



ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD COMMITTEE MANUAL

MARCH 2023

Foreword

The Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award was first presented in 2001. It came at the dawn of the 21st 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 await 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
Chair, Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award Manual Task Force
(Katherine Delmar Burke School)

Task Force Members:
Nina Lindsay (Oakland Public Library)
Cathryn Mercier (Center for the Study of Children's Literature, Simmons College)
Grace Ruth (San Francisco Public Library)

May 1, 2002

Table of Contents

[Foreword](#)

Table of Contents

[Notes](#)

[Part I: Background Information](#)

[History](#)

[Committee Function Statement](#)

[Composition of the Committee](#)

[Terms, Definitions, and Criteria](#)

[Part II: ALSC Policies and Procedures](#)

[ALSC Community Agreements](#)

[Diversity and ALSC Media Award Evaluation](#)

[ALSC Policy for Service on Award Committees](#)

[Conflict of Interest](#)

[Confidentiality](#)

[Guidelines for Award Committee Members](#)

[Meeting Attendance and Access to Materials](#)

[Frequency of Service on Award or Notable Book Committees](#)

[Relationship with Publishers](#)

[Guidelines for Committee Members](#)

[Guidelines for Publishers](#)

[Self-Published and Small-Press Titles](#)

[Part III: Committee Work](#)

[Welcome](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Committee Communication](#)

[Meeting Attendance](#)

[Resignation](#)

[Preparation](#)

[Committee Participation](#)

[Identifying, Obtaining, and Reading Eligible Books](#)

[Identifying Eligible Books](#)

[Obtaining Eligible Books](#)

[Determining Eligibility](#)

[Reading Eligible Books](#)

[Note-taking](#)

[Suggestion and Nomination Processes](#)

[Suggestions](#)

[Nominations](#)

[Meetings](#)

[Introductory Meeting \(Optional, Virtual\)](#)

[Initial Discussion Meeting \(Required, Virtual\)](#)

[Preparation](#)

[Agenda](#)

[Book Discussion](#)

[Meeting Minutes and Quarterly Report](#)

[Preliminary Deliberations \(Required, Virtual\)](#)

[LibLearnX Selection Meeting \(Required, In-Person\)](#)

[Preparation](#)

[Secretary](#)

[Agenda](#)

[Book Discussion](#)

[Balloting](#)

[Re-balloting](#)

[Honor Books](#)

[Review of Confidentiality Policy](#)

[Drafting of Press Release](#)

[Award and Honor Book Notification Calls](#)

[ALA Youth Media Awards Press Conference](#)

[After LibLearnX Selection Meeting](#)

[Public Relations](#)

[Correspondence](#)

[Final Quarterly Report](#)

[Recommendations](#)

[Preparation for the Award Presentation](#)

[Celebration and Presentation of the Awards](#)

[Preservation of Committee Materials](#)

[Conclusion of Service](#)

[Part IV: Additional Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Committee Chair: Additional Responsibilities](#)

[Administrative Assistant](#)

[Participation of ALSC Membership](#)

[Priority Group Consultant](#)

[ALSC Staff](#)

[General Responsibilities](#)

[Responsibilities at LibLearnX Selection Meeting](#)

[Responsibilities after LibLearnX Selection Meeting](#)

[Responsibilities at Celebration and Presentation of the Awards](#)

[ALSC President](#)

[Appendix A: Supporting Documents](#)

[Checklist for Prospective ALSC Award Committee Members](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions about the Policy for Service on Award and Evaluation Committees](#)

[Reading Lists](#)

[General Reading List](#)

[Sibert Award: Suggested Reading List](#)

[Past Award Winners](#)

[Award/Medal Specific Documents](#)

[Appendix B: Expanded Definitions and Examples](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Publication Eligibility Issues](#)

[Simultaneous](#)

[First Published in the United States](#)

[Publication Date](#)

[Distributed](#)

[Editorial Work](#)

[Editorial Office](#)

[Book Eligibility Issues](#)

[American Literature for Children](#)

[Original Work](#)

[Young Readers' Editions](#)

[Compilations/Anthologies](#)

[Portion Previously Published Elsewhere](#)

[Traditional Works](#)

[In English](#)

[Children's Book](#)

[Book and E-book](#)

[Author/Illustrator Eligibility Issues](#)

[Resident](#)

[Citizen](#)

[Special Eligibility Concerns: Sibert Award](#)

[Appendix C: Samples](#)

[Sample Calendar](#)

[Employer/Supervisor Information Form](#)

[Letter to Employer/Supervisor #1: Beginning of Service](#)

[Letter to Employer/Supervisor #2: End of Service](#)

[Press Release: Notice of Committee Appointment](#)

[Sample Resignation Letter](#)

[Call for Membership Suggestions](#)

[Sample Note-taking Form](#)

Notes

This manual attempts to outline the practices, procedures and principles to follow in the selection and presentation of the Robert F. Sibert Award. While as complete as possible, it cannot be exhaustive. Therefore, it is important to use the manual as a guide and seek further guidance with the Committee Chair and the Priority Group V (“Awards”) Consultant. Current contact information is available on the ALSC website.

- 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 Priority Group V Consultant is referred to as the PGC, and use implies ALSC affiliation.
- The American Library Association Communications and Marketing Office is referred to as ALA CMO.
- LibLearnX Conference, formerly Midwinter, is referred to as LLX.
- The ALA Youth Media Awards Press Conference is referred to as the ALA YMA Press Conference.

In 2009, the section “Expanded Definitions & Examples,” was added to book award manuals in response to increased committee queries to ALSC leadership regarding eligibility of books, authors, and illustrators. An Award Eligibility Task Force was convened in 2007 for the purpose of examining these questions, and the ALSC Board voted to accept the Task Force’s report at Annual Conference 2008 in Anaheim.

A Sibert Informational Book Award Poetry Eligibility Task Force was convened in 2012 to determine whether or not poetry as a format or vehicle for conveying information should be eligible for the Award. The task force considered the intentions of 1) the Sibert family in establishing the Award; 2) The Sibert Award Manual Task Force in establishing the practices, procedures, and principles for the selection of the award, and 3) the 2011 Sibert Award Committee in requesting that the term “Poetry and traditional literature (e.g., folktales) are not eligible” be changed to “Traditional literature (e.g., folktales) is not eligible. Poetry is not eligible EXCEPT as a format or vehicle to convey information.”

Additional Task Force Charge:

1. Answer questions raised in the pre-Annual 2012 report about which poetry is eligible; are books that are a combination of fiction and nonfiction eligible?
2. Give examples of both eligible and ineligible titles (poetry and other forms) along with WHY the titles are eligible or ineligible.
3. Make recommendations for other additions/edits to the Sibert manual.
4. Review, update and expand bibliography/suggested reading section.

The Task Force completed their work at the end of the 2013 Midwinter Meeting and the ALSC Board approved the changes and additions made to this manual.

In 2015, the ALSC Board voted to include archival images and documents and other primary source materials as part of the definition of original work. An example was included in the Expanded Definitions & Examples section of the manual.

An additional Task Force worked in 2017 to revise and refresh book award manuals for the digital age, tightening use of social media while on award committees, among other items. This task continued in 2020 with the formation of the Award Manual Revision Working Group. This group was to review multiple changes over the previous years and ensure that award manuals were properly updated.

In the midst of constantly changing policies and procedures of the COVID era, the Working Group evaluated, revised, and coordinated changes in the manuals to make them more accessible and useful for committees. Most notably, this group made the choice to develop a single Award Manual Template, which could then be used to more easily and accurately make further updates to the individual manuals.

This work was done with care and dedication by members Armin Arethna, Christy Estrovitz, Jean Gaffney, Suzanne Harold, Eileen Makoff, and Tessa Michaelson Schmidt, and led by co-chairs Caitlin Jacobson and Carol Phillips.

Part I: Background Information

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 administered by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association. In 2006, the award was presented to illustrators and/or photographers in addition to authors of the Sibert Medal and Honor Books.

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: Fall, 2 years

Composition of the Committee

The Sibert Award Committee shall consist of eight members and a chairperson, appointed by the president.

Terms, Definitions, and Criteria

Please see [Appendix B: Expanded Definitions and Examples](#) for further clarification of the terms, definitions, and criteria below.

Terms

1. 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 annually 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. These shall also be books that are truly distinguished.
2. The award is restricted to authors, author/illustrator, co-authors, or author and illustrator named on the title page who are citizens or residents of the United States. ALL authors and illustrators credited on the title page must meet award eligibility criteria.
3. The award is restricted to original work first published in the United States.
4. Folktales and other traditional literature are not eligible. There are no other limitations as to the character of the book providing it is an original work.

5. The committee is to consider in its deliberations only books eligible for the award as specified in the terms.
6. The award may be given posthumously.

Definitions

1. Informational books are defined as those written and illustrated to present, organize, and interpret documentable, factual material.
2. Significant contribution is gauged by how well the work elucidates, clarifies and enlivens its subject. The committee considers overall accuracy, documentation, organization, visual material and book design.
3. Children's literature is defined as the body of books published for an intended and 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.
4. Distinguished is defined as noted for significant achievement; marked by quality, excellence, or eminence; distinctive.
5. Author and Illustrator may include co-authors or author-illustrators. Illustrator may include persons credited on the title page for visual material. ALL authors and illustrators credited on the title page must meet award eligibility criteria.
6. Original work is defined as follows:
 - "Original work" means that the text (or illustrations and other graphic material, as applicable) was created by this writer or artist and no one else.
 - Further, "original work" means that the text is presented here for the first time and has not been previously published elsewhere in this or any other form. Substantial contents compiled from other sources are not eligible. Abridgements are not eligible.
 - It is understood that in informational books some key elements such as archival images and documents, and other primary source materials may have appeared elsewhere. Indeed the fact that such images and texts are artifacts of, for example, a person, time period, scientific process, or mode of exploration may enhance their value as elements of informational works.
7. First published in the United States means that books first published in previous years in other countries are not eligible. Books published simultaneously in the U.S. and another country may be eligible. Books published in a U.S. territory, or U.S. commonwealth are eligible.
8. Published in the preceding year means that the book has a publication date in that year, was available for purchase in that year, and has a copyright date no later than that year. A book might have a copyright date prior to the year under consideration but, for various reasons, was not published until the year under consideration. If a book is published prior

to its year of copyright as stated in the book, it shall be considered in its year of copyright as stated in the book. The intent of the definition is that every book be eligible for consideration, but that no book be considered in more than one year.

9. Resident is defined as someone who has established and maintains a residence in the United States, U.S. territory, or U.S. commonwealth as distinct from being a casual or occasional visitor.
10. 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.

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

Part II: ALSC Policies and Procedures

ALSC Community Agreements

These community agreements were developed so that all meetings convened by members of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) are spaces where meaningful and respectful conversations are held. The agreements outline best practices to ensure that everyone has an opportunity for expression, accountability, and growth.

They provide a guide to how topics are discussed, the language used, and how our different experiences, identities, and knowledge are reflected in our thought processes, discussions, and decisions. As you participate in discussions, meetings, presentations, etc., please use these guidelines as a starting point and add additional agreements as a group if necessary.

- **Speak for yourself.** Use "I" and be aware that your perspective is not everyone's perspective or the "normal" perspective.
- **Embrace multiple perspectives to engage in curiosity-driven dialogue (not debate or argument).** Have compassion for and honor people's varied journeys while respecting their humanity. The goal of dialogue should not be to change anyone's mind, but to *offer and receive* a perspective for consideration and curiosity. Even if your every cell feels in disagreement with someone's perspective, right and wrong binaries rarely build connection and understanding. Do note that racism, bigotry, and all other forms of oppression are not a difference of opinion and will not be tolerated.
- **Be aware** of the privilege, oppressions, and life experiences you carry and how they might affect your discussion process.
- **Listen to and use people's correct pronouns.** Let people know how you would like to be addressed during introductions, and include pronouns if you would like. If pronouns are not shared or if you are unsure of someone's pronouns, refer to the person by their name.
- **Share the air.** Be aware of how much you are talking versus listening. Challenge yourself to invite others into the conversation, and "step up" if you are prone to not participating. We all have something to bring to the discussion.
- **Interrupt attempts to derail.** Oftentimes, discomfort is so great that we immediately attempt to change the conversation to something that feels more comfortable. Before you know it, the conversation is about the weather when we were talking about equity. Work to stay engaged when you feel uncomfortable and make mistakes (this is when learning happens).
- **Acknowledge intent while addressing impact.** Work to not personalize the responses of others while taking care to be mindful of the impact of our words and our actions on others. Understand that intent does not equal impact and acknowledge the impact of something that was said or done during the conversation (or break) by criticizing ideas and not individuals.
- **Interrupt bias and take feedback.** It is everybody's responsibility to hold one another accountable. If you observe something oppressive being said or done (by yourself or others), mark it. For example, "ouch" and "oops" are words that can be spoken to mark moments when

you recognize something oppressive is said ("ouch") or you notice a mistake that you've made ("oops"). If you experience feedback from an "oops" or "ouch," it is your responsibility to keep learning. You can reach out to the Chair, Co-Chair, or discussion leader(s) to address it (after the meeting, via email, in person, etc.). "Ouch" and "oops," when used, remind everyone that deeper dialogue, reflection, and learning will happen later.

- **Remember that we all have opportunities to grow.** Feedback is a gift of experience and expertise, and it acknowledges that learning is complex and never-ending. Receive it and consider systems of dominance and power at play in community conversations and interactions. Be aware of the lenses you do and do not have as a result of your identities and experiences.

