter Selection Meeting. All eligible books remain under consideration up to the beginning of the Midwinter Selection Meeting.

Book discussion at the Midwinter Selection Meeting is limited to an established list of books. Those books have been identified as strong contenders through the suggestion process and the nomination process.

The following parameters apply:

- The Midwinter Discussion List is established using titles of books nominated by committee members and additional titles further suggested by committee members after the nomination process is complete.
- No books may be added to the discussion list once the Midwinter Selection Meeting begins. Therefore, it is important to adhere to all deadlines.
- Titles submitted for consideration by ALSC members-at-large need to be received by the Chair two weeks prior to the Midwinter Selection Meeting to allow for careful consideration. Throughout the year, the Chair collects such titles and distributes them to the committee in a timely manner. The committee is not obligated to include titles submitted for consideration by members-at-large on the Midwinter discussion list. Committee members consider these titles along with all other eligible titles when making monthly suggestions, nominations, or, late in the year, further suggestions. At the Midwinter Selection Meeting, only titles nominated by committee members are considered, along with further suggestions from committee members moved forward after the nomination process is complete.

## MIDWINTER SELECTION MEETING

The Midwinter Selection Meeting is all-important. It results in the selection of the award winner and the possible selection of Honor Books. There is much to accomplish at Midwinter.

### **Preparation**

Committee members and the Chair are responsible for making careful preparations for the Midwinter Selection Meeting as listed below.

#### Committee Member Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of committee members to:

- Obtain, read, and consider all books on the Midwinter discussion list prior to the Midwinter Selection Meeting.
- **Bring**

	Sibert Award Committee Manual.
	Pertinent committee communications.
	Personal notes about all books under consideration.
	Reviews of books under consideration (optional).
	Justification statements for all books under consideration.
	Notes on books to be introduced formally into discussion. (In advance of Midwinter, the Chair assigns committee members to introduce books into discussion. Usually committee members are assigned books that they themselves nominated).
	Copies of books to be introduced for discussion.
	Copies of any other books under consideration that may require re-reading (optional).
	Biographical information on authors represented on discussion list. Committee members are sometimes asked to bring such information for the authors of books that they formally introduce into discussion (at request of the Chair).

#### Chair Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Chair to:

- **Notify**

	The ALSC staff about which books have been suggested and nominated on an on-going basis and as soon as possible.
	The committee members about the times and locations of meetings.

- **Establish**

	A Midwinter book discussion list.
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- **Check on**

	Meeting schedule as soon as possible. Work with the ALSC staff on scheduling concerns.
	Meeting room arrangement as soon as possible. Work with the ALSC staff on a comfortable arrangement with a table conducive to discussion.
	Books under consideration. Work with the ALSC staff. One copy of each book under consideration is to be sent to Midwinter by the ALSC staff; however sometimes books may

	be missing, in which case the Chair specifically arranges for them to be on hand. It is necessary to have a book in hand for discussion of that book to take place.
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• **Arrange for**

	Access to the meeting room. Work with the ALSC staff to obtain key.
	Biographical information on authors represented on the discussion list. Work with the committee. The Chair may ask committee members to bring such information for the authors of books that they formally introduce into discussion.
	A second set of books under consideration. Work with the committee. The Chair asks committee members to bring books that they are introducing into discussion. The result is having two sets of books which is helpful for purposes of re-reading and for writing the press release.
	Secretary and tellers (2).

• **Provide**

	Information packet for committee with agendas, discussion list, discussion guidelines, etc.
	An established agenda (distributed to committee prior to Midwinter).
	Name labels for discussion table.
	Office supplies/equipment (computer, calculator, camera, thesaurus, etc).
	Tally sheets and selection ballots for voting.

**Agenda**

Introductions

Reintroduce committee members.

Jobs

Explain roles of secretary and tellers. Prior to the Midwinter Selection Meeting, several committee members are asked by the Chair to serve in these roles:

- Secretary: Takes minutes on order of business and all procedural matters. No minutes are kept on book discussions or balloting. The secretary turns in the minutes to the Chair at the end of the Midwinter Selection Meeting. The Chair turns the minutes in to the Executive Director at the conclusion of Midwinter.
- Tellers (2): Tabulate and double-check all selection ballots and tally sheets. The tellers turn all selection ballots and tally sheets over to Chair after the Midwinter Selection Meeting. The Chair turns the selection ballots and tally sheets over to the Executive Director at the conclusion of Midwinter.

Discussion of Voting Procedures:

Discuss voting procedures for winner and possible Honor Books.

- Review voting procedure for selecting the winner. See below.
- Decide order for discussion of books, ordinarily alphabetical by author unless similar titles are considered together.
- Review possible voting procedures for selecting Honor Books should the committee decide to do so. See below.

