

RESOURCES FOR

WRITING CHILDREN'S BOOKS

BY DEBORAH HODGE

A great way to get information about writing and publishing children's books is to join one or more organizations that specialize in this area. Many authors and illustrators belong to such organizations. Listed below are several to consider.

ORGANIZATIONS

The Canadian Children's Book Centre (CCBC) www.bookcentre.ca

The CCBC is an organization that promotes and supports Canadian children's literature. If you become a member, you receive a quarterly newsletter, a yearly catalogue of *Best Books for Kids and Teens*, and other benefits. Membership is \$75 per year (or \$45 for students and seniors). They also offer a *Get Published: The Writing for Children Kit* with information on getting published (about \$22), and a *Publisher's List*, which provides a list of Canadian publishers currently accepting unsolicited manuscripts (about \$6). The CCBC website provides links to Canadian authors, publishers and to various children's literature organizations, awards, contests, and more.

CANSCAIP www.canscaip.org

CANSCAIP is the acronym for the Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers. They have a "friend" category for writers and illustrators who are not yet published. Membership as a friend is \$45 per year. They hold regular meetings in Toronto and publish a quarterly newsletter, *CANSCAIP News*, which includes current market information. They also have online forums to discuss all aspects of children's literature. In addition, they host a wonderful annual conference called "Packaging Your Imagination."

Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) www.scbwi.org

This is an international organization of children's writers and illustrators, published and unpublished, based in the USA, with 22,000 members in over 70 regional chapters. They host regular and frequent conferences throughout the USA, Canada and in other countries. They hold 2 large conferences annually: a winter conference in New York and a summer conference in Los Angeles. Both are excellent. In addition, they publish a regular newsletter, *Bulletin*, as well as informational publications including markets. They have online forums, podcasts and more. A membership is \$95 US for the first year, then \$80 for subsequent years. A student membership is \$65 for the first year and \$55 in subsequent years.

Canadian Children’s Literature Roundtable (Vancouver chapter) www.library.ubc.ca/edlib/table

The Children’s Literature Roundtable is an organization of enthusiasts in various areas of Canada who believe in quality literature for young people. They host meetings to share and discuss good books, meet authors and illustrators, encourage Canadian talent, and promote reading and publishing for children. Try checking for a Roundtable chapter in your local area.

Cwill BC (for published children’s authors and illustrators) www.cwill.bc.ca

The Children’s Writers and Illustrators of BC (Cwill BC) have a free annual panel at the Vancouver Public Library each year called “Writing and Illustrating Kids’ Books: The Inside Story.” It is usually in February and open to anyone interested in writing or illustrating children’s books. Visit the website for up-to-date info on the panel. Cwill also has a blog at: <https://cwillbc.wordpress.com>. There, you can find authors who do manuscript consultation (for a fee).

WRITING AND PUBLISHING COURSES

Check your local colleges for continuing education courses that feature writing and publishing information. Most courses are taught by published authors, illustrators and industry professionals.

PUBLISHER’S WEBSITES

Almost all publishers have websites that feature their catalogues, submission guidelines and contact information. Google the name of a publisher to find a website and see the most recent books the company has published. Study their catalogue to see the types of books they publish before submitting to them. Make sure your work fits their style and preferences.

INDUSTRY MAGAZINES

There are several publications devoted entirely to books that have sections on children’s literature. Reading them is a good way to keep up with what is currently being published. You can subscribe to the magazines or ask for them at your local library. *Quill and Quire* is a Canadian monthly magazine that reviews books published in Canada. *Publisher’s Weekly* is a US publication that features books from the American market. It has a free daily online newsletter *Publisher’s Weekly Daily* that you can subscribe to. *Horn Book* is also an American magazine. It focuses solely on children’s books.

CHILDREN’S BOOKSTORES

To see what is recently being published, spend time browsing at a large children’s bookstore, such as Kidsbooks in Vancouver. Or, visit your local library and ask the children’s librarian to recommend some new books.

BOOKS ON WRITING FOR CHILDREN

You can discover almost anything you want to know about writing books for children by checking your local library. Look under the following subject headings for specific information on:

- Children's literature – authorship
- Children's literature – marketing
- Children's literature - technique

I recommend:

Sambuchino, Chuck, (editor), *Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market*, Writer's Digest Books. They publish a new edition each year. Check older editions, too. They all have great information about writing and how to submit manuscripts. They also have publisher's and agent's listings and details on what particular publishers are looking for.

King, Steven, *On Writing*. This is one of the best books I've read on writing, but it talks about writing in general, not children's books specifically.

There are many, many more...

BLOGS AND WEBSITES

Nathan Bransford is a former literary agent who has many excellent posts about matters related to getting published (how to write a query letter etc.) He also has links to many other sites. See: blog.nathanbransford.com

The Purple Crayon has information about writing, illustrating and publishing children's books at: www.underdown.org

Children's Book Council is the nonprofit trade association of US children's book publishers at: www.cbcbooks.org. Check out the FAQ section for aspiring authors and illustrators.

There are many author, agent and publisher social media sites these days. Try googling a name you're interested in and you may find a set of blogs, Twitter feeds or Facebook pages you wish to follow.

Good luck!

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