Sources

"Alternate Roots Community Agreements." Alternate ROOTS, July 31, 2018.
<https://alternateroots.org/alternate-roots-community-agreements/>.

Goldbach, Jeremy. "Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, and Privilege." Web log. *USC Suzanne Dworak School of Social Work* (blog), November 5, 2020.

Rich, Adrienne. *Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2002.

"Sample Group Agreements - Gsafewi.org."
<https://gsafewi.org/wp-content/uploads/Sample-Group-Agreements.pdf>.

Style, Emily J., and Linda C. Powell. "In Our Own Hands: Diversity Literacy." *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 6, no. 2 (1995): 64–84.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43587318>.

Taylor, Sonya Renee. "Community Agreements." *The Body Is Not An Apology*.
<https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/about-tbinaa/community-agreements/>.

Diversity and ALSC Media Award Evaluation

Inclusiveness is a core value of ALSC. It is the responsibility of each ALSC media award and Notables committee to reflect this value in their approach to their work. ALSC award and Notables lists provide librarians, teachers, and parents with information about books and other media our association holds in the highest regard. Everyone benefits, children most of all, when the titles recognized within and across ALSC awards and best-of-the-year lists authentically reflect the diversity found in our nation and the wider world.

It is important that books demonstrate integrity and respect for all children's lives and experiences and do not diminish or denigrate any individual or group through stereotypes, whitewashing, or other derogatory content. The committee should evaluate works with the consideration of all children in mind rather than privileging the dominant culture to the exclusion of others. While the works of individual nominees do not have to include racially and culturally diverse characters, they should not disrespect or discredit diverse lives, experiences and histories.

Each year there will be overlap among individual committees in terms of titles being considered for recognition. The Caldecott, Notables, and Pura Belpré committees, for example, inevitably end up considering some of the same books. It is the responsibility of each committee to consider a work based upon how it meets the criteria of their specific award rather than speculating about whether a particular title will receive another award. If a title is recognized by multiple committees, it does not diminish the work of any of those committees; rather, it draws greater attention to a particular work's excellence.

As individuals serving on committees evaluate materials according to the criteria outlined for their specific charge, they should strive to be aware of how their own perspectives and experiences shape their responses to materials. Every committee member brings unique strengths to the table, but every committee member also brings gaps in knowledge, understanding, and biases. Committee members are strongly encouraged to be open to listening and learning as well as sharing as they consider materials representing diverse experiences, both familiar and unfamiliar to them.

Revised 1/1/2023

ALSC Policy for Service on Award Committees

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) affirms its confidence in the integrity of members who are invited to serve on award committees and in the integrity of the officers responsible for selecting candidates. Because of the nature of the work of such committees, those who serve on them must be especially sensitive to conflicts of interest and the appearance of impropriety. The purpose of this policy is to clarify the eligibility and responsibility of candidates asked to serve on such committees.

Prior to commencing service, prospective committee members will be asked to sign off on the following policy, and will be asked to complete a checklist that will alert them to potential issues (see [Appendix A: Checklist for Prospective ALSC Award Committee Members](#)).

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal or private interests may lead an independent observer reasonably to question whether the individual's professional actions or decisions are influenced by considerations of significant personal or private interest, financial or otherwise.

It is the policy of ALSC, its Board of Directors, and its committees to ensure that members in all of its activities avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest resulting from their activities as members of committees of the Association. In particular, no person should obtain or appear to obtain special advantages for themselves, their relatives, their employer, or their close associates as a result of their service on a committee.

Each person who is appointed to serve on an award committee is expected to consider carefully whether any of their personal or professional interests, obligations, activities, or associations could reasonably lead to even the appearance of a conflict of interest. When in doubt, it is best to err on the side of caution and discuss any potential conflicts with the ALSC Executive Director prior to accepting the appointment. Situations that arise after a committee member has begun to serve should be directed to the ALSC President, Committee Chair, Priority Group Consultant (PGC), and Executive Director. The final decision rests with the Executive Committee.

Confidentiality

The principle of confidentiality drives the work of all award committee members in order to maintain the integrity of the award process. Committee members need to maintain a high degree of confidentiality regarding the committee's discussions, both oral and written, in-person and virtual. All committee members need to feel free to speak frankly in closed sessions, knowing that their comments will not be repeated outside their venue, and that they reserve the right to speak on their own behalf outside of those closed sessions. As with conflicts of interest, committee members should avoid situations in which there is even the appearance of a breach of confidentiality.

Committee members are urged to obtain a variety of critical opinions about eligible titles throughout the year. However, it is important to remember that in any discussion, committee members may express only their own opinions, and may not quote the opinions of other committee members or indicate in any way which titles are under consideration. It is understood that all eligible titles are being considered up until the selection of the winner is made.

Committee members are allowed, and even encouraged, to participate in local book discussions, especially with children. However, they must be vigilant in maintaining confidentiality of any committee proceedings while also ensuring separation from the selection of, discussion of, and voting on materials eligible for the award on which they serve. In addition, while committee members are encouraged to participate in book discussions, members are NOT to participate in mock elections. See [Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions about Policy for Service on Award and Evaluation Committees](#) for clarification on mock elections.

Guidelines for Award Committee Members

It is a privilege to serve on an award committee and with that privilege comes specific responsibilities. Those who accept an appointment to the book award committees should adhere to the following guidelines. See [Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions about Policy for Service on Award and Evaluation Committees](#) if clarification is needed on any of the following points.

- 1) Members who have written or illustrated a book that may be eligible for consideration during the period of service on the award committee should not accept an appointment to an award committee.
- 2) Members may not be employed by a children's trade-book publisher, author, or illustrator. Members who have served as an advisor or consultant to an author or illustrator of a children's book, or as an advisor to a children's trade-book publisher, beyond the scope of assigned library duties, such as providing reference service, should not accept appointment if that book may be eligible for consideration during the period of eligibility as defined by the terms of the award. This includes writing teachers' guides or readers' group guides at the request of a children's trade-book publisher whether or not these materials may be eligible.
- 3) Members should not accept appointment to an award committee if they have a close family relationship (parent, spouse/partner, child) or a personal relationship with the author or illustrator of any book that may be eligible which could reasonably be seen by an independent observer to cause a conflict of interest.
- 4) Members should not accept appointment to an award committee if they have a close family relationship (parent, spouse/partner, child) with a person employed by a U.S. trade publisher.
- 5) Members should not accept appointment to an award committee if they, or a close family member, directly own equity (stock ownership, stock options, convertible note(s), or other ownership interest) that represents more than a 5% stake in a U.S. trade publisher.
- 6) Members should not engage in any print or electronic communication outside of the committee regarding eligible titles during their term of service, although they may verbally express their personal opinions regarding eligible titles at any time. Prohibited communication includes, but is not limited to, professional and general journals, magazines, and newspapers; electronic discussion lists; blogs; and social-networking services (Facebook, Instagram, Goodreads, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). Members who write signed reviews in a professional or personal capacity must avoid publishing reviews of eligible materials during their term of service.

Following the term of service, members are welcome to express their personal opinions about any eligible titles in any manner or forum; however at no time may they ever use titles or other recognizable details to identify the status of a title as having been or not been under consideration, suggested, and/or nominated for the award, nor may they ever reveal any elements of committee discussion.

- 7) Members may not serve concurrently on an ALSC Award or media evaluation committee and the ALSC Board, another ALA unit's board or award or media evaluation committee, or ALA Council.
- 8) From time to time, ALSC may take other action or establish such other guidelines as may be necessary in the Association's sole discretion to protect the integrity of the award process. Questions from prospective committee members and candidates should be directed to the Executive Director; situations that arise after a committee member has begun to serve should be directed to the ALSC President, Committee Chair, PGC, and Executive Director. The final decision rests with the Executive Committee.

Meeting Attendance and Access to Materials

Persons elected or appointed to an award committee should:

- 1) Be able to attend all required discussion and decision meetings, in person and virtual, scheduled for the year of service, including pre-scheduled virtual meetings for a week in July following the Annual conference, virtual meetings in the two weeks prior to the LibLearnX Conference, and the in-person final selection meeting at LibLearnX, and be able to follow procedures established by the committee.
- 2) Have ready access to the major part of the current output of children's books under consideration in outlets such as their local library or bookstore and through interlibrary loan. It is recognized that there will be an occasional book under consideration that a committee member is unable to obtain. In such an instance, arrangements for review copies may be made as prescribed in the committee's guidelines, which can be found in the [Relationship with Publishers - Guidelines for Committee Members](#) section.

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

Frequency of Service on Award or Notable Book Committees

No individual may serve on the Batchelder Award, Caldecott Medal, Geisel Award, Newbery Medal, Sibert Medal, Children's Literature Legacy ("Legacy") Award, or Notable Children's Books Committee more often than once every four years. The four-year period shall begin from the last year of the term of service regardless of length of term. This guideline will not apply to the appointment for Chair. This guideline will not apply to other ALSC committees. Additionally, in the event that an emergency, mid-year replacement must be made, the four-year rule may be suspended, providing the appointing officer the necessary flexibility and a greater pool of experienced candidates.

Violation of any of the above guidelines may result in dismissal from the award committee and may preclude service from future award committees.

Policy adopted February 2007 and revised May 2009, June 2011, January 2014, February 2018, August 2018, and March 2023.

Relationship with Publishers

Guidelines for Committee Members

Important points regarding committee members' relationships with publishers are listed below.

- Many publishers send committee members eligible books for consideration. Committee members may accept these unsolicited books.
- The Chair consults committee members to verify the addresses where publishers should send books and makes a roster for publishers. Addresses should be viable for the term of service because it is difficult for publishers to change the mailing address once established with a warehouse.
- The ALSC Awards Coordinator makes the committee roster available to publishers as soon as possible in the year under consideration.
- The Chair surveys committee members regularly to ascertain which books have not been received. It's quite common for book shipments to arrive weeks apart.
- If certain titles have been difficult to obtain, the Chair may contact publishers directly to request needed titles, with assistance from the PGC as needed. Towards the end of the year, as deliberations approach, the PGC assumes the role of requesting needed titles, with the assistance of the Awards Coordinator.
- Committee members are not to solicit publishers for free, personal copies of eligible books. Members accept appointments to this committee with the understanding that they have access to new books. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of each committee member to obtain such books.
- 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 Award Committee. Submission procedures are outlined for publishers on the ALSC website.

To submit works for consideration for one of the ALSC awards, publishers should:

- Review the terms and criteria for the award.
- Submit one copy of the work to the award committee Chair. Publishers also have the option of sending a copy of the work to each committee member, but it is not required.

- A list of committee members for each award is available through a link on each award's Terms and Criteria page.

The deadline for submitting books for consideration is **December 31** of the publication year.

Self-Published and Small-Press Titles

Books that are self-published or published by small presses are eligible, provided they meet all other eligibility requirements. Books are eligible in their first year of publication only. If a self-published book is republished later by another publisher, then the book will not be reconsidered upon its commercial publication. The Chair will keep and pass on a current year's list of award-eligible books received directly from authors or from small, independent presses (adopted by ALSC Board of Directors, June 2004). In recent years, the number of self-published and small-press books received for consideration has significantly increased. Often only the Chair receives a copy of these titles. How these titles are shared with the committee is at the Chair's discretion, often with committee input.

Part III: Committee Work

Welcome

Once the committee is complete, usually mid-fall prior to the year under consideration, it is good practice for the Chair to send a letter of welcome to the membership. The letter might include an outline of the year's work and upcoming issues. It is usually accompanied by relevant enclosures, including the committee roster, guidelines for book discussions, etc.

Also in the welcome, the Chair encourages members to use this time early in the committee process to focus on the committee manual, which lays the groundwork for success. The Chair also encourages the use of the manual's [Reading Lists](#), found in Appendix A.

Calendar

It is the responsibility of the Chair to establish and distribute a calendar of the year's work and meetings as soon as possible (see [Appendix C: Sample Calendar](#)). It is the responsibility of committee members to meet all deadlines to ensure that the selection process is orderly and timely. When committee members are appointed, they are alerted to the scheduled time frame for mandatory virtual meetings, which includes an initial meeting in July after the Annual Conference, and preliminary book discussions during the two-week period before the LibLearnX Conference.

Committee Communication

The Chair will establish ground rules for all forms of communication by the committee at the beginning of their term. A video conferencing platform will be used for virtual meetings. Electronic communication will be used to facilitate the distribution of information from the Chair to committee members and the regular discussion of procedural issues. Substantial book discussions among committee members will be limited to in-person or virtual committee meetings in order to promote inclusiveness and prevent cliques among members.

Email is not used for substantive discussion, and it is not a substitute for face-to-face or virtual book discussions. During the year, committee members may use email to discuss matters having to do with eligibility or factual errors in a book. Questions about such matters are directed to the Chair who decides whether or not to bring a particular question to the full committee.

Meeting Attendance

Committee members are responsible for attending all required meetings, both virtual and in-person. In addition, committee members are urged to make every effort to attend optional meetings. Traditionally, the calendar has included an optional meeting at the start of the year under consideration, a required meeting around the time of the Annual Meeting (early summer), and a required in-person selection meeting during LibLearnX of the award year. Many of these meetings are now held virtually; their content is described in greater detail later in the manual. It has also become common for the Chair to schedule additional virtual meetings throughout the year. Although no official business takes place during these optional meetings, they can provide time for members to troubleshoot, compare notes, and ask questions. The Chair might also invite guest speakers to present at these virtual meetings.

