

BATCHELDER EVOLUTION

SURVEY SUMMARIES 2018

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Assignments

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Summaries

(NOTE: Percentages in red represent responses from the second survey)

Q1 For the purposes of this survey, what title best describes your current role with translated books for children? (Tessa)

The majority of survey respondents identified with the title of “Practitioner, e.g. librarian, educator” (76.37% **72.73%**; 404 of 529 responses). Other respondents identified with the title of “Academic/Researcher” (5.10%; 27 of 529 responses); “Publisher” (2.46%; 13 of 529 responses); “Translator” (2.08%; 11 of 529 responses); and “Book Seller” (.76%; 4 of 529 responses). The option of “Other” was selected by the remaining respondents (13.23%; 70 of 529 responses).

Breaking down the 70 write-ins in the “Other” category, the majority (37.14%; 26 of 70 write-ins) identified position-specific titles that fit under the “Practitioner, e.g. librarian, educator” category such as “Library Assistant” or “Early Literacy Specialist.” The next largest subgroup were individuals who identified as retired (20%; 14 of 70 write-ins). A modest number of respondents identified as reviewers (12%; 9 of 70 write-ins). The remaining write-ins were single-digit percentages and included readers, agents/managers, authors/illustrators, representatives from organizations, and consultants.

Q2 The Mildred L. Batchelder Award is given to an American publisher for a children’s book considered to be the most outstanding of those books originally published in a language other than English in a country other than the United States, and subsequently translated into English and published in the United States. How familiar are you with this award?

56.33% **54.55%** of respondents (298 persons) stated they were VERY aware of the award, 30.25% **27.27%** (160 people) were somewhat aware, and **13.42%** **18.18%** (71 people) were not aware at all but answered the survey.

Q3 Do you pay attention to the annual announcement of the Mildred L. Batchelder Award?

60.3% **54.55%**(319 people) always pay attention to the annual announcement of the Batchelder, while 24.2% **27.27%** sometimes pay attention to the announcement and 15.5% **18.18%** (82) never pay attention.

Q4 Do you pay attention to other news and announcements related to translated books for children and/or published for children internationally?

The majority of respondents 65.97% **45.45%** (349) **sometimes** pay attention to news about translated children's books and or/ books published for children internationally. 23.44% **54.55%** of respondents (124 persons) said they always pay attention while 10.59% **0%** (56) never pay attention.

Q5 Now or in the past, have you had a direct connection to the Mildred L. Batchelder Award, either through committee work, publishing, or translation? (Tessa)

The majority of survey respondents did NOT have a direct connection to the Batchelder Award (88.28% **100%**; 467 of 529 responses). The minority who had a connection (11.72%; 62 of 529 responses) **described their connections in eight major areas:**

1. Committee work (55.17%; 32 of 58)
2. Publishing (25%; 15 of 58)
3. Personal connection to an individual in a role listed above (6.89%; 4 of 58)
4. Translation (3.44%; 2 of 58)
5. Reviewer (3.44%; 2 of 58)
6. Reader (3.44%; 2 of 58)
7. Author/illustrator (1.72%; 1 of 58)
8. Agent (1.72%; 1 of 58)

Commented [1]: 4 people did not describe a connection. Do I need to point this out?

Commented [2]: I don't think that matters.

Q6 In your role, do you buy, sell, promote, or recommend books for children? (Junko)

94% **100%** of respondents answered positively that they buy, sell, promote, or recommend books to children. The ways in which they fulfilled those roles varied from mostly librarians who recommend to children to those who teach in library school to a literary translator.

