

CWIG Conference 2021

Annual General Meeting: Report

Chair: Dawn Finch



Welcome

Welcome to our first online AGM – with record attendance!

Some housekeeping: please mute yourself unless you are asked to unmute. Post questions in the chat bar – we will pick up on these at the end of the report.

When I accepted the role of Chair for the Children's Writers and Illustrators Group (CWIG) from Shoo back at our 2019 AGM, I was deeply honoured. After doing my stretch (as they say!) on the committee, I must confess I was very much looking forward to spending time celebrating children's books and reading and meeting lots of the wonderful creatives who work so hard to bring these books to the shelves. Sadly, we all know that 2020 had other plans, and instead of award ceremonies, festivals and summer garden parties we had Zoom meetings. In place of discussions about exciting events and gatherings, we had discussions about hardship funds and mental health support.

Throughout all of this I have been inspired every day by the overall resilience and kindness of creatives. During a time when many of us have had to rapidly reimagine and reinvent their own careers, I have watched you all extend the virtual arm of support to each other.

Everything I've seen over the last year has proved to me that the term 'socially distanced' is completely wrong. Words matter to us and what we now have is not social distance, but physical distance. We may not be able to sit together, but as a supportive group we will always fit together.

CWIG Committee

Today we say goodbye to Committee members **Sita Brahmachari, Keren David, Candy Gourlay, Curtis Jobling**; and welcome **Ian Billings, A M Dassu, Chitra Soundar** and **Isabel Thomas** who are elected unopposed.

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Ian Billings is a stand-up comic for kids, fiction author, poet, and scriptwriter of award-winning audio drama, TV and theatre. **A. M. Dassu** is Deputy Editor of SCBWI-BI's magazine, *Words & Pictures*, is a Director of Inclusive Minds, and is a writer of fiction and non-fiction including the widely acclaimed MG novel *Boy, Everywhere*. **Chitra Soundar** is the author of over 40 books for children for trade and education, fiction and non-fiction. **Isabel Thomas** is an award-winning science writer and the author of more than 160 books for children.

We are always seeking candidates as people retire, and there will be two vacancies next year, so if you are interested in standing, contact Jo McCrum (jmccrum@societyofauthors.org) by 1 June. In order to increase our representation, we will be reviewing the current CWIG constitution and will report back once we have consulted the SoA Management Committee.

Remaining Committee members representing picture-books, MG, non-fiction, fantasy, horror, theatre, TV, animation, poetry, YA and educational works include: **Dawn Finch** (me), **Steve Antony**, **S F Said**, **Ross Montgomery** and **Robin Stevens**.

Members

We continue to grow in numbers and are 1,346 strong – the largest of the SoA's special interest groups at about 12% of general membership. Do encourage others to join, as we have lots to offer – new members can currently join with 20% off the first year's subscription by using code **CWIG20** with a special link posted on the [CWIG page](#).

Events and resources

Since the last AGM we have been working on guidance for members – largely via events scheduled as part of the SoA @ Home Festival, taking in school visits, pitching and developing film proposals, creating new income streams, working as illustrators and more. We have also begun featuring bespoke features in the bi-monthly CWIG newsletter with contributions on mental health, creativity, grants and income streams.

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Thanks to speakers and contributors Jenny Alexander, Dapo Adeola, Steve Antony, Lucy Coats, Cressida Cowell, Megan Farr, Candy Gourlay, Curtis Jobling, Sarah McIntyre, Shoo Rayner, Cat Weatherill, Ken Wilson-Max, Isabel Thomas and the crew of The Good Ship Illustration for keeping our skills and spirits up. Catch up or revisit the talks on the [SoA Vimeo channel](#). Our guides on school visits are live documents and are regularly updated, so do keep sending Jo your feedback on rates, T&Cs and what generally makes a school visit a success.

Campaigns

Our promotion of reading for pleasure continues with 46 [Reading for Pleasure Awards](#) given to schools for the 2019/20 term, a third down from the previous year due to the impact of the pandemic and schools closures. We are happy that seven schools have received awards this year, provided that you are confident that the school is really promoting reading for pleasure, for an award to be sent following a virtual visit. Please don't delay in making an award – they are really valued by schools – particularly during these strange and difficult times. Thank you to all those authors who made their awards – we appreciate the work that goes into making a submission.

We continue to meet with organisations such as World Book Day and BookTrust to ensure a broad range of representation.

That concludes my report. Thank you all for your support this year.

Dawn Finch
6 February 2020