Virtual meetings are also used as a way to winnow down the discussion list prior to the in-person LibLearnX selection meeting. **If a virtual meeting includes the discussion and/or selection of titles, it is mandatory for all committee members to attend.** The Chair should bear this requirement in mind, and schedule these meetings as far in advance as possible.

Please note that a committee member must tender their resignation if they are unable to attend a required meeting, regardless of the reason, and regardless of whether the meeting is virtual or in-person (see *Resignation section below for details*). Members are therefore urged at the outset of their service to ensure that they can attend all required meetings. For virtual meetings, they should ensure that their calendar is cleared, they have access to any necessary technology for signing into the meeting, and they have secured any necessary time off from their supervisor.

For the LibLearnX Selection Meeting, currently the only required in-person event, members should:

- Secure permission from their supervisor and, if necessary, their director or library board.
- Secure funding to attend (whether from personal funds or funds provided by their employer).
- Make hotel reservations at the earliest date these are available (bearing in mind that many hotels fill on the first day of registration).
- Make timely arrangements for transportation to the conference site.
- Register for the conference.
- Communicate with the Chair if there are any emergency or last-minute delays (such as inclement weather) that would affect the committee's operation. **It is advised that any transportation arrangements not depend on last-minute arrival given the possibility of travel disruptions.**

Resignation

Unforeseen personal and professional circumstances can arise that may interfere with a committee member's service; there is no shame in stepping down. A committee member must resign immediately upon the development of any circumstance that disqualifies them from committee service under this policy or that would otherwise affect, *or give the appearance of tending to affect*, their ability to carry out assigned responsibilities fairly and without self-interest of any kind. Committee members will also be asked to resign if they cannot attend a required meeting. Committee member resignations must be sent to the Chair, President, and the Executive Director; Chair resignations must be sent to all members of the committee, the PGC, President, and Executive Director. In addition, a resigning Chair must forward current files to the new Chair and to the Executive Director. Refer to [Appendix C: Sample Resignation Letter](#).

If a member resigns, the President will appoint a new committee member to fill the vacancy. The President may look to a member of the Notable Children's Books Committee to stand in as a replacement if the timing of the replacement is close to the LibLearnX Selection Meeting. This person would also continue serving on the Notable Children's Books Committee, which is why

the two committees' meetings do not overlap. If a suitable replacement cannot be found in time for the LibLearnX Selection Meeting, the committee will operate one member down and will reformulate the voting procedure accordingly.

Preparation

The focus of the awards committee is distinct from the usual selection concerns in a library. Committee members need to be able to apply traditional literary and sometimes artistic standards to evaluate the books. But in their year of committee work, committee members will also need to focus on the terms, criteria, and definitions of the award. To that end, committee members are urged to prepare for the year's work in many ways:

- Read the committee manual, with special attention to the terms, criteria, and definitions governing the award.
- Read books and articles relating to the award and to the language of evaluation and criticism. See [Appendix A: Reading Lists](#) for suggested resources.
- Be on the lookout for book discussions, especially those with children. While active participation can be problematic, listening is useful. Book selection meetings, workshops, classes, and professional associations provide opportunities for such discussion. ALSC's Notables discussions are open and can be particularly educational. See [Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions](#) for further clarification on participating in book discussions.
- Practice writing your own critical viewpoint and examine it in light of the terms and criteria for the award. Have you taken into account the factors to be considered?
- Write critical analyses of past winners and honor books structured around the award terms, criteria, and definitions.

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.

There is no denying the workload is heavy, especially as the Selection Meeting approaches, and 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 [Appendix C: Employer/Supervisor Information Form, Letter to Employer/Supervisor #1: Beginning of Service](#) and [Letter to Employer/Supervisor #2: End of Service](#).

In addition, committee members sometimes notify employers/supervisors about their work on the Award independently, and 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 [Appendix C: Press Release: Notice of Committee Appointment](#).

Identifying, Obtaining, and Reading Eligible Books

Committee members are responsible for identifying, obtaining, and reading eligible books throughout the year under consideration. Committee members will begin to receive books for consideration from publishers by early spring. Eligible books will also be announced in catalogs and reviews and may appear in libraries and bookstores. It is wise to begin this process 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 books to read and consider. Here are some ways to identify eligible books:

- 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 they become available. Contact an ALSC Notable Children's Books Committee member and/or visit the Notable Children's Books section on the ALSC website.
- Attend ALSC Notable Children's Books Committee deliberations.

Obtaining Eligible Books

Committee members are responsible for obtaining eligible books 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 books include:

- Pick up galleys at the LibLearnX and Annual meetings and at other conferences.
- Examine review copies received in the workplace.
- Browse new titles at bookstores.

Committee members are not to solicit publishers for copies of eligible books (see [Part II, ALSC Policies: Relationship to Publishers](#)).

Determining Eligibility

Committee members should refer to the current terms, criteria, and definitions, including those in [Appendix B: Expanded Definitions and Examples](#), rather than to precedent or past winners in attempting to determine eligibility. It is important for committee members to make the initial effort to determine the eligibility of both the publisher and the author/illustrator of the work: the year of publication, the citizenship and/or residency of the author/illustrator (U.S. citizenship and/or residency is required), and the locale of the publisher (the publisher must be located in the U.S.).

In addition to the book itself, possible sources of information may include: 1) publishers' catalogs; 2) websites of publishers, authors, and illustrators; 3) Library of Congress website; and 4) Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk.

In ambiguous cases, committee members should notify the Chair, who consults with the PGC on eligibility questions. After the Chair and the PGC make a determination, the Chair informs the committee of the decision.

If a current title under consideration has a publication or release date in question then the current award Chair may ask the previous Chair about the title in question.

Reading Eligible Books

Committee members are responsible for reading eligible books—those to consider as potential contenders, those suggested, and those nominated. The reading load is heavy, and re-reading is often required.

Note-Taking

A critical component of reading is note-taking. From the outset, committee members need to develop a 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. **Many members rely on electronic note-taking, although public tools such as Goodreads should not be used.** Making a list of criteria, terms, and definitions to apply to each eligible title helps maintain a focus on the award elements throughout the selection process.

No matter what system is used, the notes themselves need to speak to the award criteria. Succinct and specific notes clarify thinking and aid in selection discussions. In addition, committee members should 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 [Appendix C: Sample Note-Taking Form](#).

Notes should 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.

Notes should also 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 books under consideration. Although reviews are not to be quoted during discussion, they may raise questions and help clarify thinking on a particular title.

Suggestion and Nomination Processes

The suggestion and nomination processes serve several important functions. They allow committee members to identify strong contenders, while also alerting committee members as to

which books merit consideration by the group. And they help committee members begin to identify the strongest books based on award criteria—books that will ultimately form the core of books to be discussed during the selection process.

Suggestions

Starting early in the year under consideration, the Chair solicits suggestions of eligible books from committee members on a monthly basis by sending out a link to an online tool.

Suggestions are automatically compiled in a table that can be viewed online, with a link distributed by the Chair. The table will list all suggested books, as well as the number of suggestions for each book. After the second round of suggestions, the table will also include a cumulative list. Throughout this process, suggestions remain anonymous.

There are no set parameters as to the number of suggestions a committee member may make, and some members will suggest more books than others. Committee members are asked to suggest all books they deem to be strong contenders based on the award criteria, but they are also urged not to overload the list, as this undermines its function. In the suggestion process, it is important for committee members to move forward only those books deemed strong enough to merit careful consideration by the whole committee.

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

Nominations

In the autumn of the year under consideration, the nomination process begins. The Chair will request three rounds of nominations from committee members. Committee members will be asked to nominate three, two, and two books (for a total of seven distinct nominations) deemed to be the strongest contenders based on the award criteria. They are also required to provide complete bibliographic information and a justification statement for each book. Justification statements are usually no more than 100 words, and serve as preparation for oral discussion by providing practice in how to succinctly state points that speak to the award criteria.

Committee members may not repeat nominations on subsequent ballots, but they may nominate titles that were nominated by other committee members on previous ballots. In other words, each committee member must choose seven distinct titles, but their choices may overlap with those of other committee members. This practice allows the committee to measure support for titles. Nominations have several functions. They serve as a focus for all suggestions made during the year. The written justifications serve as preparation for oral discussion at the LibLearnX Selection meeting, and provide practice in stating clearly and succinctly your ideas about books that seem distinguished. And, they make each committee member aware of which books require their closest scrutiny. To avoid making commitments prior to the Midwinter discussions, ranked preferences are not given on the nominating ballots. Serious consideration is to be given to all nominated books, including those with minimal support, and committee members must read each title.

As with suggestions, nominations and justifications are submitted using an online tool. The Awards Coordinator provides the Chair with a link to this tool, and the Chair in turn distributes the link to committee members well in advance of the deadline. Members **must** submit their

nominations and justification statements by the deadlines listed on the calendar established at the beginning of the year. As with the suggestions process, nominations remain anonymous. Nominations will be compiled in an online format viewable with a link provided by the Chair. After the first round of nominations, members will be able to view a cumulative list of nominations.

Meetings

Introductory Meeting (Optional, Virtual)

Held near the beginning of the year under consideration, the Introductory Meeting is an optional, virtual meeting marking the start of the committee's year of service. The Chair sets a date and time and sends out a meeting link well in advance, while also posting the agenda with the meeting link to the ALSC community space on ALA Connect several days before the meeting. This is an open meeting; all other meetings of the committee will be closed to all but committee members.

As with all optional meetings, committee members are urged to attend if at all possible. At this meeting, the Chair will introduce the members, may distribute the year's calendar, and will often invite the PGC to talk about committee procedures, and/or experts in the field and past committee chairs to talk about evaluation techniques. No official business takes place. Books under consideration are not discussed, nor are any procedural issues decided.

Initial Discussion Meeting (Required, Virtual)

The Initial Discussion Meeting is held virtually after the Annual Conference of the year under consideration (early summer), and it allows the committee time to prepare for the work ahead. The highlight of this meeting is a practice book discussion, allowing committee members to hone their discussion skills. It is up to the Chair to determine whether they will host one or two meetings during the appointed time, provided the ALSC Zoom room is available or the Chair has access to another secure online platform.

Preparation

Committee members and the Chair are responsible for making careful preparations for the Initial Discussion Meeting. The Chair schedules the meeting as soon as possible, makes logistical arrangements, sets an agenda, appoints a secretary, and sends out any relevant information in advance. The Chair also establishes a short list of suggested titles for practice book discussion, selecting books from the year's suggestions to date. Committee members obtain, read, and consider all books on the practice discussion list. The Chair also asks select committee members to be prepared to introduce books from the practice list into discussion.

Agenda

The agenda at the Initial Discussion Meeting includes:

- An opportunity for committee members to become reacquainted.
- Discussion of terms, criteria, and definitions for Award/Medal Winner and Honor Books. At the discretion of the Chair, an expert may be invited to address the committee.

- Discussion of procedures to be used by the committee during the remainder of the year and at the LibLearnX 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 PGC. At the discretion of the Chair, the PGC may be invited to address the committee.
- Practice book discussion using a short list of suggested books.
- Optional look at suggestions list. Members who have made suggestions can remove them at this time; removed suggestions can be added back at a later date.

Book Discussion

The practice book discussion is a critical element of the Initial Discussion Meeting. It's important to remember, however, that this exercise is for practice only and that it will not play a role in the final selection. Instead, 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. During this session, committee members are asked to adhere to the same guidelines employed during book selection, so as to make the practice session as meaningful as possible. See *LibLearnX Selection Meeting: [Book Discussion](#)*.

Meeting Minutes and Quarterly Reports

The secretary takes minutes on the order of business and on procedural matters. No notes are taken on the practice book discussion. After the Initial Discussion Meeting, the secretary prepares the minutes and sends them to the Chair for review.

The Chair will submit Quarterly Reports during the year of service, along with a copy of the meeting minutes, to appropriate leadership using the link provided by ALSC staff.

Preliminary Deliberations (Required, Virtual)

Beginning early in January of the year of the award, committees will meet virtually to begin deliberations. During these meetings committee members will discuss the nominated titles, and initial cuts may be made by consensus. These decisions will guide the Chair as they establish the list of books to be discussed during final deliberations and balloting, which occur during the LibLearnX Meeting of the award year.

LibLearnX Selection Meeting (Required, In-Person)

The LibLearnX Selection Meeting is all-important. It results in the selection of the Award/Medal winner and the possible selection of Honor books. This meeting takes place over the course of a single day.

Preparation

Committee members and the Chair are responsible for making careful preparations for the LibLearnX Selection Meeting.

The Chair establishes the list of books to be discussed at the LibLearnX Selection meeting, which will include all nominated titles that remain after the virtual preliminary deliberations held earlier in the month, as well as any suggestions made after the last nomination deadline. The Chair is responsible for sharing this list with committee members and the ALSC Awards Coordinator, with a copy to the Executive Director, as soon as possible. The bulk of the list should be provided at least three weeks prior to the start of the LibLearnX Selection Meeting.

The Chair informs the committee members and the Awards Coordinator immediately of late additions to the list of books under consideration. Additions may be made no later than one week prior to the beginning of the conference. This deadline allows committee members to read the books prior to LibLearnX.

The Chair also asks each committee member to introduce selected books from the list into discussion at the Selection Meeting—typically books the committee member has nominated. Committee members are expected to bring notes on the books they will introduce, as well as copies of these books and biographical information for the authors and/or illustrators.

It is the responsibility of the Chair to communicate room and other arrangement needs to the Awards Coordinator by October 1. ALSC staff communicate these needs to Conference Services. The Chair sends out notification with meeting locations and times as soon as they receive them.