Q7 In your role, do you work with translated books for children? (Junko)

85% **90.91%** of respondents answered positively to this question. A few said they translated, many repeated responses to Q6 by talking about their roles as librarians in recommending books -- although some talked about **what a hard sell it was, or that readers were not interested.**

Q8 Is the Mildred L. Batchelder Award important to you in your role? (Junko)

Nearly 70% **100%** of respondents positively responded to this question. Some rely on it for recommendations of what to know/read/purchase/recommend. Specific responses talked about how it increased sales of a book, or helped them be aware of international authors and their books in a way that no other award did. However, several responded that they were not aware of the award prior to the survey, b

Q9 Historically, the Batchelder has been awarded to longer translated works, primarily novels and some memoirs and biographies. Books with “substantial text” are eligible, and pictures books have been awarded in the past. Do think the word “substantial” should be dropped from the current criteria to be fully inclusive of all translated texts? (Kay)

Respondents overwhelmingly support (79.58% to 20.42%; 421 to 108 replies) **100%** dropping the word “substantial” from the current criteria for translated text. Additionally, 126 respondents provided wide-ranging comments.

There is clear support dropping the word “substantial,” thus making picture books eligible for Batchelder consideration. Several also suggest that **separate awards** be established for picture books and longer texts: (44 responses)

- “Picture books are just as hard and financially risky to translate.”
- “Even better to have two categories: older and younger”
- “Picture books from outside the US can be quite unique—I would love to see them recognized!”
- “It would be nice to see a specific category for picture books.”
- “I am all for inclusivity, though I hope to continue to ... see novel length works honored.”
- “As we make a strong push for diversity, it is best to be as inclusive as possible.”

Many other respondents seem to favor of dropping “substantial,” but they want some other qualification. They point out that “substantial” is a very subjective word. (42 responses)

- “There is a difference between “substantial” and “just a few words.”
- “However, the book can’t be wordless!”
- “Substantial seems to be at odds with the criteria that specifies children’s book.”
- “It’s always been **up to the committee to define substantial**—hence picture book winners.”
- “Perhaps **significant** is more appropriate.”
- “It manages to be vague and exclusionary at the same time, which I dislike.”

Several respondents want the wording to remain the same and expressed concern about making picture books eligible for the Batchelder award. Additionally, some responses indicate that there may be confusion about who actually wins the award, with some suggesting that award goes to the translator, rather than the publisher of a translated work: (28 responses)

- “It’s a translation award, so there needs to be a substantial amount of text.”
- “I think the original reasoning is sound. Picture books are often acquired from non-English speaking authors. Novels, not so much.”
- “I think the issue is whether the prize is for translation skills, which focuses on translated text, or whether the prize is for the overall quality of the book.”

- “The effort involved in translating a picture book cannot be compared to the effort involved in translating a novel or a work of longer nonfiction. And since the definition of a picture book is one in which the images carry (at least) equal narrative weight to the text, you are already dealing with an art form that is not singularly dependent on the quality of the translated text. And from a publisher’s perspective, if we’re being honest, when considering picture books from abroad, first eliminate any whose pictures we don’t love (or feel will “work” in our market) so it’s a much easier selection process. To consider a longer text one must get a reliable read from a native speaker, and then often hire a professional translator to do a few sample translations. It’s much more involved. And since the Batchelder is supposed to encourage TRANSLATION, I think more weight should be given to encouraging the larger (and therefore less likely among mainstream publishers) effort required of a “substantial” text.”
- “The award is for excellent translation. That is an accomplishment in bridging a cultural and literary divide. Substantial is an appropriate term to use.”
- “It would not be in keeping with Mildred Batchelder’s vision.”
- “I think if this award starts getting watered down too much, there won’t be any point to it.”

Finally, there seems little consensus about perceived risks taken by publishers in translating books and the degree of difficulty in translating longer versus shorter texts. This may be because practitioners outnumber publishers in this survey by 404 to 13. Some comments below:

- “Some of the risk that existed in the 60s has been ameliorated over time with the advent of digital publishing and the renewed focus on global impact.”
- “Some of the most difficult works to translate are short. A single poem can take years to translate well.”
- “Larger volumes of text typically require and display more artistry on the part of the translator than simpler works. The efforts of long-text translators should not become overshadowed by books with very little text that happen to be well-known or popular.”
- “Books in translation with ‘substantial text’ are the more substantial risk for publishers. This risk-taking should be rewarded.”
- “It is a bigger risk for editors to acquire longer manuscripts, especially those written by authors previously less visible or unknown in the US.”
- “I think that substantial is a key component – because translation of longer texts is more difficult keeping the intent and voice of the author is much harder for a novel vs a picture book.”