### Book Discussion

Books are discussed one by one in the first round of discussion. After all books have been discussed, it is possible to re-open discussion on selected titles before moving to a selection ballot. Important guidelines apply:

- Discussion is focused first on a book's strengths before its weaknesses.
- Discussion is as even-handed as possible. Books do not always require the same length of discussion.
- Discussion is meaningful, that is, based on the award criteria.
- Discussion of each book concludes with a closing statement from the committee member who introduced it formally into discussion. This practice provides for balance—the negative and the positive. (optional)

### Balloting

When there is consensus that all the books on the discussion list are fully discussed, the committee proceeds to a selection ballot. Refer to Part IV, "*Selection Ballot: Sample*" for a sample selection ballot. Certain procedures apply:

- Committee members list first, second, and third place votes for the award on a selection ballot.
- In tabulating ballot results, the tellers assign four points to each first place vote, three points to each second place vote, and two points to each third place vote.

There is a formula to determine the winner.

A book must receive at least five first place votes at four points per vote for a total of 20 points. In addition, that book must have a five point lead over the book receiving the next highest number of points.

### Tally.

Once balloting is complete, the tellers tabulate the results. Refer to "Part IV, *Voting Tally Sheet: Sample*" for a sample tally sheet. The tabulations are double-checked, and the Chair reads the results aloud to the committee. Depending on the results, certain steps are taken:

- If there is a winner, the committee proceeds to considering whether or not to select Honor Books. The same voting procedure is used as for the award winner.
- If the first ballot does not produce a winner, the committee follows procedures for re-balloting.

### Re-Balloting

The committee may not proceed to another ballot without a second round of book discussion. At this point, certain choices present themselves, and certain procedures apply:

- By consensus the committee may choose to withdraw from the discussion list all titles that received no votes on the first ballot.
- By consensus the committee may choose to withdraw additional titles that received minimal support on the first ballot.
- Once withdrawn from the discussion list, a book is permanently eliminated from consideration for the award.
- Once a second round of discussion is complete, the committee proceeds to a second ballot.
- On a second ballot (and, if necessary on subsequent ballots), votes are tabulated by the tellers who use the same point system and formula as in the first round to determine a winner.
- If after a second ballot, there is still no winner, the committee is required to re-open discussion and then re-ballot, alternating between discussion and re-balloting until a winner is selected.

### Honor Books.

Once a winner is selected, the issue of Honor Books is addressed. The terms of the award provide parameters:

- There is no requirement that Honor Books be named.
- There is no rule dictating the number of Honor Books to be named.
- There is the expectation that Honor Books be truly distinguished, not merely strong contenders for the award.

The committee first considers whether or not to select Honor Books. If it decides there are to be none, the selection process is complete. If Honor Books are to be chosen, the selection process proceeds. At this point, certain choices present themselves:

- whether or not to use the winning selection ballot to choose Honor Books. The committee looks at titles with the next highest number of points.
- whether or not to ballot one more time. Only one additional ballot is allowed. The Honor Book selection ballot consists of titles from the winning selection ballot that received points. (Of course, the winner is eliminated). By consensus, titles with no remaining support also may be withdrawn.

The committee studies the ballot tally (either from the winning selection ballot or from one subsequent ballot on Honor Books), and the committee determines which books committee members deem to be truly distinguished.

Honor Books are announced to the public in alphabetical order by author to confer equal status for all.

Once the committee completes the selection process, there is still work to be done.

### **Review of Confidentiality Policy**

It is imperative for committee members to maintain secrecy regarding the selection outcome prior to the Press Conference. It is also important for committee members to be mindful of confidentiality issues going forward. Refer to Part I, ALSC Policies. *Confidentiality*.

### **Preparation of Information for Press Release**

The committee re-convenes after the selection process is complete to prepare information requested by the PIO for a press release. Responsibilities are:

- The Chair divides preparation responsibilities among committee members and edits their work for continuity. Biographical information about the winning authors and justification statements about the winning books are used as background.
- The Chair provides the requested information to the PIO by the designated deadline and in the designated format.
- The PIO prepares a press release to be distributed immediately after the Press Conference. The press release is available in print or on the ALSC web page. Refer to Part IV, *Press Release: Sample*.

### **Recommendations**

After the selection process is complete, if it so chooses, the Chair and the committee may make recommendations regarding selection policies, practices, and procedures. These recommendations go to the new Chair, the President and Vice President, and/or the Board. The recommendations cover internal changes, changes in the working relationship with the ALSC staff, and/or matters requiring Board action.

### **Press Conference**

The committee convenes at the PIO headquarters on the morning of the Press Conference. Shortly before the Press Conference, the Chair notifies the winning author(s) and publisher(s) by phone. Usually, this is done by speakerphone, so that the whole committee helps share the news and offers congratulations.

At the Press Conference, the President announces the winner of the Sibert Award and, if chosen, the Honor Books. Other award announcements include the Batchelder, Caldecott, Coretta Scott King, Newbery, Printz, Carnegie, and, in appropriate years, Pura Belpré and Wilder Awards. Seats are usually reserved for the various committees. Committee members are usually asked to stand for

recognition when the award is announced, and they are usually asked to pose for a group photograph at the end of the Press Conference .