The Chair may prepare table tents for members, arrange for members to bring laptops or tablets if needed, and suggest they bring snacks to share during discussions.

Committee members are responsible for obtaining, reading, and carefully considering all books on the LibLearnX discussion list prior to the Selection Meeting. In addition, they should prepare and bring personal notes about all books under consideration. They might also bring reviews of books under consideration and copies of any books under discussion they may want to re-read.

Secretary

Prior to the LibLearnX Selection Meeting, the Chair asks a committee member to serve as secretary. The secretary takes minutes on the 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 LibLearnX Selection Meeting. The Chair turns the minutes in to the Executive Director at the conclusion of LibLearnX, attached to the Quarterly Report.

Agenda

- Introductions: acquaint committee members.
- Review of the terms, criteria, and definitions of the Award.
- Decide order for discussion of books, ordinarily alphabetical by author unless similar titles are considered together.

- Discuss voting procedures for the Award/Medal winner and possible Honor books.

Book Discussion

Each book suggested after the last round of nominations has been made will be considered. Any nominated book that was not eliminated during the preliminary deliberations but does not seem a serious contender may be eliminated at this time by some agreed upon procedure, bearing in mind that **once a book is eliminated from the discussion list, it cannot be reintroduced.**

Last-minute changes to the list should be communicated to the Awards Coordinator, with a copy to the Executive Director.

Once this review is completed, a full discussion of each book remaining on the discussion list takes place. These books are then discussed one by one. After all books have been discussed, it is possible to re-open discussion on selected titles before moving to a selection ballot. Throughout book discussion, important guidelines apply:

- Use critical analysis; avoid plot summaries and generalities such as cute, nice, good, etc.
- Be clear in what you say, think through the point you are making, and speak loudly enough to be heard by everyone.
- Refer back to the criteria to keep the discussion focused.
- Be concise—be sure that what you have to say adds to the discussion; try not to repeat what others have said.
- Speak to the group as a whole. Listen openly to other committee members and respond thoughtfully to what they have to say.
- Be courteous and refrain from relating personal anecdotes.
- 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.
- Focus first on a book’s strengths before its weaknesses.
- Be as even-handed as possible. Books do not always require the same length of discussion.
- Conclude with a closing statement from the committee member who introduced the book under discussion. This practice provides for balance: the negative and the positive.

For further insight into best practices for book discussion read Thom Barthelme’s classic article, [“Thom’s Rules of Order: Ten Tips for Good Book Discussion.”](#) For an updated view on the CCBC’s book discussion guidelines, see Vicky Smith’s insightful article, [“Considering the Criteria: Addressing Book Discussion Guidelines in the Twenty-First Century.”](#)

Balloting

When there is consensus that all the books on the discussion list have been fully discussed, the committee proceeds to a selection ballot.

Certain procedures apply:

- Committee members list first, second, and third place votes for the award in an online tool created by the Awards Coordinator and sent to the Chair for distribution.
- In tabulating ballot results, the online tool will assign four points to each first-place vote, three points to each second-place vote, and two points to each third-place vote.
- A specific formula is used 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.
- If the committee is operating an odd number of members down, it is recommended that the Chair refrain from voting, as an even number of committee members makes it significantly harder for a book to achieve the margin of points needed to win. If a committee is operating an even number of members down, the Awards Coordinator can adjust the formula used in the online balloting tool.
- If there is a winner, the committee next considers whether to select Honor books (*see below*), and if so, what procedure should be used to make this selection.
- If the first ballot does not produce a winner, the committee follows the procedures outlined below 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 books that received no votes on the first ballot.
- By consensus the committee may choose to withdraw additional books 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, once again using an online tool constructed by the Awards Coordinator and provided to the committee by the Chair.
- The online tool tabulates the votes using 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 an expectation that Honor Books be truly distinguished, not merely strong contenders for the Award.

The committee first considers whether 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 to use the winning selection ballot to choose Honor Books. The committee looks at titles with the next highest number of points.
- Whether 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 may also be withdrawn.

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

Honor Books are announced to the public in alphabetical order by title.

Review of Confidentiality Policy

Once the committee has made its selections, the Chair should take a moment and review the need for confidentiality. It is imperative for committee members to maintain secrecy regarding the selection outcome prior to the ALA Youth Media Awards (YMA) Press Conference. Similarly, it is critical that employees of winners' publishing companies and the winners themselves maintain secrecy prior to the ALA YMA Press Conference. Publishing house employees are notified of the committee's selections when the ALSC Executive Director contacts them to obtain the winners' contact information, and the winners are notified shortly thereafter by the committee. Maintaining secrecy minimizes information leaks and misinformation, ensures the stature of the Award, and preserves the element of surprise.

It is also important for committee members to be mindful of confidentiality issues after the announcement and going forward. Confidentiality rules are not intended to limit the free speech of committee members; rather, they 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. As such, the details of the Selection Meeting should never be disclosed.

The following items are not for public discussion at any time prior to, during, or following the selection of the awards:

1. Reasons (other than your own) given by individual committee members for nominating, supporting, or removing a book from consideration. The committee's reasons for selection of the medalist and honor books will be given by the Chair or a designate who prepares the press release or the announcement articles.
2. Specific titles or lists of titles under consideration. Remember that all eligible books are under consideration prior to the Midwinter Selection meeting.
3. The number of ballots necessary for any decision or the vote in any balloting.

Drafting of Press Release

After the selection process is complete the Chair prepares a draft [press release](#), usually with assistance from committee members. Background information about the winners and justification statements about the winning books are used as background. The Chair is responsible for delivering the draft press release, copies of the Medal/Award and Honor Books, and any other requested information to the ALA Communications & Marketing Office (CMO) by the designated deadline and in the designated format. The CMO finalizes the press release to be distributed immediately after the ALA YMA Press Conference, both in print and on the ALA and ALSC websites.

Award and Honor Book Notification Calls

The Committee Chair will receive information concerning the timing and method of communication with the award winners from the CMO and the Awards Coordinator prior to LibLearnX and will inform all the committee members.

ALA Youth Media Awards Press Conference

The committee reconvenes at the CMO headquarters on the morning of the ALA YMA Press Conference. Usually the committee is asked to pose for a group photograph. A CMO staff member will notify the Chair of when the committee is scheduled to be photographed. As many ALA award committees are scheduled that morning, it is essential that all members are present a few minutes before the scheduled time to avoid delays. It is imperative that the press conference start on time.

At the ALA YMA Press Conference, the President announces the winner of the Award and, if chosen, the Honor books, as well as all other major ALSC and ALSC affiliate awards. Honor books are announced in alphabetical order by title. Seats are reserved for the various committees at the front of the room, and committee members are asked to stand for recognition when their award is announced.

After LibLearnX 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 should emphasize the importance of the role librarians play in selecting the award-winning titles, the value of emphasizing and making accessible distinguished books for young readers, 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 while being mindful of confidentiality issues.

If contacted by the national media, committee members should immediately email the details to the Chair, PGC, ALSC Executive Director and the current ALSC President and await further instructions from them.

Correspondence

The Chair handles correspondence specific to their committee's selection and work:

- Sends appreciation letters to members and members' employers (refer to [Appendix A: Letter to Committee Members' Employer/Supervisor #2: End of Service](#)).
- Sends the next Chair a list of any potentially eligible books with next year's copyright date that the committee identified in its reading, along with friendly suggestions about procedural matters. Note: While it is sometimes necessary for a Chair to check with their predecessor regarding whether a book has already been considered and might therefore be ineligible, this should be done on a case-by-case basis. Providing a committee's entire discussion list would violate the rules governing confidentiality.

Final Quarterly Report

The Chair submits a final Quarterly Report, along with meeting minutes, to appropriate ALSC leadership (see the Division Leadership Manual and the ALSC website).

Recommendations

After the selection process is complete, the Chair and the committee may make recommendations regarding selection policies, practices, and procedures. These recommendations go to the new Chair, the PGC, and the Awards Coordinator, with a copy to the Executive Director. The recommendations may cover internal changes, changes in the working relationship with the ALSC staff, and/or matters requiring Board action.

Preparation for the Award Presentation

The Chair works with the ALSC Awards Coordinator to make necessary arrangements for presentation of the award. Communication with the winning author(s)/illustrator(s) and publisher(s) is paramount. ALSC staff, at the direction of the Awards Coordinator and Executive Director, will send letters of congratulation to the winners and publishers. The Chair may also send notes of congratulation, if desired, with copies of any communication sent to the Awards Coordinator for archival purposes.

In addition, the Chair prepares remarks for the Award presentation, as directed by the ALSC office.

Celebration and Presentation of the Awards

During the Annual Conference of the selection year, the Sibert Award is presented at the ALSC Awards Presentation usually held on Monday morning. The winner receives a bronze medal, and the honor book authors receive certificates mounted on plaques. Although committee

members are not required to be present, most find a special satisfaction in being part of the audience on this important occasion. Publishers may also plan special events for committee members to meet the award recipients, although they are not obligated to do so.

Preservation of Committee Materials

ALSC preserves suggestion lists, nomination lists, and justification statements (with names redacted); minutes (in keeping with how they are currently posted so that they do not include confidential discussion points); the Chair's press remarks; copies of congratulatory letters, and the Chair's award presentation remarks, adding these materials to the current archive. ALSC permits publication of this information after a period of 50 years following the presentation of the medal/award.

Conclusion of Service

The Chair completes their term of service by sending all committee files to the ALSC Executive Director (copies of committee communications such as letters and emails, as well as copies of congratulatory letters to the Medalist and Honor Book recipients).

Part IV: Additional Roles and Responsibilities

Introduction

Responsibility for selection of the Medal/Award winner and Honor books rests with the Award Committee. The bulk of this manual describes these responsibilities. However, there are others who have responsibilities for the awards. These roles are detailed here.

Committee Chair: Additional Responsibilities

Most of the Chair's roles and responsibilities are discussed where relevant throughout the manual. However, it is worth noting that the Chair is a voting member of the committee with all the rights and responsibilities of other committee members. As such, they must maintain a delicate balance between being the Chair and being a committee member. Many Chairs find it helpful to the free flow of the discussion if they limit their remarks to books they feel strongly about, speak later in the discussion of any book, and speak only to make a point that has not already been made. The Chair must also be ready to abstain from voting should the committee find itself balloting one member down to ensure a smoother selection process.

The Chair is responsible for setting the tone for committee discussion. This can be done by accepting all statements relevant to the discussion, by leading the discussion on pertinent issues, and by ensuring that all committee members are allowed to speak and that none are allowed to dominate.

It is recommended that the Chair establish contact with the Chairs of other major Award committees and the Notable Children's Books Committee in order to share common concerns and provide mutual support.

In addition, the Chair does the following:

- Attends Chair orientation, which is held online, early in the year under consideration. This orientation is usually conducted by the PGC.
- Places call for book recommendations from ALSC membership in all relevant outlets (see [Participation of ALSC Membership](#) below).
- Checks eligibility of books suggested or nominated, with assistance from the PGC.
- Answers all correspondence promptly, referring correspondence to the ALSC President or Executive Director for reply when appropriate. Copies all correspondence to committee members, to the ALSC Awards Coordinator, and to the PGC.
- Submits budget request for the next committee, on request. For budget information, please see the most current edition of the ALSC Division Leadership Manual.
- Maintains financial records of committee's expenses and requests a reimbursement from ALSC, if applicable. For instructions on requesting reimbursement, please see the most current edition of the ALSC Division Leadership Manual.
- Prepares Quarterly Reports and submits electronically.
- Contacts non-participating committee members and, if necessary, after consultation with the PGC, suggests their resignation from the committee.

- Represents the committee at the virtual Division Leadership Meeting (first LibLearnX and Annual Conference) and meetings of the PGCs.
- Attends the ALA YMA Press Conference briefing at the LibLearnX Selection Meeting (usually held on Friday at 5pm).
- Presents problems to the PGC and Awards Coordinator as needed.

Administrative Assistant

The Chair's administrative workload is large. As such, the Chair may request the appointment of an administrative assistant, a volunteer who can help with the Chair's many tasks. Although not a voting member, the Administrative Assistant is held to the same standards of confidentiality as other committee members. The Administrative Assistant is not required to attend conferences, although virtual participation may be requested to facilitate committee deliberations. The Chair should direct their request for an assistant to the Awards Coordinator, the Program Officer for Governance, and the President at the time of their appointment.

Participation of ALSC Membership

Offering ALSC members an opportunity to participate in the selection of the award is an important process.

It is the responsibility of the Chair to call for books to consider several times during the year on the ALSC blog, the ALSC website, ALA Connect, through tweets @weareALSC, and in *Children and Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*. In addition, the Chair may call for books to consider on other electronic discussion lists having to do with children's literature. On an individual basis, committee members may also call for books to consider from members-at-large. Suggestions are currently collated using an [online tool](#) created by the Awards Coordinator. The Chair is automatically emailed a notification of any resulting suggestions, and ensures that committee members are provided with this information. Books submitted for consideration by members-at-large are accepted up to two weeks before the LibLearnX Selection Meeting.

The committee is not obligated to include books submitted for consideration by members-at-large on the LibLearnX discussion list, but committee members should take these suggestions seriously and consider these books along with all other eligible books when making monthly suggestions, nominations, or, late in the year, further suggestions. At the LibLearnX Selection Meeting, only books nominated by committee members are considered, along with further suggestions from committee members moved forward after the nomination process is complete. Refer to [Appendix C: Call for Membership Suggestions](#).

Priority Group Consultant (PGC)

- A Priority Group Consultant is assigned to the committee to address questions from the Chair and the committee regarding procedure, personnel, and the eligibility of books. This position is PGC V - Awards.