Q10 Do you feel eligibility should be expanded to cover translations of folklore and traditional tales? (Monica)

Of the 529 respondents, a significant majority of 435 (82.23%) **81.82%** answered yes while 94 (17.77%) answered no. There were 111 comments.

Those in favor of the change indicated in their comments that doing so would encourage more publications of a currently overlooked genre, more #ownvoices titles, make more titles eligible (as many translated works are folklore and traditional tales), and a recognition that cultures are often represented through their traditional literature. Some of the comments:

- I understand why this exclusion was added when the award was begun. At that time, there was a wealth of folklore being published. Now there is very few books being published in the genre and I see no reason why they should be excluded from consideration.

- I think these should absolutely be eligible, but the committee should give extra consideration to making sure that these are uniquely representative (if they are a new or previously relatively unknown tale OR to those that are telling the folklore/tales in unique or revelatory ways).
- Folklore and traditional tales are a substantial part of any literature. I cannot imagine why they would be excluded
- In a multicultural world, it is important to understand the folklore that shapes the lives of people from other parts of the world. It may play an important role in peace and understanding.
- Folklore is an increasingly scarce area in publishing- quite a difference from when the award criteria was created. I would welcome the Batchelder honoring worthy folklore in translation.
- YES YES YES! We can learn so much from other cultures' versions of their own stories, especially. Thank you for thinking of expanding it in this way.
- This could also increase awareness of the award. Traditional literature is included in the Common Core State Standards, and teachers might seek out Batchelder-winning folktales.
- I understand the idea that longer books are going to be less commercially successful and therefore more in need of the spotlight of the award, but I actually think that making more popular picture books and folklore eligible for the award will increase the visibility of the award and might bring MORE attention to the longer works that do happen to win.
- Reading that Mildred's life work was "to eliminate barriers to understanding between people of different cultures, races, nations, and languages" I think including translations of folklore and traditional stories should have the opportunity to be included.

A number of commentators qualified their assent only if folk/traditional tales were recognized separately from completely original works or if they were new and original translations of tales. Others who indicated yes voiced concern about how to determine the originality of such titles, how to vouch for cultural authenticity, the role of the translator versus the teller, the competency of translators working outside their own ethnicities and cultures, fear that including folklore would "crowd out" other texts as it is already overrepresented, feeling it was more important for young readers to know contemporary cultures rather than the traditional ones that were presented in folklore. Some of these comments follow:

- I'd say "maybe." I can see where some cultures place more value on folklore and traditional tales than we do at this point in time. And that might be eye opening for American Children. On the other hand, as I mentioned before, one does have to work harder to find contemporary or historical tales to bring to the table. Effort deserves reward, I think.
- If there was an answer that said "maybe," that is what most accurately reflects my opinion! I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further, but wonder if these particular translated works would end up more "Americanized" than others and would be more difficult to assess in terms of their relationship to the original work (since committee members are unable to read the original works of all titles considered).
- I'm checking yes, but would qualify to add if the tale represents the culture in an authentic and unique way. While folklore satisfies the idea GM Kruse describes 'knowing the classic stories of a country creates an attitude for understanding towards the people for whom that literature is a heritage' ;yet another translation of well known tales such as Cinderella does not necessary deepen understanding of that culture. However, a tale rich in cultural context would do that.
- You need a "not sure" category here. Though this would increase the number of translations eligible - a good thing, and the main reason I'm leaning towards "yes" - it's possible that the number of folktale translations could overwhelm the other books - a bad thing. Though there is nothing intrinsically wrong with considering traditional tales, including them would change the character of the award.
- I'm answering yes, but this is something I'm torn about. There are some fantastic translations of folk and fairy tales, but I do worry that because those books tend to be more popular, we'll lose sight of other titles.
- Yes- with two VERY strong cautions: (1) Christianity's dominance has led many to think that the religious stories of non-Christians are "folk" or "tales". Please do what you can to create awareness of why that is unacceptable. (2) Within the US are over 500 distinct Indigenous Nations. With Indigenous

