



OCBG Chair's Report for AGM 2023/Annual newsletter

Since last November, the OCBG committee have been very busy, trying to return to pre-pandemic levels of activity and membership. We have had a lively and successful year and have enabled lots of children to encounter new and exciting stories and authors.

1. **AGM 2022:** We were delighted to welcome international storyteller and long-time friend of OCBG, Anna Conomos, to be our guest speaker. After our Bring -and -Share supper, Anna held us spellbound with a true story about friendship and reconciliation from World War Two Thessaloniki.
2. **This year's theme (2023) :** We decided to continue with our environmental awareness theme and make it the focus for our biennial conference. See below...
3. **World Book Day 2023:** The committee went through the Book Swap and CBA books, to choose the newest and best books to give away to our school members. We managed to bag up 10 books per school. Each bag was worth at least £100 so with schools enjoying a reduced membership at £15 p.a. we hope they feel their membership offers good value!
4. **World Book Day Thank You!** The OCBG would like to thank Annette Sweeney, and the other staff and girls from Oxford Junior High School, for raising money through their Reading activities which they then very generously donated to the OCBG. This helped us to provide our family event for free.
5. **Oxford Literary Festival 2023:** Catherine, Moira and I helped Andrea Reece with introducing and thanking authors. This is something OCBG has helped with for many years now. If you would like to become involved, Andrea's successor will be looking for help in the Spring of 2024 (from March 16th). It is great fun and means one can meet the authors!
6. **Children's Book Award.** Our reviewer schools wrote lots of helpful reviews (KS1 and KS2 primary and secondary) but none of the OCBG were able to attend the ceremony in London this year. Thankfully, Moira has agreed to organise the CBA again in 2024. Member schools please consider signing up for this. It really re-energises reading in a school!
7. **Author visit 2023:** We hosted a truly memorable visit from Gaynor Linton (she writes as G.M.Linton), thanks to Scholastic Books. As part of the Windrush heritage celebrations, Gaynor introduced her delightful Caribbean heritage character Sunshine Simpson to the children of Wheatley and Windmill schools. Her talk was very well received and the children loved the book!
8. **Alice Day 2023:** OCBG has once again been invited to contribute to the planning group for Oxford's annual Alice Day. On July 2nd, we hosted a free family event at St Margaret's Well, Binsey, which inspired Lewis Carroll's Treacle Well. We entertained over 40 families, with stories, crafts, cartoons, activities, a lucky dip and storytelling by Bill Laar. Thank you to everyone on the committee and to Imogen and Naomi Poole, Mirjam Chappell, Sensing Space, Clive Goddard and Alex Neil for their help with the Alice Day. The weather was kind and everyone seemed to enjoy the afternoon very much indeed.

9. **Libraries and OCBG:** We are very pleased that more local libraries are joining the OCBG> I have been invited to give author talks about my own book about local saint, Frideswide- 'The Princess who hid in a tree' - to families during the summer holidays and half terms. In 2023, I went to Botley, Woodstock and Farringdon libraries and I am booked to go to Summertown and Abingdon in December. At each event, I hand out membership forms to encourage parents to consider joining us.
10. **The 2023 OCBG Conference (October 14th): Stories can change the world.**
This year, we were delighted to host our conference at the Story Museum in their Magic Common Room, which is a colourful and enchanting space, ideal for the 40 attendees. We were looked after very well by the Museum staff and all enjoyed a fascinating morning, with four excellent speakers (Mini Grey, Ben Lerwill, Gill Lewis and Bill Laar). OCBG member, Bella Pearson, provided a stunning display of books published by her very own publishing house Guppy Books, and Moira displayed the books which featured in the Westmill Solar environmental project last year. Moira diligently keeps the OCBG scrapbooks and they were also on display.
We were able to treat everyone to a free book in their conference tote bag and, thanks to our raffle, many people went home with two free books! The Story Museum set up a bespoke shop for us and over £300 worth of books were sold and signed! The Museum kindly gave OCBG ten per cent of the book sales. We hope the conference has more or less broken even, but -even if we made a small loss- it was worth it because of the profoundly worthwhile contribution of our speakers, the lovely new members we have recruited, and the feedback has been super-positive!
11. **Federation news.** Moira attended and enjoyed the 2022 conference and re[presented] the OCBG. Our news has at last found its way into the FCBG newsletter, despite the copy having been lost once or twice! The 2024 conference will be held at Woldingham School, Caterham from 5th to 7th April. See the website for details.
12. **Looking ahead.....:** In 2024, we hope to run at least one Book Swap, so school members please propose a date or two! Our Alice event will take place on Sunday July 7th, at Binsey. It would be good to run a creative workshop about cartoon-making and/or comic strips. We hope to organize some author visits in 2024.
13. **Next year's theme and focus (tbc):** For 2024, we may highlight poetry about nature to tie in with our recent focus on the fragility and preciousness of planet Earth. We are hoping to apply for another grant to support our activities with schools and families and also to support the Nasio Trust, in partnership with Kennington Library, a long-term OCBG member. The Nasio Trust is raising money to build a community library in Western Kenya.
14. **Thanks again to Team OCBG!** Huge thanks to Moira for being membership Secretary and CBA coordinator and Amy for being the Treasurer and for managing the Eventbrite and FB page. Thanks to Catherine for taking minutes Thanks too, to Warren for helping to keep our website up to date and looking good. As ever, thank you to all the committee for keeping the good ship OCBG on course! May 2024 see us sustaining our activities and helping children develop a life-long love of reading! In the meantime, thank YOU for your membership. Please renew promptly and spread the word about what the OCBG is trying to achieve! It would be great if each member encouraged at least ONE other person or school to join the OCBG. Please email me if you would like a digital leaflet to send to someone you know.....

Jackie Holderness. Chair OCBG. Nov. 2023 oxfordcbg@gmail.com