## AFTER MIDWINTER SELECTION MEETING

### **Public Relations**

Committee members work with their local news media in publicizing ALSC awards and other ALA children's book awards. If interviewed, committee members emphasize the importance of distinguished informational books for children, the award criteria, and the committee's reasons for its choices as stated in the press release. Committee members are free to express their own views on particular books, but they need to be mindful of confidentiality issues. Refer to, Part I ALSC Policies. *Confidentiality*.

### **Correspondence**

The Chair handles correspondence specific to his/her committee's selection and work. In particular, the Chair sends a letter of appreciation to the employers/supervisors of committee members. Refer to Part IV, "*Letter to Committee Members' Employer/Supervisor (#2): Sample*."

### **Report**

The Chair prepares and submits a report about the committee's work to the ALSC Board on the Post-Midwinter Meeting Report Form (see the Division Leadership Manual and the ALSC website) and by the designated deadline.

### **Preparation for the Award Presentation**

The Chair works with the ALSC staff and organizers of the Annual Membership Meeting to make necessary arrangements for presentation of the award. Communication with the winning author(s) and publisher(s) is paramount. It is also important to extend an invitation to the Award Presentation to representatives from Bound-To-Stay-Bound Books.

In addition, the Chair prepares remarks for the award presentation at the Annual Conference (see below)

## AWARD PRESENTATION

At the Annual Conference following the Midwinter Selection Meeting, the Sibert Award is presented at the ALSC Annual Membership Meeting. The winner receives a bronze medal, and the Honor Book authors receive certificates.

Although committee members are not required to be present, most find a special satisfaction in being part of the audience on this important occasion.

In making the award presentation, the Chair:

- Introduces committee members.
- Introduces any representative(s) from Bound-to-Stay-Bound Books if present.
- Makes prepared remarks, explaining why the committee deemed the winning book and, if chosen, the Honor Books as truly distinguished with regard to the award criteria.
- Introduces the winning author and, if chosen, the Honor Book authors and presents the awards to them. A medal is given to the winner and certificates to the Honor Book winners.

## **PART III: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

INTRODUCTION

COMMITTEE CHAIR

PRIORITY GROUP CONSULTANT

ALSC STAFF

ALSC MEMBERSHIP

ALSC BOOK AWARD AND NOTABLE CHILDREN'S BOOKS COMMITTEE

CHAIRS

ALSC BOARD

ALSC PRESIDENT

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE (PIO)

## INTRODUCTION

The Sibert Committee is responsible for selecting the award winner and, if it so chooses, Honor Books. The Sibert Committee Manual describes the policies, practices, and procedures that guide the selection process. It describes the roles and responsibilities of committee members and of the Chair as well.

The Chair, the Priority Consultant, ALSC (staff, membership, award and Notable Children’s Books Committee chairs, the ALSC Board, and the ALSC President), and the ALA Public Information Office have specific roles and responsibilities. The checklists below with those roles and responsibilities are comprehensive but not exhaustive:

### COMMITTEE CHAIR: RESPONSIBILITIES

#### **General**

	Sends welcome letter to members with procedural information.	ASAP
	Sends congratulations letter to employer/supervisor of committee members.	ASAP
	Establishes calendar for year and distributes it to committee.	ASAP
	Checks to see that Sibert Award Committee Manual is sent to committee members by the ALSC staff.	ASAP
	Creates a mail roster (work, home, e-mail, fax with preferences).	ASAP
	Communicates with the ALSC staff about meeting schedules and room arrangements for Annual and Midwinter meetings.	on-going
	Keeps in touch with committee members about which books are not readily available	ongoing
	Notifies publishers about which books committee members have not seen.	ongoing
	Solicits suggestions/distributes suggestions list to committee. After first round of suggestions, distributes cumulative lists as well.	monthly
	Calls for nominations and justification statements/distributes nomination lists and justification statements to committee. After second round of nominations, distributes a cumulative list of nominated titles.	Oct. and Dec.
	Invites ALSC members-at-large to submit titles for consideration. Uses ALSC listserv, ALSCConnect Newsletter, ALSC website and <i>Children and Libraries</i> . (optional: other publications and listservs about children’s literature).	on-going
	Distributes lists of titles for consideration submitted by ALSC members-at-large to committee.	on-going
	Forwards suggestions lists and nomination lists to the ALSC staff.	on-going
	Maintains database of suggestions and nominations to include titles of all books suggested and nominated (author, publisher, illustrator); # of suggestions; # of nominations; date of suggestion and nomination; names of those suggesting and nominating each title; and committee member assigned to introduce formally books into discussion at Midwinter Selection Meeting.	on-going
	Consults with Priority Group Consultant on procedural and personnel issues and on eligibility questions.	on-going

	Answers all correspondence promptly (committee, ALSC, and general).	on-going
	Copies appropriate correspondence to committee members, Executive Director, ALSC President and Vice-President, and to Priority Group Consultant.	on-going
	Facilitates committee e-mail discussions as needed.	on-going
	Sends appreciation letters to committee members' supervisors	at outset and conclusion of service
	Works with committee members not fully participating and after consultation with Priority Consultant, recommends resignation.	on-going
	Attends Division Leadership meetings as schedule permits.	on-going