language revitalization on the upswing, we will likely see stories published in Indigenous languages. Would they be eligible, as stories from sovereign nations?

- With reservations. I would be concerned about authors translating stories from outside their own language/culture. We continue to see problematic takes on Native American stories from authors in the UK, for instance, and I imagine this would be true of authors in Asia retelling South American folktales, for example. So I would hope that some degree of cultural awareness would be taken into account if the criteria were to be changed.

Of those who were against the addition, their comments indicated a concern that there was already plenty of folklore available, that it wasn't original work, that it would make it more difficult for contemporary works and/or longer works to be recognized, and worries about cultural authenticity. Some of their comments include:

- Tough question. I come down on the side of no because I think that awarding original stories brings attention to books less likely to be purchased than a translated traditional tale.
- As was originally stated, these books are likely to be recognized elsewhere. Folklore and traditional tales already enjoy popularity.
- I think that makes the pool too large and actually discourages publishers from considering more contemporary titles.
- I believe that original writing should be the focus of the award. We have had translated folktales for many generations. Recognizing novels, picture books and biographies in translation is more important.
- The Batchelder should reward new translations and stories with an international POV that might enrich American readers' perspectives, not familiar tales.
- I feel it's more important for readers to understand contemporary cultures than traditional ones, although traditional cultures of course form the background for contemporary culture.
- While I am not entirely against this, I would prefer to see it remain as an award that honors authors. Folklore and traditional tales are often adapted rather than translated, and/or retellings from oral tradition. Appropriation and "who should profit" become issues, because it can be difficult to identify the original author. The Batchelder Award in its current form affirms, and effectively helps sustain the careers of, active international authors—who can be credited and earn royalties from increased sale of their work in English. The Batchelder also (usually) honors translators of integrity, with extensive and intensive background in the source language, who work to be faithful to clearly identified texts and authors. I worry that in opening the Batchelder to "translations" of folklore and traditional tales, the "translators" affirmed might in fact be rewriters, retellers, and in the worst cases, armchair travellers who barely know the source languages and cultures and (knowingly or unknowingly) exploit tales of other people for their own as well as translators.
- For years the bulk of "diverse" literature for young people in the US has consisted of folklore. There is a reason that Lee & Low, in its mission to push diversity in publishing, doesn't deal with folklore. Much as I love folklore, we desperately need to hear international voices writing original fiction and nonfiction. The prestige of an award such as this one will have a great impact in fulfilling its original purpose if the spotlight is placed on underrepresented genres.

Q11 Please identify if you are a current member of any of the following professional groups (Tessa)

The majority of survey respondents identified as being a current member of a range of professional groups. Many respondents identified multiple groups of which they are current members. Of the answer choices and the "Other (please specify)" option, the bulk of respondents belong to library-related professional groups, including the American Library Association (and divisions such as ALSC, YALSA, PLA, and AASL) and numerous state library associations. Other significant professional groups identified included education,

literacy, writing/illustrating, and publishing (including translation and editing). A small percentage indicated that they are not members of any professional group. Some respondents indicated membership to non-US professional groups; e.g. School Library Association (UK) or Japan Association of Translators, and/or international professional groups; e.g. International Board on Books for Young People.

