

History of the Association of Children's Librarians of Northern California

Founded in 1935, the Association of Children's Librarians (ACL) was established so children's librarians in the San Francisco Bay Area could meet periodically to exchange ideas, collaborate on book reviewing, and to discuss matters relating to their profession.

According to an article by Jean Sherwood, published in the Winter 1971 edition of *California School Libraries*, "the idea originated in the mind of Sydney B. Mitchell, Dean of the School of Librarianship, UC Berkeley...[who] was concerned about the state of library work with children in California...Pressure was brought to bear upon him by certain county librarians who felt the need for some action which would support library work with children and give children's librarians an opportunity to confer with others in their work."

Nanette Morgan of the Oakland Public Library was ACL's first chairman; other founders included librarians Frances Clarke Sayers, Margaret Girdner, Leone Garvey, Doris Gates, and Natalie Mayo.

ACL members include children's and young adult librarians, from both public and school libraries, as well as graduate students studying library science and/or children's literature, even children's book store staff members.

Meetings are held the second Friday of each month, where members share book reviews, engage in discussions on the profession, and benefit from mini-workshops on a variety of topics.

Members write book reviews and share them at the meetings; these reviews are then collected and published in the monthly periodical *BayViews*, which is sent to all members and to the publishers that send us books for review. Except for a paid typist and proof-reader, *BayViews* is entirely done by members volunteering their expertise.

ACL also compiles a yearly list of Distinguished Books, voted on by members who meet and debate the merits of the most notable books published over the year. This list is published and sent to all members.

Since 1992, a newsletter *BayNews* has accompanied *BayViews*, offering news on children's authors and illustrators, a regular column with storytime ideas and themes, columns on board and pop-up books, programming ideas, read-alikes, and other related topics of interest to youth services librarians.

Each February since 1987, ACL has held a Performers' Showcase, so youth services librarians can see auditions from a variety of performers who do programming, including puppeteers, singers, storytellers, magicians, jugglers, and more.

Each Spring, ACL holds an Institute instead of their regular meeting, to focus on a different topic with guest speakers including authors, illustrators, publishers, and experts on the topic. The Institute topics are wide-ranging, from preschool books and programming, to feeding children at the library, to middle schoolers' development and their books. Each Institute committee also compiles and publishes a bibliography of books and other resources related to the topic.

ACL has had an online presence since 1999: www.bayviews.org. The website lists information on how to join, as well as tools for members who review books, the monthly newsletter *BayNews*, recent Institute Bibliographies, a long list of Storytime themes with books and craft ideas, the contacts for performers who have appeared at the Performers' Showcase, and other pertinent and helpful information for youth services librarians.

In March 2012, ACL started its popular blog bayviewsandmore.wordpress.com/ , as well as a Facebook page www.facebook.com/BayViews , and Twitter page twitter.com/ACLBayViews . These new innovations help members stay in touch and get up to the minute news and announcements.

Frequently Asked Questions about ACL (Association of Children’s Librarians of Northern California):

How many members does ACL have? Currently, we have approximately 100 members; mostly children’s librarians from the nine Bay Area counties. We have more members from public libraries than schools but both groups are represented by active members who write book reviews and serve on our committees.

When did ACL start? In 1935.

Email your question on ACL’s history to Penny Peck – Pikly@aol.com.