### **Annual Conference (before Midwinter Selection Meeting) and Midwinter Selection Meeting**

	Works with ALSC staff on all meeting arrangements: scheduling, room assignment, discussion list books to be provided, etc.	on-going
	Notifies committee members as to meeting schedule and place.	ASAP
	Sets agendas for Annual and Midwinter Meetings/distributes proposed agendas to committee ahead of meetings.	May and Dec.
	Develops and distributes roster of committee members' hotel addresses for communication.	May and Dec.
	Prepares and distributes list of books to be discussed to committee members and the ALSC Executive Director.	May and Dec.
	Prepares information packets for committee members with agendas, discussion lists, discussion guidelines, etc.	May and Dec.
	Keeps committee members and ALSC staff informed of late suggestions.	Dec. and Jan.
	Conducts Annual and Midwinter Selection Meetings.	Annual and Midwinter
	Assigns committee secretary (prior to meetings).	June and Jan.
	Assigns tellers (prior to Midwinter Selection Meeting).	Midwinter
	Arranges for necessary supplies/equipment (books, ballots, name cards, tally sheets, office sundries, calculator, computer, camera, thesaurus, etc).	prior to Annual and Midwinter
	Arranges for committee members to introduce formally books into discussion (for Annual, usually books they have suggested and for Midwinter, usually books they have nominated).	May and Dec.
	Arranges to have biographical information on strong contenders available at Midwinter.	prior to Midwinter
	Gathers phone numbers for authors of books considered strong contenders to back up ALSC staff (optional).	prior to Midwinter
	Asks committee members to make recommendations regarding policies, practices, and procedures. Recommendations cover internal changes, changes in the working relationship with ALSC staff and PIO, and/or matters requiring Board action.	at end of Midwinter Selection Meeting
	Attends Press Conference briefing.	Midwinter
	Oversees preparation of press release information for PIO/submits information in designated format along with winning books to PIO by designated deadline.	Midwinter

With committee, notifies winners and their publishers by phone prior to the Press Conference.	Midwinter
Attends Press Conference with committee members.	Midwinter
Reviews and distributes minutes from Annual to committee members.	after Annual
Submits minutes, ballots, and tally sheets to ALSC Executive Director.	at end of Midwinter Selection Meeting
Prepares committee report on Annual and Midwinter meetings for ALSC board	after Annual and Midwinter Selection meetings

### After Midwinter Selection Meeting

Sends appreciation letters to committee members and to committee members' employers/supervisors.	after Midwinter
Submits committee recommendations regarding policies, practices, and procedures to new Chair, President and Vice President, and/or Board.	after Midwinter
Contacts publishers of winning books to answer questions about the award presentation and make sure authors are clear on arrangements.	after Midwinter
Checks with ALSC staff to make sure Bound-To-Stay-Bound representative(s) receives formal invitation.	after Midwinter
Invites committee members to award presentation.	after Midwinter
Prepares comments for award presentation.	after Midwinter

### Annual Conference (after Midwinter Selection Meeting)

Greets award winners and publishers.	Annual Membership Meeting
Introduces committee members to audience as part of award presentation.	Annual Membership Meeting
Introduces any representative(s) from Bound-To-Stay Bound Books to audience as part of award presentation.	Annual Membership Meeting
Presents Sibert Award and Honor Book awards, prefaced by remarks about why each book was selected.	prepared Annual Membership Meeting

### PRIORITY GROUP CONSULTANT: RESPONSIBILITIES

Assists Chair with procedural, personnel, and eligibility questions.	on-going
Assists members with unusual issues, particularly those having to do with Chair.	on-going
Attends committee meeting at Annual Conference to explain role (at request of Chair).	June

## ALSC STAFF: RESPONSIBILITIES

### General

	Checks eligibility for membership of committee appointments.	before notification
	Notifies members appointed by President.	@ Nov. in year before work begins
	Distributes manuals to committee members upon acceptance of appointment.	@Nov. in year before work begins
	Provides publishers with a mail roster of committee members.	ASAP
	Maintains a collection of all books suggested and nominated for the award based on lists sent by Chair.	on-going
	Supplies publishers with a committee roster/posts committee roster on ALSC award web page.	Spring
	Works with Chair on meeting schedule and meeting room arrangements for Annual (prior to Midwinter Selection Meeting) and Midwinter Selection Meeting.	on-going
	Assists with call for ALSC members-at-large to submit titles for consideration (ALSC publications and ALSC listserve).	on-going

### Annual Conference (before Midwinter Selection Meeting) and Midwinter Selection Meeting

	Provides one copy of each book on discussion lists/notifies Chair of any books that cannot be provided.	@May and December
	Arranges for Chair to have key to meeting rooms.	Annual and Midwinter
	Arranges for Chair to have access to photocopy service.	Annual and Midwinter
	Provides phone numbers for winning author(s) and/or publishers.	Midwinter
	Works with PIO on arrangements for announcement: phoning winners, Press Conference, press release, distribution of press release in print and on ALSC website, etc.	Midwinter
	Works with President on Press Conference award announcement.	Midwinter