- The PGC 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.
- Committee members consult the PGC should there be unusual issues that the Chair cannot resolve, particularly issues regarding the Chair.
- The PGC attends the Introductory Meeting and/or the Initial Discussion Meeting (at the request of the Chair) to explain their role to the committee.

ALSC Staff

General Responsibilities

- Checks eligibility for membership of those appointed to the committee (Program Officer for Governance).
- On the President's instructions, sends formal invitations to potential committee members who have responded positively to an email asking if they would be interested in serving (Program Officer for Governance, with the President and Executive Director copied).
- Provides the Chair with an electronic contacts form for distribution to committee members. Provides publishers with a committee roster and posts roster on the ALSC website once committee members complete the electronic contacts form and confirm that their information is correct in the ALA database. **Because committee rosters are sent to publishers immediately after the Introductory Meeting, it is vitally important that committee members submit the contacts form and ensure that their mailing addresses are correct in the ALA database as soon as possible.** Once publishers have the roster, it is essentially impossible to update the addresses (Awards Coordinator).
- Assists with call for ALSC membership to submit titles for consideration in ALSC publications and on ALSC website (Awards Coordinator, in collaboration with the Membership and Marketing Specialist).
- Creates online forms for suggestions, nominations, and membership suggestions. Provides Chair with a link to these forms (Awards Coordinator).
- Requests that ALA Conference Services provide for a secured room for the committee meetings. Communicates the room and schedule details to the Chair, and informs the Chair on how to obtain the key or access to the room (Awards Coordinator and Executive Director).

Responsibilities at LibLearnX Selection Meeting

- Creates an online form for balloting and provides the Chair with a link to the form (Awards Coordinator).
- Provides Chair with contact information for Medal and Honor winners (ALA CMO).

- Provides access to forms that the Chair fills out listing winners, along with official comments (ALA CMO).
- Works with ALA CMO on arrangements for the announcement: contacting winners, ALA YMA Press Conference, press release, distribution of press release in print and on website, etc. (Awards Coordinator, with assistance from all ALSC staff).
- Works with the President on the ALSC portion of the ALA YMA Press Conference (Executive Director and Awards Coordinator).
- Updates awards lists on the ALSC website (ALSC Communications Officer).

Responsibilities after LibLearnX Selection Meeting

- Sends letters of congratulations to winners and honor recipients, and publishers with details about ALSC Award Presentation arrangements (Executive Director).
- Works with winners and their publishers regarding acceptance speeches (Executive Director).
- Works with winner's publishers to arrange for physical Award Presentation program (Executive Director).
- Works with the President on arrangement for award and/or medal and certificate presentations and other related events (Executive Director).
- Arranges for engraving of medals, preparation of awards and certificates (Executive Director).
- Provides chair with copies of previous presentation speeches and information on award presentation (timing, procedures, deadlines, etc.) (Executive Director).
- CALDECOTT and NEWBERY: Contacts the Melcher family and notifies them of the winners (Executive Director).
- CALDECOTT and NEWBERY: Contacts Scholastic/Weston Woods regarding taping of speeches and *Children and Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children* and *Horn Book Magazine* regarding publication of the speeches (Executive Director and Communications Officer).
- GEISEL: Contacts representative(s) of Random House to issue formal invitation to Award Presentation as a courtesy for their assistance (non-financial) in the establishment of the award (Executive Director).
- SIBERT: Contacts representative(s) of Bound To Stay Bound Books to issue formal invitation to award presentation (Executive Director).
- Continues to aid ALA CMO in publicizing the awards (Awards Coordinator).

Responsibilities at Celebration and Presentation of the Awards

- Brings medals, awards and citations to the conference (Awards Coordinator).

- Handles last minute details related to awards presentation programs (Awards Coordinator).

ALSC President

- Appoints members of the committee and the Chair.
- If necessary, makes appointments to fill committee vacancies.
- If necessary, deals with conflicts of interest or non-participation of committee members, in consultation with the Executive Committee and the PGC.
- Presides at announcement and presentation ceremonies.

Appendix A: Supporting Documents

Checklist for Prospective ALSC Award Committee Members

Please respond to the following questions. A “yes” answer does not necessarily preclude service on an award committee. These questions are intended to alert prospective committee members to situations that may or may not pose a problem; the answers will enable the Executive Committee to assess individual situations.

Have you already agreed to serve on another ALA unit’s board, award or media evaluation committee, or ALA Council? Yes No

Are you under contract for a children’s trade book that will be published during the period of your award committee service? Yes No

Have you been employed or served as an advisor or a consultant for a children’s trade-book publisher, author, or illustrator in the past three years? Yes No

Do you have a close relative (i.e. parent, spouse/partner, child) who is the author or illustrator of a book that may be eligible during the year of your committee service? Yes No

Do you have a close relative (i.e. parent, spouse/partner, child) who is currently employed by a U.S. trade publisher? Yes No

Do you, or does a close relative, directly own equity (stock, stock options, convertible notes, or any other ownership interest) that represents more than a 5% stake in a U.S. trade publishing company? Yes No

Do you have a personal relationship with the author or illustrator of any book that may be eligible that could reasonably be seen by an independent observer to cause a conflict of interest? Yes No

Do you anticipate having difficulty attending all required meetings in the manner they are offered (in person or virtually)? Yes No

Do you anticipate having difficulty accessing newly published children's books? Yes No

Have you served as a member of the Batchelder Award, Caldecott Medal, Geisel Award, Newbery Medal, Sibert Medal, Legacy Award, or Notable Children’s Books Committee in the past four years? Yes No

If you answered “yes” to any of the questions above, please contact the Executive Director in the ALSC Office to discuss your specific situation before you accept an appointment. Failure to disclose such activities may lead to immediate dismissal from the committee.

I verify that I have read and understand bullet point #6 under ALSC’s [Guidelines for Award Committees](#). I understand that effective the start of my term (July 1 or immediately upon appointment after that date), I will not write a signed review of eligible titles or post about eligible titles on social-media accounts. I understand that once the committee’s selections have been announced at the LibLearnX meeting of my award year, I may then write or post about any book titles on electronic or print platforms.

Please indicate here the social media service(s) you use and your user name or other identifying information:

If you review in print and/or online, please provide the name of the review outlet and whether the reviews are signed or unsigned:

_____ Signed Unsigned _____ Signed Unsigned

_____ Signed Unsigned _____ Signed Unsigned

Signed: _____ date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Checklist updated: February 2007, revised May 2009, June 2011, January 2014, May 2015, April 2018, March 2023.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Policy for Service on Award and Evaluation Committees

Why are there ALSC policies for service on award and media evaluation committees?

Every year, ALSC leadership is approached about situations in which award and media evaluation committee members have potential conflicts of interest. Because ALSC awards and notable lists have such high visibility, our members and the general public exhibit great interest about how and why committees make their selections. It is important for the process to be completely above suspicion.

How are the policies publicized?

The policies are posted on the ALSC website and also appear in the ALSC Handbook of Organization and in all pertinent award and notable manuals, which are also posted on the website. In addition, all potential award committee appointees and media evaluation appointees are required to read and sign the document before they accept an appointment. A [checklist for prospective award committee members](#) is emailed to every potential appointee to help them identify problem areas to disclose and to discuss with the ALSC Executive Director and, when necessary, the Executive Committee, prior to accepting the appointment.

Why do we need such a rigid policy? Doesn't ALSC trust its members?

We have a great deal of trust in our members, and we respect their dedicated service to ALSC on award and media evaluation committees and in other capacities. However, the awards and notable lists draw public scrutiny because they can translate into real financial benefits for authors, illustrators, and publishers. In order to protect the integrity of the awards and notable lists, the Board believes that it is important that the selection process be above suspicion or reproach, and above allegations that any member had a personal interest in the outcome of the selection. For additional insight, particularly in relation to the award committees, please refer to 2013–2014 ALSC President Starr LaTronica's editorial, "[The Voice of Reason](#)," that appeared in the August 2014 issue of *Horn Book Magazine*.

The book award committees' guidelines for print and electronic communication differ from that of other media evaluation committees. Please review 2015–2016 ALSC President Andrew Medlar's June 27, 2014 [blog post](#) for the history and rationale of the Award Service and Social Media task force's work and recommendations that were adopted by the ALSC Board in January 2014.

Don't you think members would take extra precautions to be impartial if they had some sort of connection to the materials or persons under consideration?

If we permit a member with a personal or family connection to a book, author, illustrator, or publisher to serve on an award committee, it would be as unfair to the very books, authors, illustrators, or publishers with whom the member has a connection as it is to the rest of the materials or persons under consideration. Members may feel it necessary to bend over backwards to appear impartial and to recuse themselves from all discussions or votes relating to particular materials or persons, but such actions are unfair both to the contenders and to the committee process, since the process is based on consensus building. We understand the frustration of those who feel strongly that we can trust members to self-monitor and act ethically to prevent their personal or family connections from affecting their service on award or media evaluation committees. This policy helps to prevent a third party, who doesn't know the member personally, who has no way of knowing how ethical and fair they are, and who is not present at

a committee's confidential deliberations, from questioning the legitimacy of the committee's decision.

What about social media?

The evolution of social media outlets and other opportunities for the wide dissemination of information electronically necessitates the consideration of responsibilities and confidentiality that did not exist in the past, and members of award committees should bear in mind the inherently public and sometimes uncontrollable nature of these forums. The potential for committee members' appropriate statements to be disseminated widely and quickly, resulting in the unintended consequence of them being misinterpreted, utilized improperly, made available indefinitely, and/or creating the appearance of a breach of confidentiality or conflict of interest, must be taken into account and eliminated whenever possible.

Members should not use social media or electronic forms of communication in relation to eligible titles during their term of service. Of course this excludes the virtual committee work that takes place in closed forums among members, ALSC staff, and ALSC leadership, such as email and private ALA Connect groups or Zoom meetings. Prohibited forms of communication include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Goodreads, Library Thing, blogs, and review websites.

What does this mean for reviewers?

Award committee members may not publish bylined articles or signed reviews that feature titles that are eligible for their particular award during their term of service in professional journals (print and/or electronic) or other professional and personal outlets because, as committee affiliation is public information, any published reviews attributed to specific committee members are susceptible to the same issues as discussed with other social media above. There are many ways that committee members may contribute their thoughts about materials. The following is a list of possible options as identified by past-President Starr LaTronica in the *Horn Book* [editorial](#) referenced above:

- Members of all committees may write and publish unsigned reviews of any book.
- Members of all committees (except the Batchelder) may write signed reviews or discuss via social media any book previously published in other countries or by an author or illustrator who is not an American citizen or resident.
- Batchelder committee members may write signed reviews or discuss via social media any book that has not been translated and published in the United States in the previous year.
- Books with no illustration provide a wide field for members of the Caldecott committee.
- Books with no text are available for Newbery committee members (and seeing that all three Caldecott Honor Books qualified for that category in 2014, it would seem a rich field).
- Belpré committee members are welcome to write signed reviews or discuss via social media any books by non-Latinx authors and illustrators.
- Members of the Sibert committee may write signed reviews or discuss via social media all works of fiction.

- Geisel committee members may write signed reviews or discuss via social media any books beyond the scope of a beginning reader.
- The wide and wonderful world of YA literature is available to all of us who value and evaluate literature for older youth.

Does this mean I may not blog or tweet?

Award committee members may not blog or otherwise communicate electronically (outside of the committee process) regarding any aspect of eligible titles during their term of service. At no time during or after their service may committee members discuss the status of books as having been or not having been a consideration, suggested, and/or nominated for the award.

When do I need to cease writing signed reviews and/or other social media activity?

ALSC policy indicates that you may not engage in print or electronic communication regarding eligible titles* during your “term of service,” which officially begins July 1 of your appointment year. If appointed after July 1, your term of service begins immediately. However, once your committee’s selections have been announced at the LibLearnX Youth Media Awards Press Conference, you may begin reviewing (bylined), writing articles, and blogging again even though the term does not end until the following Annual Conference.

*Please note: This prohibition includes any and all new fall publication books that would be reviewed in galley form. Official publication dates are sometimes delayed, meaning that a book could potentially become eligible for an Award/Medal the following year. As such, to be on the safe side, ALSC uses the July 1 cut-off date for books in galley form. This also ensures consistency among all committee members. In the time between July 1, and when the committee’s year under consideration begins, you may still review finished, published books of that year, books published in previous years, and imports, all of which have no chance of being eligible. (The exception to this is for members of the Batchelder Committee.) Of course, after January 1, you can review any books published in the previous year.

For example, a 2021 committee member could review any 2019 book in its final form, but NOT any galleys produced after July 1, as publication could be delayed, and the book could become eligible for that committee year.

What about writing teachers’ or readers’ group guides about specific children’s books?

Since it falls under the category of serving in an advisory capacity to a trade publisher, the policy does not permit members to write teachers’ guides or readers’ group guides for children’s trade-book publishers. If one wants to serve on an award committee, one must forgo writing these sorts of items during the term of committee service.

The author of a book about volcanoes acknowledged me in her introduction because I helped her do research when she called my library. Does that count as serving in an advisory capacity?

No, providing assistance as part of ordinary library reference duties does not disqualify a member from serving on an award committee.

There is a children’s book being dedicated to me that will come out during my term of service. Is that a problem?

Yes. You may not accept an appointment if the book in question is eligible for consideration by your award or media evaluation committee. If you learn of the dedication once your term begins, we expect you to resign as soon as you find out.