Q12 Please share any final questions or comments for the Task Force. (Monica)

There were 84 responses to this final question. A number voiced appreciation of the task force work and charge while others were related to earlier questions. Some that raised other issues and concerns include the following:

- I think there should be several categories including picture book, substantial text, and even graphic novel; bilingual books and books by authors from elsewhere who live here and publish here are also worth considering and discussing.
- Very strongly believe that award should go to the title - not the publisher - of the book. We have fortunately moved (at least somewhat) beyond the parochial era when it was felt that we needed to incentivise publishers to undertake translations by naming them - rather than the books themselves - as the award's recipients. Also, it is a strange and somewhat confusing anomaly that the winner is shown to be the publisher, but all the runners up recognize the actual titles.
- I'm quite curious about how the issue/question of the revision of illustrations would be considered if picture books are more likely to be considered, but that seems like something that would be for consideration and determination by the expert committee members rather than something that needs to be spelled out.
- If not substantial text could it be reflected as engaging and reflective text as in reflecting the original text?
- I think another aspect of this discussion that would be helpful to be addressed is the question of 'substantial text' and specifically how it relates to the statement 'picture books are to be considered only if the text is substantial and is at least as important as the pictures'. As stated above, longer works are more of a risk. Additionally, I think picture books require another layer of critical evaluation. Consider the recent honor *Grandma Lives in a Perfume Village* for depiction of a contemporary story in stylized western art by an artist who has never visited China. I would propose a separate award for picture books that could include folklore. If that is not in keeping with the intent proposed by the original award (substantial text meaning not a picture book), then perhaps a separate award altogether could be considered.
- Since you're considering changes, how about this one: work jointly with YALSA to have a Batchelder that includes YA, with the Odyssey Award as a starting point for a model to administer the award. I like the Schneider Award approach with one teen winner, one middle grade winner, and one younger winner, though I would want the option to add honor books. Translations are eligible for all the YALSA Awards but they will seldom win because the pool of translations is still relatively small. Expanding the Batchelder upwards in age would solve the problem.
- I would like to see the Task Force look at not just limiting the search with just American publishers, but also by including publishers from other countries publishing translations to English for the first time. There are many wonderful translations (to English for the first time) coming from publishers in the U.K., Canada, and Australian...among others.
- One additional consideration is how "American publisher" is defined. There are a few Canadian publishers (North American, for sure) whose commitment to translated books is strong and exceptional.

Commented [3]: Coding the specific responses to this question was very messy, so I opted for this general description. especially with the number of write-ins and people who are in more than one organization. Let me know if it works or if a percentile breakdown is necessary.

Commented [4]: Most people are part of a professional group. I think that is most interesting. I would leave it.

Perhaps expanding the definition of American would result in a larger pool of books to read, review, and honor.

- I emphatically suggest that in promotions of "translated books" and/or of Batchelder Award winners/honor books the phrases "global literature" and "international literature" be used. I've concluded that the term "translated books" is a turn-off for many who would otherwise appreciate and perhaps even love the translated books honored by the Batchelder Award. I also think that the translators need more promotion, not their own award, but they need greater visibility. I do not want to see short texts honored, as that is the easy way out for everyone concerned. Readers of translated books need to be good "listeners" when reading eligible texts. Yes, I know that Batchelder Award winning books almost always do not garner sales as a result of the award, but I feel that it's still an excellent idea to reward the publishers and editors for taking the risk. If the winning publishers/editors are given enough time during the acceptance speeches and then their speeches are published in The Horn Book and Children & Libraries, there's much we all can learn about the honored books.
- I would LOVE to see the award expanded to include a separate award for illustration. Illustrations are often an important factor in our decision to publish books in translation and illustrations from around the world can be as mind expanding for kids as the text in translation!
- I agree with re-visiting the criteria of this award. There are some really odd phrasings in there- Just what does "Americanized" mean? Even the writers put that in quotations, suggesting that it was up to interpretation. Also, "sense that the book came from another country" is equally nebulous, there's no sense-meter that I'm aware of to gauge foreignness.