### After Midwinter Selection Meeting

	Works with winners and their publishers regarding award presentation and winner's speech.	after Midwinter
	Works with winner's publisher to arrange for printed award presentation program.	after Midwinter
	Works with President and organizers of Annual Membership Meeting on arrangements for award presentation.	after Midwinter
	Handles office correspondence related to the awards.	on-going
	Contacts representative(s) of Bound-To-Stay Bound Books to issue formal invitation to award presentation.	after Midwinter
	Arranges for medal and certificates.	after Midwinter
	Provides Chair with information on award presentation (timing, what needs to be covered, etc).	after Midwinter

### Annual Conference (after Midwinter Selection Meeting)

	Brings award and certificates to Conference.	Annual
	Handles last minute details related to award ceremony.	Annual

### ALSC MEMBERSHIP: ROLE

	Submits titles for consideration.	on-going
	Promotes community interest in the award/distributes information about award.	on-going
	Promotes and participates in mock Sibert Award discussions and discussions about informational books.	on-going
	Attends award ceremony as part of Annual Membership Meeting.	Annual after Midwinter Selection Meeting

### ALSC BOOK AWARD (NEWBERY AND CALDECOTT) AND NOTABLE CHILDREN'S BOOK COMMITTEE CHAIRS: ROLE

	Confer with Chair about common concerns and provide mutual support (optional).	on-going
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### ALSC BOARD: RESPONSIBILITIES

	Regularly, and on request, reviews, reaffirms, and/or changes terms and procedures for award selection.	on-going
	Authorizes venue of award presentation.	

### ALSC PRESIDENT: RESPONSIBILITIES

	Appoints six committee members plus a Chair (Note: with the 2005 committee, this will change to "appoints four members to committee").	Fall of year before work begins
	Fills vacancies as needed.	on-going
	Deals with conflict of interest or with problem of committee member participation in consultation with the Executive Committee and Priority Group Consultant.	on-going
	Promotes the award along with others.	on-going
	Presides over award announcement at Press Conference.	Midwinter Selection Meeting
	Presides over award presentation at Membership Meeting.	Annual (after Midwinter Selection Meeting)

## PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE (PIO): RESPONSIBILITIES

	Provides guidelines for preparation of press release information— explanation of why books are truly distinguished and biographical information on winning author(s). Requests books.	prior to Midwinter Selection Meeting
	Designates format and deadlines for submission of information/books needed to prepare press release.	prior to Midwinter Selection Meeting
	Prepares information for press release in print and for ALSC web page based on information submitted by committee.	Midwinter Selection Meeting
	Briefs Chair on arrangements for notifying winners and for Press Conference.	Midwinter Selection Meeting
	Provides time, space, and equipment for Chair to make to phone calls to winners before Press Conference (preferably a speakerphone to allow committee participation).	Midwinter Selection Meeting
	Arranges for Press Conference.	Midwinter Selection Meeting

## **PART IV: SAMPLES**

*Calendar: Sample*

*Employer/Supervisor Information Form: Sample*

*Letter to Committee Members' Employers/Supervisors (#1): Sample*

*Letter to Committee Members' Employers/Supervisors (#2): Sample*

*News Release Form: Sample*

*Award Announcement/Call for Suggestions: Sample*

*Note-taking Form: Sample*

*Nomination Ballot (#1): Sample*

*Nomination Ballot (#2): Sample*

*Justification Statement: Sample*

*Midwinter Discussion List: Sample*

*Selection Ballot: Sample*

*Voting Tally Sheet: Sample*

*Press Release (to be included in hard copy/link on line): Sample*

*List of Past Sibert Winners*

**ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**  
*Calendar: Sample*

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**2001 ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**  
Calendar  
2000-2001

January/February	ALA Midwinter Meeting; first committee meeting. Optional Attendance
May 2	Suggestions due*
June 6	Suggestions due*
July 8 July 9	ALA Annual Conference, Chicago, Illinois Award Organization and Discussion (mandatory attendance) Meetings, 2-4 p.m., place TBA
August 1	Suggestions due*
September 5	Suggestions due*
October 3	Suggestions due*
October 10	<b>NOMINATIONS #1</b> due (use form #1)**
November 7	Suggestions due*
December 5	Suggestions due*
December 12	<b>NOMINATIONS #2</b> due (use form #2)**
January 2	Suggestions due (for late submissions only)
January 12-17	ALA Midwinter Meeting, Washington, D.C. Award Selection (mandatory attendance)
June 14-20	ALA Annual Conference, San Francisco, California Award Presentation, ALSC Membership Meeting (optional attendance)

\*Suggestions are due on the first Tuesday of each month beginning in May with the exception of July.

\*\*Nominations are due on the second Tuesday of October and December

**ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**

*Employer/Supervisor Information: Sample*

Please supply the employer/supervisor information so a letter can be sent to your employer/supervisor regarding your participation on the Sibert Award Committee. You may list as many names as you like.

---

your name

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Supervisor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Title \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Supervisor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Title \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**

*Letter to Employer/ Supervisor #1: Sample*

April 1, 2000

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Please accept our congratulations and gratitude for your support of \_\_\_\_\_ during his/her term on the Association for Library Service to Children's Sibert Informational Book Award Committee.