If I have a friend who is a children's book author, does this mean I can never serve on an award or media evaluation committee?

It might, if the author is a close personal friend who publishes an eligible book every year. If it happens that your friend does not have a book coming out in your year of service, there's no issue.

How do you define "close personal relationship"?

We define a close personal relationship as one that could reasonably be seen by an outsider as having an influence on your decision-making process. This would include close friends and co-workers. It would not include authors or illustrators with whom you have a casual acquaintance, such as those who have been speakers at your library or those who sat next to you at a dinner during a professional conference. We want to avoid a situation in which after illustrator X wins the Caldecott Medal, the grumbling begins: "It's no surprise illustrator X won! Their best friend was on the Caldecott Committee!" If you are at all in doubt about the degree of a friendship, please discuss the specifics with the ALSC Executive Director.

What about accepting dinner invitations from publishers?

Publishers often invite award committee members, as well as other ALSC members, to be their guests at meal events and social gatherings at professional conferences. It is fine for you to accept such invitations, as long as they do not conflict with your committee meetings. You should be very vigilant about maintaining confidentiality in these sorts of gatherings, because many people will hang on your every word. You may want to take the opportunity to relax by talking about something other than books during these occasions.

My wife works for a trade publisher, so I can't serve on an award or media evaluation committee. But my colleague's brother is a book editor, and that doesn't keep her off committees, even though they are very close. What's the difference?

ALA's attorneys advised us that only parents, children, spouses, and partners must be included in the definition of "immediate family." Siblings and other relatives, such as cousins, etc., fall outside this narrow definition. Relationships with siblings may be personally significant but legally, a relationship with a parent, child, spouse, or partner is more susceptible to claims of conflict of interest because those relationships are much more likely to have strong emotional and direct financial ties.

I am the author of an adult book that is scheduled for publication while I'll be on an award committee. Will I be able to serve on a book award committee?

Yes, since an adult book is ineligible for any of the ALSC awards or media evaluation committees.

I have a manuscript for a children's book that is being considered by a publisher, though it's not yet under contract. Should I withdraw it temporarily from consideration if I want to be on the committee?

Yes, members must avoid any appearance of conflict of interest. A manuscript under contract would infer a financial tie to a publishing house.

I critiqued a manuscript for a children's novel last year because the author wanted my opinion of her book while it was a work in progress. However, I have no idea when the

book will be published. What should I do about accepting an appointment to the Newbery Committee?

If there is a good chance the book will be published in the year in which you have been invited to serve, it would be best to decline an appointment. In a case such as this, contact the ALSC Executive Director to discuss the ways in which you can verify a book's publication date.

I am writing a professional book about children's literature that will come out in the year I'll be serving on Caldecott. Will I have to step down?

No, members are not disqualified from serving on an award committee if they write, edit, or contribute to a book about children's literature that is aimed at professionals or other interested adults.

How can I obtain a variety of critical opinions about books under consideration throughout the year without violating confidentiality guidelines?

Committee members are strongly encouraged to speak with others—children and adults alike—regarding eligible books, to benefit from informing themselves about a variety of perspectives on titles. When participating in such verbal, in-person discussions, committee members are encouraged to:

- Practice active listening.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Share public information about the award process and the terms and criteria of the awards, as this serves an educational and outreach purpose and the information is publicly available in the committee manuals at www.ala.org/alsc.
- Keep in mind that you are gathering opinions from others and keep your own comments at a minimum, especially negative comments, which will be remembered more readily than positive comments.
- Use sensitivity and positive frameworks when discussing material that you personally don't consider strong.
- Be careful to not publicly dismiss a book.
- Try to avoid entering into discussions in which two eligible titles are being directly compared. This has the tendency to suggest that the committee is considering each title against the other. When titles are taken individually, or as a large group, it is easier to establish context. Allow points of discussion to arise naturally in conversation rather than soliciting comparisons between titles. Set the context before discussion on any particular title. For instance, "Remembering that as a committee member I have to consider and compare all eligible titles, I am interested in reader response to Title A."
- Only express your own personal opinion and be clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the committee. Use "I" rather than "we."

What about Mock Award discussions?

- Committee members are allowed, and even encouraged, to participate in local book discussions, especially with children, but they must be vigilant in maintaining confidentiality of any committee proceedings while also ensuring separation from the

selection of, discussion of, and voting on materials eligible for the award on which they serve.

- In summary, while committee members are encouraged to participate in book discussions, members are NOT to participate in mock elections. A committee member may observe the discussion at a mock discussion, but should not themselves discuss eligible titles or vote.
- If a committee member is required to hold a mock election as part of their employment, members should discuss this with the Chair, just as they should discuss any other uncertainties regarding book discussion with the Chair and the PGC.

I was on the Caldecott Committee more than 20 years ago. Can I talk about that now?

No. You may discuss your own opinion of that year's books, but not those of other committee members, and you cannot reveal any details of the decision-making. This protects the freedom of committee members to speak without reservation in committee deliberation, knowing that no one will EVER discuss their comments or opinions with anyone who was not on that committee.

How is the four-year waiting period determined between service on the Batchelder, Caldecott, Geisel, Newbery, Sibert, Legacy, or Notable Children's Books Committees?

The four-year period shall begin from the last year of the term of service regardless of length of term and will follow the Olympic model. For instance, a member serving on the 2018 Newbery Award Committee may not serve on any of the committees indicated above until the 2022 committee. In February 2018, the ALSC Board approved an operational practice that allows for the four-year period to be suspended in the event that an emergency, mid-year replacement has to be made. This will provide the appointing officer the necessary flexibility and a greater pool of experienced candidates.

Additionally, the appointment to a Chair position may occur within the four-year period to ensure qualified leadership. However, it does not work in reverse. A prior Chair may not be appointed to a member position within the four-year period.

Revised April 2018; abridged here in March 2023 to reflect specifically Book Award Committees. The complete document can be found here:

<https://www.ala.org/alsc/aboutalsc/governance/alsc-handbook-organization>

Reading Lists

General Reading List

The following list may be helpful to members in reviewing criteria and understanding various aspects of the evaluation of children's literature.

Derman-Sparks, Louise. "Guide to Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books." *Social Justice Books: A Teaching For Change Project*, 2016.

<https://socialjusticebooks.org/guide-for-selecting-anti-bias-childrens-books/>

Defines biases and how to identify and better evaluate children's literature.

"Diversity Resources." *Cooperative Children's Book Center*, School of Education, University of Madison, Wisconsin.

<https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/diversity-resources-multicultural-literature/>

Accessed 5 January 2023. Resources addressing cultural competence, critical thinking, and content review. Continuously updated.

Horning, Kathleen T. *From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010. The gold standard in how to review and evaluate children's books.

Hunt, Peter. "How Not to Read a Children's Book." *Children's Literature in Education*. Dec 95, Vol. 26 Issue 4, pp 231–240. Hunt looks at how adults versus children view books, specifically contrasting Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* with Enid Blyton's series "The Famous Five."

Kiefer, Barbara Z., *Charlotte Huck's Children's Literature, Tenth Edition*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2009, relevant chapters. A textbook on children's literature; covers the basics of evaluation and review.

L'Engle, Madeleine. "Is it Good Enough for Children?" *Writer (Kalmbach Publishing Co.)*. Jul 2000, Vol. 113 Issue 7, p8. Argues that the quality for writing children books is similar with the quality in writing adult books, and the importance of respecting the child reader.

Lukens, Rebecca, *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature, 9th Edition*. London: Pearson, 2012. A textbook on children's literature, useful for reviewing the basics of evaluation and review.

Parrott, K. *SLJ Diversity and Cultural Literacy, online course syllabus*, Summer 2016.

<https://contributors.slj.com/2016/10/slj-diversity-and-cultural-literacy-syllabus/> A collection of articles, videos, and podcasts on cultural literacy, originally offered as part of an online course.

Smith, Vicky. "Considering the Criteria: Addressing Book Discussion Guidelines in the Twenty-First Century." *The Horn Book*, October 2, 2019,

<https://www.hbook.com/story/considering-the-criteria-addressing-book-discussion-guidelines-in-the-twenty-first-century>. A critique of commonly accepted book discussion guidelines, offering suggestions on how these guidelines might be modified to ensure discussions reflect the diversity of the populations we serve.

Stevenson, Deborah. "Finding Literary Goodness in a Pluralistic World." *The Horn Book*,

Sept/Oct 2006. Vol. 82 Issue 5, p 511–517. The article considers how to evaluate the "goodness" of a children's book when "good" is acknowledged to be a relative term.

Sibert Award: Suggested Reading List

Aronson, Marc. "Originality in Nonfiction: A writer for Young People Makes a Case for Recognizing Innovation." *School Library Journal*, January 2006, pp. 42-43.

Aronson, Marc. "New knowledge." *The Horn Book Magazine*, March-April 2011, 57+. *Gale In Context: High School* (accessed May 1, 2023).

Aronson, Marc. "Nonfiction Windows So White." *The Horn Book Magazine*, March-April 2021, 12+. *Gale In Context: High School* (accessed May 1, 2023).

Campbell, Edith. "Teachers and librarians: Look for the back story". *School library Journal*, August 20, 2021.

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

Freedman, Russell. 2006. "May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture: The Past Isn't Past: How History Speaks and What It Says to the Next Generation." *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library*

Horning, Kathleen T. *From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010. The gold standard in how to review and evaluate children's books.

Hoyle, Karen Nelson. 2008. "Forty Years Old and Still Vibrant. (Cover Story)." *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children* 6 (2): 14–18.

Issacs, Kathleen. "Truth in Informational Books: A Librarian Makes a Case for Sticking to the Verifiable Facts." *School Library Journal*, July 2005, pp. 28-29.

Kesler, Ted. "Evoking the World of Poetic Nonfiction Picture Books," *Children's Literature in Education*. Vol 43, Number 2. July 21, 2012

Lee Stone, Tanya. 2022. "The Art of Visual Storytelling in Long-Form Nonfiction." *Horn Book Magazine* 98 (5): 20–25.

Vardell, Sylvia M." Everyday Poetry: Outstanding Science Poetry,"*Book Links*. May 2012.

Other Nonfiction Book Awards of Interest

The AAAS/Subaru SB&F Prize for Excellence in Science Books,
<https://www.aaas.org/awards/aaas-subaru-sbf-prize-excellence-science-books/about>

Orbus Pictus Award: Recognising excellence in the writing of non-fiction for children
<https://ncte.org/awards/orbis-pictus-award-nonfiction-for-children/>

Past Award/Medal Winners

For a complete list of past Medal and Honor books, please visit the [ALSC website](#)

Award/Medal Specific Documents

[Insert Award/Medal Specific Documents here.]

ROBERT F. SIBERT INFORMATIONAL BOOK AWARD

Press Release: Sample

Elizabeth Partridge, Lauren Tamaki win 2023 Sibert Medal

For Immediate Release

Mon, 01/30/2023

Contact:

ALA Media Relations

Communications and Marketing Office

American Library Association

cmomedia@ala.org

NEW ORLEANS — Elizabeth Partridge and Lauren Tamaki, creators of "Seen and Unseen: What Dorothea Lange, Toyo Miyatake, and Ansel Adams's Photographs Reveal About the Japanese American Incarceration" were named the winners of the 2023 Robert F. Sibert Medal for the most distinguished informational book for children published in 2022. The award was announced today by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), during the ALA's LibLearnX: The Library Learning Experience held January 27-30, in New Orleans.

"Seen and Unseen: What Dorothea Lange, Toyo Miyatake, and Ansel Adams's Photographs Reveal About the Japanese American Incarceration," published by Chronicle Books, centers on three different photographers and how their work frames understandings around the American incarceration of people of Japanese descent during World War II.

"This visually stunning book engages readers by inviting them to explore primary sources and to critically question the world around them and how it is documented," said Sibert Medal Committee Chair Elisa Gall.

Partridge lives in Berkeley, California. She has written more than a dozen books for young readers. Her books have received many honors, including National Book Award finalist, a Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, a Los Angeles Times Book Prize, a Michael L. Printz Honor, and the Jane Addams Children's Book Award. Tamaki is a Canadian illustrator living in New York. Her work has been recognized by the Society of Illustrators, the Society for News Design, AI-AP, and the National Magazine Awards.

The Sibert Medal Committee selected four Honor Books.

“Choosing Brave: How Mamie Till-Mobley and Emmett Till Sparked the Civil Rights Movement,” written by Angela Joy, illustrated by Janelle Washington and published by Roaring Brook Press, a division of Macmillan Children's Publishing Group.

This powerfully told story pairs striking papercut images with poetic language to detail the life of Mamie Till-Mobley, the memory of her son Emmett Till, and the legacy of Till-Mobley's activism and how it connects to contemporary movements for racial justice.

Joy currently resides in southern California. Washington resides in Alexandria, Virginia.

“A Seed Grows,” written and illustrated by Antoinette Portis, published by Neal Porter Books, an imprint of Holiday House.

Portis thrillingly presents the life cycle of a sunflower. Palette, font size, and endpapers illuminate the habitat, while text and illustration echo each other in pitch-perfect harmony to convey the wonder that comes from the falling of a sunflower seed.

Portis lives in Southern California.

“Sweet Justice: Georgia Gilmore and the Montgomery Bus Boycott,” written by Mara Rockliff, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie and published by Random House Studio, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Penguin Random House.

Exceptional writing sheds light on an everyday civil rights hero while rich illustrations fill the eye with vibrant colors and period details in this thoroughly researched picture book biography of Georgia Gilmore.

