

June 13, 1979

Mrs. Zena Sutherland  
1100 East 57th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Dear Zena:

Julie Todaro requested that I write you concerning the Newbery-Caldecott Dinner.

The Newbery-Caldecott award is extremely important to children's librarians. Probably the first thing that a children's librarian considers when planning the ALA conference is attending the Newbery-Caldecott dinner. Upon receiving my ALA conference schedule I looked for the announcement for the Newbery-Caldecott dinner. I was appalled at the price--\$17.50--and have decided not to attend.

There are several reasons why I made this decision other than the cost. After attending the dinner in 1975, I was very disappointed as it was extremely difficult to see the authors unless you were seated at a table directly in front of the podium. One of the reasons for attending is to be able to see the author. If you can only hear the authors you might as well wait for the cassette tapes of the speech to be sold. Although you aren't involved in the excitement you can hear the speech clearly and as many times as you would like.

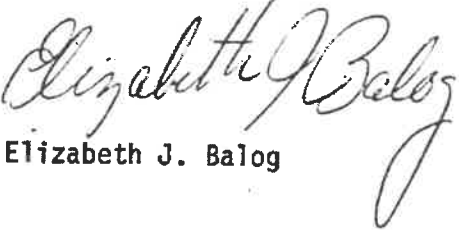
A major problem for most librarians is that in this period of tax-cuts librarians aren't receiving reimbursement for attending conferences so that they are limited in what they can attend. Therefore, many people who have limited themselves to a specific food budget will find that \$17.50 will not fit into the total amount.

For \$17.50 you can have a superb meal at a restaurant where you aren't served cold food or coffee and can order what you like. Not only can you select your food but also your table companions. I enjoy meeting new people that work in other libraries but you always run into the problem of people who smoke and people who do not smoke. This might be avoided by having people who sign up for dinner request either a smokers' or non-smokers' table.

Finally I do not feel that it is right to provide free seats for people who did not pay for the meal. Although it is expensive for the meal the people who attend have made a special effort. If seats are set up in the back of the room there should be a minimal charge to help finance the cost of the room.

As ALA grows in membership and more people attend the annual conference I do not feel that a dinner will accommodate the number of people who would like to hear the authors speak. A reception will probably be the best alternative. A cash bar could be provided for a period prior to the authors' presentation. For example, a cash bar could be set up either 1½ hours before the presentation or for the same amount of time immediately following the presentation. although this takes away from the personal touch it doesn't limit the number of people in the same way that the dinner does.

Sincerely yours,



Elizabeth J. Balog