This is an especially exciting assignment. The Sibert Award is new and most welcome, and, in this the pioneer year, there will be much to accomplish. Not only will the Committee select the most distinguished informational book and perhaps additional Honor Books. The Committee will also be establishing procedures and standards for the future.

Well over 5000 trade books are published for children each year, and many are informational books. In accepting an appointment, each committee member has made a professional commitment to be involved in an intense and time-consuming process: Reading, evaluating, discussing, and ultimately selecting the year's most distinguished informational books. Needless to say, already well-practiced reviewing and evaluative skills will be further honed and heightened.

In July our committee will meet during the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. We will meet to make our selections in January 2001 in Washington, D.C. The award presentation will be at the ALSC Membership Meeting in San Francisco in June 2001.

Thank you again for your support during this selection process.

Sincerely,

---

Chair, 2001 Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award Committee

## ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD

### *Letter to Employer / Supervisor #2: Sample*

March 3, 2001

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Please accept our congratulations and gratitude for your support of \_\_\_\_\_ upon completion of his/her term on the 2001 Sibert Informational Book Award Committee. As you probably know, the award is administered by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association.

For your information, the winners, announced in January, are as follows:

Winner:

**SIR WALTER RALEGH AND THE QUEST FOR EL DORADO** by Marc Aronson (Clarion).

In addition, there are four Honor Books.

**THE LONGITUDE PRIZE** by Joan Dash (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

**BLIZZARD** by Jim Murphy (Scholastic Press)

**MY SEASON WITH PENGUINS: AN ANTARCTIC JOURNAL** by Sophie Webb (Houghton Mifflin)

**PEDRO AND ME: FRIENDSHIP, LOSS AND WHAT I LEARNED** by Judd Winick (Henry Holt)

This was an exciting pioneer assignment. Not only did the Committee select a winner and Honor Books, the Committee also established procedures and standards for the future.

Well over 5000 trade books are published for children each year, and many are informational books. It is an enormous professional commitment to be involved in the intense and time-consuming selection process: Reading, evaluating, discussing, and selecting the year's most distinguished in informational books.

The Sibert Committee met in July at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. We met in Washington, D.C. in January to make our selections. The awards will be presented at the ALSC Membership Meeting in San Francisco in June 2001.

On behalf of ALSC I thank you for your support during this exciting first year of the Sibert Award. \_\_\_\_\_ was instrumental in launching the award and setting the highest standards in terms of process and informational books.

Thank you again for your support of \_\_\_\_\_ and the 2001 Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, 2001 Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award Committee

## ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD

### *News Release Form: Sample*

Committee members sometimes notify employers/supervisors about their work on the Sibert Committee independently. Also, they often notify local newspapers, professional organizations, and/or their own alumni organizations independently or through library public relations departments. The resulting notice underscores individual participation as well as the work of ALSC and ALA. Below is a sample news release form:

From: \_\_\_\_\_  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

\_\_\_\_\_ is named to position in National Library Group.  
your name and/or position

\_\_\_\_\_ will serve as \_\_\_\_\_ on the  
your name position (member or chair)

Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award Committee. The Committee is charged with selecting annually the most distinguished informational book for children published in the United States. Honor Books may be named. The Sibert Committee operates under the direction of the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association.

Include a brief statement of your professional responsibilities/activities.

The American Library Association serves as a voice of America's libraries and the people who depend on them. ALA promotes the highest quality library and information services and protects public access to information. There are nearly 64,000 members worldwide. It is the oldest and largest library association in the world with members in academic, public, school, government, and special libraries.

The Association for Library Service to Children is concerned with

- the evaluation of library materials for children;
- improving and expanding library services for children and those who work with them in all library settings;
- advocating the rights of children within and beyond libraries;
- supporting the professional development of members;
- supporting research and study in these areas.

## **ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**

### *Award Announcement/Call for Suggestions: Sample*

The Chair calls on ALSC members-at-large to submit titles for consideration by the committee. The Chair posts an announcement on the ALSC listserv, in *ALSCconnect* (the ALSC newsletter), in *Children and Libraries* and on the ALSC website several times during the year. The Chair may also solicit suggestions from other list serves having to do with children's literature. An example from the Sibert Award's first year:

In-Put Wanted: The ALSC/Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award Committee is asking the ALSC membership to submit titles for consideration. The Sibert Award is presented annually to the author of the most distinguished informational book published during the preceding year. Honor Books may be named.

Informational books are defined as those written and illustrated to present, organize, and interpret documentable factual material for children from birth through age fourteen. (Poetry and traditional literature are not eligible). Authors must be U.S. citizens. For other terms and criteria, please refer to the ALSC website.

The award will be announced at the Press Conference during the ALA Midwinter Conference to be held in Washington, D.C., in January, 2001. The award will be presented at the ALSC membership meeting during the ALA Annual Conference to be held in San Francisco in June 2001.

The 2001 Sibert Committee calls on ALSC members to submit titles for consideration. Please remember: Only informational books from the 2000 publishing year are under consideration for this award.