Rockliff lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Christie lives in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

“The Tower of Life: How Yaffa Eliach Rebuilt Her Town in Stories and Photographs,” written by Chana Stiefel, illustrated by Susan Gal and published by Scholastic Press, an imprint of Scholastic, Inc.

With a recurring theme of light and life amidst the darkness, and primary source photographs integrated into illustrations, this book excellently contextualizes Eliach's life and her work building the “Tower of Faces” exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Stiefel lives in Teaneck, New Jersey. Gal lives in Berkeley, California.

The award was established by ALSC and named to commemorate Mr. Robert F. Sibert, founder of Bound to Stay Bound Books, Inc., of Jacksonville, Illinois. Sibert was known for his early work in establishing standards of bookbinding.

Members of the 2023 Sibert Medal Committee are Chair Elisa Gall, University of Chicago Laboratory Schools; Cynthia Alaniz, Cottonwood Creek Elementary, Coppell, Texas; Justin Azevedo, Sacramento Public Library, California; Judy Ehrenstein, Montgomery County Public Libraries, Bethesda, Maryland; Adrienne Gillespie, Tumwater Middle School, Beaverton, Oregon; Katelyn Martens-Rodriguez, Washington County Library, Minnesota; Laurie Reese, Felipe de Neve Branch, Los Angeles Public Library; Aaron Stefanich, Grand Forks Public Library, North Dakota; and Ashley Waring, Reading Public Library, Massachusetts.

ALSC is the world's largest organization dedicated to the support and enhancement of library service to children. With a network of more than 4,000 children's and youth librarians, literature experts, publishers and educational faculty, ALSC members are committed to engaging communities to build healthy, successful futures for all children through libraries. To learn more about ALSC, visit their website at www.ala.org/alsc.

For information on the Robert F. Sibert Medal and other ALA Youth Media Awards, please visit www.ala.org/yma.

ABOUT AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The American Library Association (ALA) is the oldest and largest library association in the world. Founded on October 6, 1876 during the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the mission of ALA is “to provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.” For more information, visit www.ala.org.

Appendix B: Expanded Definitions and Examples

Introduction

The intent of this section is to shed light on the often difficult process of determining eligibility. This is not to be the end of the process, but the beginning of the discussion. Members are to be reminded that often eligibility decisions ARE difficult and do not have clear answers. Thoughtful evaluation among members is expected, and, in some cases, committees will need to use their best judgment and come to a consensus. However, it should be noted that in cases where there is a question, communication with publishers should be done by the Chair or PCG, with the assistance of ALSC staff if needed, not by individual committee members.

It should also be noted that the examples in this section may or may not apply to a specific award. All examples have been included for informational purposes and to shed light on the process of each committee.

Publication Eligibility Issues

Simultaneous

Definition

For purposes of these awards, "published simultaneously" means that a book was first published in the United States within the same calendar year that it was first published in any other country, whether or not the actual dates of publication are identical.

Example

How I Live Now by Meg Rosoff was published in 2004 by Wendy Lamb/Random House and simultaneously published in Great Britain. It was explained by the editor, Wendy Lamb, that the book had been jointly acquired by the U.S. and British publishers; that editorial work had, from the beginning, been a joint process by the two editors; and that every effort had been made to be sure that the publication of the two editions was, literally, simultaneous. However, certain procedures specific to each publisher were impossible to manipulate (such as Tuesday always being publication day in the U.S. while the British publication day was always Thursday for these publishers). For this reason, the British edition was actually released a few days—but only a few days—before the U.S. edition. The book was ruled eligible with regard to date. Note: This example does not address other issues, such as the age level of *How I Live Now*, nor the fact that Rosoff is a resident of the U.K., and it is unknown, at this writing, whether she has maintained her U.S. citizenship.

First Published in the United States

Definitions

"First published in the United States" means the acquisition of the book and the editorial work were done by a publisher with editorial offices in the United States that publishes books under U.S. publishing conventions for a United States market. A book may be eligible if published "simultaneously" (see above) in another country, provided the acquisition and editorial work were done jointly or originated in the U.S.

“U.S. Publisher” and “American Publisher” are used synonymously to mean a publisher with editorial offices in the United States. Publishers who maintain warehouse or distribution facilities in the U.S. but whose primary editorial offices are in other countries are specifically excluded.

“Published” means prepared and issued for public sale. This includes the acquisition, editorial work, and release of a book and may (or may not) also include marketing and promotion.

Examples

As in the example above, Rosoff’s *How I Live Now* (published in 2004) was considered eligible because the editorial work was done JOINTLY. Had the editorial work been done only by the British editor, the book would have been ineligible.

Eragon, by Christopher Paolini, was originally self-published by Paolini International, Livingston, Montana, in 2002. Subsequently, in 2003, it was published by Random House. Because the first edition had been sold locally and distributed by the author, the Random House edition was ineligible. The same would have been true had the original publication been by any smaller publisher, rather than by the author.

Publication Date

Clarification

Ideally, a book has a publication date in the award year, is available for purchase in that year, and has a copyright date no later than that year. At times, however, a book will have a publication date that differs from the copyright date. If a book is published prior to its year of copyright as stated in the book, it shall be considered in its year of copyright. If a book is published after its year of copyright, it should be considered in the year of its publication. The intent is that every eligible book be considered, but that no book be considered in more than one year.

When considered logically, these stipulations make sense: Obviously, books that receive an award or medal should be available to the public. A book that is copyrighted but not yet published does not meet that requirement. For books that are published in a year but not copyrighted until the following year—something that tends to happen late in the year—it is worthwhile to wait until the book’s official year.

Publication dates may initially be determined from the book itself, from the publisher’s website, or from such sources as the Library of Congress online catalog at <http://catalog.loc.gov> or Amazon at <http://www.amazon.com>. Verification of publication dates, in cases where there is a question, should be done by the Chair or PCG, with the assistance of ALSC staff if needed, NOT by individual committee members.

Examples

Wait, Rest, Pause: Dormancy in Nature by Maurice Flinchum Atkins was published in 2019, but it had a copyright date of 2020. It was eligible for consideration in 2020 for the 2021 awards.

Text and illustrations from *The Year of the Rat* by Grace Lin were copyrighted in 2007, but the book wasn’t published until 2008. The title page of the book lists “First edition: January 2008.” It was eligible for consideration in 2008 for the 2009 awards.

Distributed

Definition

Distributed means transmitted from the publisher to the wholesale or retail seller and may (or may not) also include marketing and promotion.

Example

Publishers Group West distributes the books of many small publishers (Children's Book Press, Lee and Low, Island Press, and others).

Editorial Work

Definition

"Editorial work" means the negotiation process between author and editor that leads from initial manuscript to finished book. It may include conversations, correspondence, written instructions, markings on drafts, or other communication about the book.

Example

In the Rosoff example above, both the U.S. and U.K. editors worked with the author to shape the original manuscript, correct errors, etc. The two editors also held conversations with the author about the best choice of words to make the book equally readable in both countries.

Editorial Office

Definition

"Editorial office" means where "editorial work" is officially done (see definition above). While it is recognized that many editors work at home, in transit, and in locations other than "offices," the location of the Editorial Office refers to the business address at which such work originates. Secondary or subsidiary offices are specifically excluded.

An office that acquires the original manuscript or distributes the completed book is not considered an "editorial office" unless the work of editing is also done there.

Example

Several Canadian publishers have maintained offices in the state of New York and elsewhere in the United States to facilitate their interactions with U.S. writers and illustrators while performing editorial work at their Canadian headquarters. These publishers, while they have U.S. offices, are not considered U.S. publishers for purposes of these awards.

Book Eligibility Issues

American Literature for Children

Definition

"American Literature," in this sense, refers to the origin of the book, and not to the time or location where the action takes place. Nor does it refer to the characters or actions within the book.

Example

The War That Saved My Life by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley was a 2016 Newbery Honor recipient. Even though it is set in England during World War II, Brubaker Bradley is an American author, and Dial, the book's publisher, is based in the United States.

Original Work

Clarification

The intent is to ensure that a book is a NEW creation and not a re-creation from some other work. This does not mean that some minor portion of the work cannot have appeared elsewhere. It does mean, however, that no significant part of the book under consideration was originally part of another work. Not all cases are clear-cut, and each committee must make its own judgments about originality. Where consensus is not easily reached, the Chair should discuss the issue with the PGC, who may also consult the Awards Coordinator and Executive Director, as needed.

Examples

Bread and Jam for Frances and *A Baby Sister for Frances*, published in 1964 with illustrations by Lillian Hoban, were republished in "newly illustrated" editions in 1993. Although color had been added, the characters in and composition of the scenes were substantially the same. The illustrations were therefore ineligible.

Joseph Had a Little Overcoat by Simms Taback (2000 Caldecott Medal) had been published in a 1977 edition, also illustrated by Taback. The new edition was considered eligible because the illustrations were entirely new.

Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret: A Novel in Words and Pictures* (2008 Caldecott Medal) contains visual quotations from the films of French cinematographer Georges Méliès. As with quotations in a book review, these are a minor portion of the illustrations, and the book was considered eligible. Other illustrators—for example, Jon Agee in *The Incredible Painting of Felix Clousseau*—have used such visual quotations from external sources.

Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold (1992 Caldecott Honor) was preceded by an exhibition of the artist's pictorial quilts on the same subject. The book, in which the illustrations are paintings and the story is told in words, was considered a different entity, created for children, and separate from the original pictorial quilts.

Young Readers' Editions

Clarification

Children's books derived from previously published adult books, including young readers' editions, are not eligible. The intent of the award is not to see who can successfully adapt an adult book; the award is intended for the original creation of a distinguished book for children. This condition is NOT intended to exclude works in which an author (or illustrator) has created a new work based on earlier work that is in the public domain, such as a novel based on a Shakespeare play.

Examples

The Greatest Treasure Hunt in History: The Story of of the Monuments Men (2019) by Robert Edsel would not be considered eligible because it was substantially a young readers' edition of Edsel's book for adults, *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* (2009).

Othello: A Novel by Julius Lester, based on the Shakespeare play and published for children in 1995, would be considered eligible.

Compilations/Anthologies

Clarification/Definition

Anthologies and compilations of works by many authors are not eligible. Books of this nature consist of multiple distinct elements and are generally not a unified whole. As such, they do not constitute a single work and are therefore ineligible.

Example

Flying Lessons and Other Stories (2017), edited by Ellen Oh, was composed of ten distinct short stories by different authors. Although all of the authors were residents or citizens of the United States, and only one of the stories had been published previously, the book was determined to be ineligible, as it was not a single work, but rather ten separate works.

Portion Previously Published Elsewhere

Clarification

If a portion of a book was previously published elsewhere—for instance, in a magazine, a collection of short stories, or in electronic format—then the amount of previously published material must be a minor portion of the entire work. The substantial majority of the book must be wholly new, original, and previously unpublished.

Examples

A chapter in *A Long Way from Chicago* by Richard Peck (1999 Newbery Honor) had previously been published as a short story. However, this chapter was a minor part of the book, which was much longer. The book was ruled eligible.

Emancipation Proclamation: Lincoln and the Dawn of Liberty by Tonya Bolden in 2013 was a substantially expanded and enhanced version of an article published in 2007, and so it would be eligible.

Infinite Hope: A Black Artist's Journey from World War II to Peace (2019) by Ashley Bryan used some journal entries and letters that were previously published in an earlier work. However, *Infinite Hope* was substantially new and original, with only very small portions of the work having been previously published, and so it would be eligible.

Traditional Works

Clarification

A committee may consider books that are traditional in origin, if the book is the result of original research and the retelling and interpretation are the writer's own.

Example

Donna Jo Napoli's books *The Prince of the Pond, Otherwise Known as De Fawg Pin* (1994), based on the folk tale "The Frog Prince," and *Zel* (1996), based on the folk tale "Rapunzel," would be eligible, as would be Robin McKinley's *Rose Daughter* (1997), based on the folk tale "Sleeping Beauty."

In English

Definition

Committee members should consider only books written and published in English. This requirement DOES NOT limit the use of words or phrases in another language where appropriate in context. Bilingual books may be considered, with the understanding that the award is given for the English text. In such cases the committee should, if necessary, request that the non-English text be read by a native speaker of that language to determine whether there are flaws that detract from the book's excellence or that would limit its acceptance by readers in the other language. Care must be taken, when approaching outside readers, not to imply the book is "under consideration" by the committee. This should be done ONLY by the Chair, not individual committee members. Outside readers may be told only that the book is "eligible," and should be approached as early in the year as possible, to avoid the impression that the book appears on the discussion list. As stated in the terms and criteria, all eligible books are to be considered.

Examples

The German author Cornelia Funke lived in California during the time she was writing one of the books in her *Inkworld* trilogy. Had the book been written in English, it might have been eligible for consideration based on her residency. However, because it was first written in German, it was not eligible.

We Are Grateful/Otsaliheliga written by Traci Sorell and illustrated by Frané Lessac (2019 Sibert Honor) features Cherokee text alongside the English text. The book would be eligible, with the understanding that only the English text would be considered for the award, and with the suggestion the committee seek out the opinion of someone able to read Cherokee.

Children’s Book

Definition

A book for which children, up to and including age fourteen, are an intended and potential audience. Books for this entire age range are to be considered, with the exception of the Geisel award for books for beginning readers.

In some instances, award-winning books have been criticized for exceeding the upper age limit of fourteen. If a book is challenging, and suitable for 13-14-year-olds but not for younger readers, is it eligible? Yes; but it can be given an award only if it does what it sets out to do as well as or better than other, younger books that are also eligible.

Questions for committees to consider include:

- Is there any 14-year-old for whom this book is suitable?
- If so, is it distinguished enough to be considered?
- If so, exactly what 14-year-olds would respond to it, and why?

A book may be considered even though it appeals to a fairly small part of the age range if the committee feels that:

- It is so distinguished that everyone of that age should know the book; or
- It is so distinguished, in so many ways, that it deserves recognition for the excellence it provides to a small but unique readership; or
- It is exceptionally fine for the narrow part of the range to which it appeals, even though it may be eligible for other awards outside this range.

Examples

Frog and Toad Together, by Arnold Lobel (1973 Newbery Honor), appeals to a young audience.

This One Summer, illustrated by Jillian Tamaki (2015 Caldecott Honor), is presented in graphic novel format for older tweens and young teens. It was also awarded a Printz Honor for its appeal to teens (see [ALSC Blog post by Angela Reynolds](#)).

Piecing Me Together by Renée Watson (2018 Newbery Honor) is considered by most sources to be for young adults. It appeals to children ages 12 years old and up and has themes that may not resonate with younger children. That said, there is no doubt that it is a distinguished work of fiction intended for children within the qualifying age range.

Book and E-book

Definition

“Book” means the work was published in book format (pages between covers). Electronic books (e-books) and technological additions (including, but not limited to, CDs, DVDs, or accompanying websites) are specifically excluded from consideration of the book itself. A book published only in electronic format (e-book) is not eligible.

Example

A picture book version of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* with accompanying CD of a New York Philharmonic performance of the work may be considered, but ONLY the book itself is considered for the award. If the book should win, the citation should point out that although a CD is included with the book, the committee considered, and the award is given to, the book only.

Clarification: E-books

A book first published in electronic format (e-book) and subsequently published as a hardcover or paperback book is not eligible.

Author/Illustrator Eligibility Issues

Author/illustrator eligibility can be a challenging issue to address. Where eligibility is not certain, the Chair should discuss the issue with the PGC. The Chair or the PGC may contact the publisher directly.

Resident

Definition

The author has established and maintains residence in the United States, U.S. territory, or U.S. commonwealth, as distinct from being a casual or occasional visitor, or the author meets one of the following criteria: a) the author, a citizen of another country, holds a "green card" and is a Permanent Resident Alien; b) the author lives for at least six months EVERY year in the United States, regardless of where the book was actually written; or c) the author's permanent home is in the U.S., but the author is outside of the U.S. for a temporary purpose. For example, an individual goes on vacation in another country or works there temporarily. The individual still maintains residency in the U.S. and intends to return.

Examples

A Polish author who had obtained a "green card" and had lived in Brooklyn, NY, for many years decided, when her home was being renovated, to spend a year in Poland with relatives before returning to Brooklyn. She was considered eligible during this period, even though she was temporarily living abroad, because she had established Permanent Resident status.

The British author Susan Cooper lived for many years in the Boston area, though she traveled widely and returned to Britain at times. She was considered eligible.

Citizen

Definition

The author is considered by the government of the United States to be a U.S. Citizen, whether by birth or naturalization. This definition shall apply even if the author obtains citizenship during the year in which a book is being considered.

Special Eligibility Concerns: Sibert Award/Informational Books

Clarification on Informational Books

Informational books are defined as those written and illustrated to present, organize, and interpret documentable, factual material. The primary intention of the author and/or illustrator is to inform the reader about a topic. The verifiable, factual content may be presented in poetry. Ultimately it is up to the committee to use the purpose, terms, definitions, and criteria in the manual to determine eligibility of each book. If necessary, the Chair may seek advice from the PGC with questions regarding eligibility.

The titles listed in the examples below were judged to be eligible because the primary intention of the author and/or illustrator was to inform the reader about a topic, and they present verifiable, factual content:

Examples

Published in 2000, *Jefferson's Children* by Shannon Lanier is a factual book about Thomas Jefferson's children. The primary intent of the author is to inform the reader about Thomas Jefferson's family and the author's ancestry. He uses research, interviews, photographs, and graphics to present factual information. This book was eligible.

The Poet Slave of Cuba: A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano (2006) by Margarita Engle is a lyrical biography based on research and the poetry of Juan Francisco Manzano. The author tells the story of Manzano's life in verse to do justice to the poet's life. The primary intent of the author is to relate the life story of Manzano. This book was eligible.

Swirl By Swirl: Spirals in Nature (2011) by Joyce Sidman and illustrated by Beth Krommes. Though the author personifies, or at least infers deliberate intention to, a shape found in nature in lines like "A spiral is a clever shape" and "It knows how to defend itself," she develops these themes with scientifically accurate observations about how spirals function. Similarly, the illustrations are imaginary scenes, but the spirals in them are realistically depicted. Though the explanatory notes are not found throughout but have been gathered at the end, they are more extensive than the preceding text and clearly signal that the overall intent of the book is to be informational. This book was eligible.

Moonbird: A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95 by Phillip Hoose (2013 Sibert Honor). Though the author takes a bird's point of view in several passages to heighten dramatic moments, he does not impute human motives or thought processes to his avian protagonist. Furthermore, his presentation is overwhelmingly based on, and directly tied to, factual, verifiable scientific discoveries and observations. This book was eligible.

In *Older Than the Stars* (2010) by Karen C. Fox, the text takes readers through the steps of the universe's expansion by employing the structure of a familiar nursery rhyme: "This is the BANG when the world began. / These are the bits that were born in the bang when the world began." Factual information is incorporated into the text. This book was eligible.

Clarification on Original Work

In the case of the Sibert Award, illustrations previously published or compiled from other sources may be used. In this case, however, the award would be presented only to the author and not to the artist or artists. Since informational books are frequently adapted from a variety of

sources, the guiding principle should be whether the book, taken as a whole, is a substantially new and original contribution to the subject, rather than mainly an adaptation of a previous publication.

Examples

Susan Campbell Bartoletti's *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* (2006 Sibert Honor) is illustrated with photographs from many sources. Under these guidelines, the author would nonetheless be eligible.

Candace Fleming's *The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion & the Fall of Imperial Russia* (2015 Sibert Honor) uses numerous excerpts from diaries and letters from the Romanov family, as well as autobiographical writings of ordinary Russian people. Under these guidelines, the author would be eligible.

Appendix C: Samples

Sample Calendar

Winter/Spring Month/day	Introductory meeting (virtual meeting, optional) Meet and greet for members, establishment of expectations and anticipated virtual meeting schedule*
May/day	Suggestions due**
June/day	Suggestions due**
July/day	Initial Discussion Meeting (virtual meeting, mandatory) Including procedural orientation, practice book discussion
August/day	Suggestions due**
September/day	Suggestions due**
October/day	Suggestions due**
October/day	NOMINATIONS due***
November/day	Suggestions due**
November/day	NOMINATIONS due***
December/day	Suggestions due**
December/day	NOMINATIONS due***
January/day	Suggestions due (for late submissions only)
January/day	Deliberations start as mandatory virtual meetings
Winter/day	LibLearnX Selection Meeting, LOCATION Award Selection (in-person meeting, mandatory attendance)
June/July	ALA Annual Conference, LOCATION Award Presentation, ALSC Membership Meeting (In person meeting, optional attendance)

*The Chair will add regular, virtual meeting dates to the calendar.

**Suggestions are due on the DAY TO BE ESTABLISHED BY THE CHAIR every month beginning in May with the exception of July.

***Nominations are due on the DAY TO BE ESTABLISHED BY THE CHAIR. The number of nomination rounds depends on your particular committee's procedures.

Employer/Supervisor Information Form

Employer/Supervisor Information:

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

Your Name

Supervisor's Name

Supervisor's Title

Name of Institution

Mailing Address

Email Address

Supervisor's Name

Supervisor's Title

Name of Institution

Mailing Address

Email Address

Letter to Employer/Supervisor #1: Beginning of Service

mm/dd/yyyy

Dear _____,

Please accept our congratulations and gratitude for your support of _____ during their term on the Association for Library Service to Children's **(NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** Committee.

This is an especially exciting assignment. The **(NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** is widely considered to be among the most prestigious awards in children's literature, and books selected by the committee will become part of the canon of distinguished children's books for years to come. As part of this committee, _____ will help to select a **(AWARD/MEDAL)** winner, and perhaps additional Honor books.

Well over 20,000 trade books are published for children each year. 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 **(TYPE)** book for children. Needless to say, already well-practiced reviewing and evaluative skills will be further honed and heightened.

The process will begin virtually starting in **MONTH/DAY**. We will meet in-person to make our final selections at the LibLearnX Conference on **MONTH/DAY/YEAR** in **CITY**. The award presentation will take place at the ALA Annual Conference in **CITY** in **MONTH/YEAR**.

Thank you again for your support during this important committee assignment!

Sincerely,

Chair, YEAR **(NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** Committee

Letter to Employer/Supervisor #2: End of Service

mm/dd/yyyy

Dear _____,

Please accept our congratulations and gratitude for your support of _____ upon completion of their term on the **(YEAR) (NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** Committee. As you probably know, the award is administered by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA).

For your information, the winners, announced in **(month)**, are as follows:

Winner:

(Insert title)

In addition, there are XXX Honor Books:

(Insert titles.)

Well over 20,000 trade books are published for children each year, and many are books for **(TYPE)**. 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 **(TYPE)** books.

The **(YEAR) (NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** Committee met at the LibLearnX meeting in **CITY** in **MONTH** to make our final selections. The awards were announced at the ALA's Youth Media Awards ceremony, and will be officially presented to the winners at the ALA Annual Conference in **CITY, DATE**.

On behalf of ALSC I thank you for your support during this exciting year. _____ was instrumental in maintaining the distinguished traditions of the **AWARD/MEDAL**.

Thank you again for your support of _____ and the **(BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)**.

Sincerely,

Chair, **(YEAR) (NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** COMMITTEE

Press Release: Notice of Committee Appointment

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

From: _____

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(your name and position) is named to position in the American Library Association.

(Your name) will serve as (position—member or Chair) on the **(YEAR) (NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** Committee. The committee is charged with selecting annually the most distinguished (include award/medal criteria here) for children. Honor books may be named. The **(NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** Committee operates under the direction of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA).

Include a brief statement of your professional responsibilities/activities:

ALA serves as a voice of America's libraries and the people who depend on them. It also promotes the highest quality library and information services and protects public access to information. There are nearly 50,000 members worldwide. It is the oldest and largest library association in the world with members in academic, public, school, government, and special libraries.

ALSC is the world's largest organization dedicated to the support and enhancement of library service to children. Our work is centered on:

- 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 for the rights of children within and beyond libraries;
- supporting the professional development of members; and
- supporting research and study in these areas.

Sample Resignation Letter

Committee Member Resignation

To: Chair, President, and Executive Director

Please accept my resignation from **(YEAR) (NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** Committee effective **mm/dd/yyyy**. I can no longer honor my committee membership because of _____ (brief explanation).

Signed

Chair Resignation

To: President, Executive Director, and all committee members

Please accept my resignation from **(YEAR) (NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** Committee effective **mm/dd/yyyy**. I can no longer honor my committee chair position because of _____ (brief explanation).

Signed

Call for Membership Suggestions

The Chair calls on ALSC members to submit titles for consideration by the committee. The Chair posts an announcement on the ALSC blog, ALA Connect/ALSC, and through tweets @wearealsc during the year. The Chair may also solicit suggestions from other electronic discussion lists having to do with children's literature. Currently, suggestions are submitted via an online tool, which notifies the Chair via email of any responses. The Chair is responsible for passing these suggestions along to committee members.

Input Wanted: The ALSC **(YEAR) (NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)**

The **(YEAR) (NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** Committee is asking ALSC membership to submit titles for consideration. The **(NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** is presented annually to the **(author or illustrator)** of the most distinguished American **(type)** book for children published during the preceding year. Honor books may be named.

(DESCRIBE QUALITIES OF BOOKS ELIGIBLE FOR YOUR AWARD/MEDAL.)

The award will be announced at the press conference during the LibLearnX Meeting to be held in **(City, Year)**. The award will be presented during the ALA Annual Conference to be held in (City, Year).

The **(YEAR) (NAME OF BOOK AWARD/MEDAL)** Committee calls on ALSC personal members to submit titles for consideration. *Please remember:* only books from the **(YEAR)** publishing year are under consideration for the award/medal. Also, please note that publishers, authors, illustrators, or editors may not nominate their own titles.

Please click on this [link](#) to suggest a title to the book award/medal committee. We look forward to reading your suggestions.

Sample Note-taking Form

[If desired, this form can be modified to meet specific award criteria.]

Title:

Author:

Illustrator:

Publisher:

I suggested: Yes No

I nominated: Yes No

Subject/Summary:

Quality of Writing (excellent, engaging, and distinctive use of language, vocabulary):

Quality of illustration, if applicable (distinctive and engaging visual material, provides keys or clues to the text):

Quality of Design, if applicable (size of typeface, line length and spacing, use of white space, placement of illustrations):

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

For works of fiction, interpretation of the theme or concept, development of a plot, delineation of characters, delineation of setting, appropriateness of style:

Child Audience (respect for children’s understanding, abilities, and appreciation up to and including age 14):

Additional considerations for informational books:

Accuracy (author authority, currency, etc):

Organization (appropriate scope and sequence):

Documentation (appropriate citations to allow verification of facts):

Clarity (delineation of fact and theory):

Stimulating presentation of facts, concepts, and ideas:

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

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Comments:

REMEMBER: 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.

Reviews: BCCB Booklist Horn Book Kirkus PW SLJ Other