Please send suggestions to \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.  
Chair's name      e-mail address

**ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**

*Note-taking Form: Sample*

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**Author:**

**Title:**

**Publisher:**

**Illustrator:**

---

I suggested: Yes No

I nominated: Yes No

Reviews: BCCB Booklist Horn Book PW SLJ Other

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Subject/Summary

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Quality of writing (excellent, engaging, and distinctive use of language)

Quality of illustration (excellent, engaging, and distinctive visual material)

Organization (appropriate scope and sequence)

Documentation (appropriate citations to allow verification of facts)

Clarity (delineation of fact and theory)

Accuracy (author authority; current, etc)

Stimulating presentation of facts, concepts, and ideas

Style of presentation (text, visual material, and book design appropriate for subject and intended audience)

Features (index, table of contents, bibliography, glossary, graphics, author note, etc)

Child audience (respect for children’s understanding, abilities, and appreciation up to and including age fourteen)

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Strengths

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Weaknesses

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Comments

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The ALSC Informational Book Award shall be awarded annually to the author of the most distinguished informational book published during the preceding year. There are no limitations as to the character of the book except that it be original work. Poetry and traditional literature are not eligible. The award is restricted to authors who are citizens or residents of the United States. The book must be published in the United States. Honor Books may be named. They shall be books that also truly distinguished.

Significant contribution to the field of children's literature- gauged by how well the entire work elucidates, clarifies and enlivens its subject for a child audience. The committee considers overall accuracy, documentation, and organization. Although the award is presented to the author, visual material and book design figure into the committee’s decision along with text.

Children's literature- defined as the body of books for a potential child audience. Such books display respect for children's understanding, abilities, and appreciation. Children range from birth through age fourteen. Books for the entire range are to be considered.

Distinguished- defined as noted for significant achievement; marked by quality; excellence, or eminence; distinctive.

- excellent, engaging, and distinctive use of language.
- excellent, engaging, and distinctive visual presentation.
- appropriate organization and documentation.
- clear, accurate, and stimulating presentation of facts, concepts, and ideas.
- appropriate style of presentation for subject and for intended audience.
- supportive features (index, table of contents, maps, timelines, etc)
- appropriate for child audience

Not every book relies equally on every element. The committee need not find excellence across the board, but rather in those elements relevant to the book. The book must be a self-contained entity, not dependent on other media for enjoyment. Sibert Award is presented to honor excellent presentation of information in books for children. The award is not presented for didactic intent or for popularity.

**ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**

*Nomination Ballot #1: Sample*

**2001 ROBERT F. SIBERT  
INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**

Nomination Ballot #1 (three nominations due October 10, 2000)

I recommend to the committee for consideration for the Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award the following three titles (not in preferential order):

**Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Publisher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Illustrator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Publisher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Illustrator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Publisher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Illustrator:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
name \_\_\_\_\_ date

On another page, please write your justification statements—your reasons for nominating these books with regard to the award criteria. (Statements are usually no more than 100 words). Be sure to add your name and the date to that page. Please single-space for easier reproduction by other committee members.

Nominations and justification statements are due on Tuesday, October 10, 2000. (Delivery deadline for e-mail, U.S. Mail, and FAX as well).

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ / FAX number: \_\_\_\_\_ Mailing address:  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**ALSC/ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**  
*Nomination Ballot #2: Sample*

**2001 ROBERT F. SIBERT  
INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**  
Nomination Ballot #2 (three nominations due December 12, 2000)

I recommend to the committee for consideration for the Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award the following three titles (not in preferential order):

**Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Publisher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Illustrator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Publisher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Illustrator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Publisher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Illustrator:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ name

\_\_\_\_\_ date

On another page, please write your justification statements—your reasons for nominating these books with regard to the award criteria. (Statements are usually no more than 100 words). Be sure to add your name and the date to that page. Please single-space for easier reproduction by other committee members.

Nominations and justification statements are due on Tuesday, December 12, 2000. (Delivery deadline for e-mail, U.S. Mail, and FAX as well).

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ / FAX number: \_\_\_\_\_.

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

## ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD

### *Justification Statement: Example*

Each committee member nominates a total of six books for the publishing year. A justification statement is prepared for each title nominated, and the statements are distributed to the committee by the Chair.

Actual justification statements are confidential. They are read only by committee members. Below is a sample justification statement, written by a past Chair for a title that appeared on the 1999 ALSC Notable Children's Books list and, in her opinion, is a book that would have been a likely contender for the award. Statements are usually no more than 100 words.

Freedman, Russell. **MARTHA GRAHAM: A DANCER'S LIFE**. Clarion Books.

Freedman tells the story of a creative genius, tracing her personal story and making clear the effect she had artistically on the world. His involving narrative incorporates quotes fluidly, and while there are no direct references for these quotes, their context is clear. Acknowledgements support Freedman's authority, and his selected, annotated bibliography serves to lead the young reader on. Purposefully selective photographs are stunningly reproduced, adding the perfect illustrative rhythm to the text. Photographers are credited wherever possible. This work is thorough and convincing, beautifully organized and designed, engaging and haunting.

\_\_\_\_\_

name

\_\_\_\_\_

date



**ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**  
*Selection Ballot: Sample*  
**SELECTION BALLOT**

Ballot, Number \_\_\_\_\_

First Choice: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Choice: \_\_\_\_\_

Third Choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**

*Voting Tally Sheet: Sample*

Author/Title	1 <sup>st</sup> place 4 points (# votes times # points)	2 <sup>nd</sup> place 3 points (# votes times # points)	3 <sup>rd</sup> place 2 points (# votes times # points)	total

## **ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD**

*Press Release: Sample*

ALA News Release  
For Immediate Release  
January 2001

### ***Marc Aronson wins first-ever Robert F. Sibert Award***

Marc Aronson, author of "Sir Walter Raleigh and the Quest for El Dorado," was named the winner of the Robert F. Sibert Award for most distinguished informational book for children published in 2000. The book, published by Clarion Books, portrays the adventurous life of Sir Walter Raleigh and his quest to find the legendary city of El Dorado and the fate of the famous Lost Colony he sponsored in the New World.

The announcement was made January 15 during the American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting in Washington, D.C. The annual award is administered by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the ALA.

The award is sponsored by Bound-to-Stay- Bound Books, Inc., of Jacksonville, Ill., in honor of Robert F. Sibert, its longtime president. Sibert is known for his early work in establishing standards for book binding. In this biography, Aronson draws on the events, intrigues and literature of Elizabethan times to create a richly layered account of "the first modern man". Raleigh's search for El Dorado drives the elegantly structured plot and serves as a unifying allegory.

"Aronson's exemplary scholarship is evident everywhere in the text and accompanying matter, including the archival reproductions and thorough documentation that together explain and extend the narrative," said award committee chair Susan Faust. "Combined with beautiful bookmaking and eloquent storytelling, this book sets a clear standard of excellence in its presentation of a person in his time."

Formerly a senior editor at Henry Holt Books for Young Readers, Aronson is now vice president and editorial director at Carus Publishing. He is the author of "Art Attack: A Short Cultural History of the Avant-Garde," also from Clarion Books, and lives in New York City with his wife and son.

Four Sibert Honor Books also were named: "The Longitude Prize," by Joan Dash, illustrations by Dusan Petricic, published by Frances Foster Books/Farrar, Straus and Giroux; "Blizzard!: The Storm That Changed America," by Jim Murphy, published by Scholastic Press, a division of Scholastic Inc.; "My Season with Penguins: an Antarctic Journal," by Sophie Webb, published by Houghton Mifflin Company; and "Pedro and Me: Friendship, Loss, and What I Learned," written and illustrated by Judd Winick, published by Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

Set in the exciting historical framework of the 18th century, "The Longitude Prize," chronicles the invention of a seagoing clock by John Harrison and the surrounding scientific, economic and political activity of 18th-century Great Britain. Petricic's black-and-white illustrations chart with levity Harrison's drive to solve the longitude problem with his clocks and his struggle to receive

recognition for his ultimate achievement. A detailed glossary and concise timeline complement the book's bibliography and index. Dash lives in Seattle and is the author of numerous books, including a forthcoming biography of Helen Keller.

Murphy's "Blizzard!: The Storm That Changed America," is a gripping tale about the disastrous storm that blasted the Eastern seaboard in March 1888. "This work combines splendid storytelling, faultless research, thorough analysis and thoughtful design," Faust said. Lending immediacy are eyewitness accounts and evocative visual material. To underscore the historical context, Murphy highlights changes made in weather forecasting and city design after the blizzard.

In "My Season with Penguins: an Antarctic Journal," Webb deftly uses illustrated journal entries to document her participation in a two-month expedition to Antarctica to study Adelie penguins in 1996. She includes absorbing details of daily life for a scientist in the field, as well as the life and behavior of penguins. Clear prose and engaging illustrations done in watercolor, gouache and graphite convey how an ornithologist works and lives in the field.

In "Pedro and Me: Friendship, Loss, and What I Learned," cartoonist Winick tells the true story of his friendship with AIDS-educator Pedro Zamora in a graphic-novel format. "Important lessons are presented in a style friendly to young teens," Faust said. Learning from the friend he met on MTV's "The Real World," Winick continues Pedro's work even after his death.

Other members of the award selection committee are: Karen Breen of Kirkus Reviews; Carol M. Dumont, Children's Center librarian at Dallas Public Library; Kathleen Isaacs of Edmund Burke School, Washington, D.C.; Nina Lindsay of Oakland (Calif.) Public Library; Cathryn M. Mercier of Simmons College Center for the Study of Children's Literature, Boston, Mass.; and Ken Settingerton of Toronto Public Library.

More information on the Sibert Award can be found at <http://www.ala.org/alsc/sibert.html>.

### **Past Sibert Medal Winners**

- 2003 *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler*, by James Cross Giblin
- 2002 *Black Potatoes: The Story of the Great Irish Famine, 1845-1850*, by Susan Campbell Bartoletti
- 2001 *Sir Walter Raleigh and the Quest for El Dorado*, by Marc Aronson