



Boston Authors Club

May 2020 News

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Introducing the Boston Authors Club Discovery Award

2020 PICTURE BOOK CONTEST



Eligibility

~The contest is open to participants who live within 100 miles of Boston and who have not had a picture book traditionally published. Authors of self-published books, other venues (magazines or journals), or other genres (adult fiction or nonfiction) are eligible. Only unagented manuscripts will be considered.

Contest Rules

- ~Submission should be ONE picture book manuscript only, which may be either non-fiction or fiction.
- ~No contact information should appear on the actual manuscript. Standard formatting is Times Roman 12, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, and should not exceed 1200 word count. Manuscripts that do not follow this format will be disqualified.
- ~Please include a separate cover letter with the author's name, address, and phone number in the upper left corner. Author may include a brief bio and description of the story in this letter as well.
- ~A submission fee of \$25 is required.
- ~Manuscripts accepted only from June 1-June 30th, 2020 (11:59 pm EST).
- ~Winners will be notified by phone and email by the end of August.

SUBMISSION VIA THE BAC WEBSITE ONLY - SUBMISSION FORM WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT www.bostonauthorsclub.org STARTING ON JUNE 1, 2020

Prizes:

~First Place includes a manuscript critique with agent Ammi-Joan Paquette (Erin Murphy Literary Agency), a one year membership to the Boston Authors Club (BAC), an interview in the BAC newsletter, and recognition at the Julia Ward Howe Award Celebration.

~Second Place includes a manuscript critique with author/illustrator, Peter H. Reynolds, a one year membership to the BAC, an interview in the BAC newsletter, and recognition at the Julia Ward Howe Award Celebration.

~Third Place includes a one year membership to the BAC, an interview in the BAC newsletter, and recognition at the Julia Ward Howe Award Celebration.

We are honored to have [Nandini Bajpai](#), [David A. Kelly](#), and [Heather Lang](#) serving as our judges. They will be looking for well-crafted stories with distinct voices.

Disclaimer:

Authors retain all rights to their manuscripts. All decisions made by the judges regarding the winners are final. No contest entries or fees will be returned. By submitting, authors are agreeing to all the contest rules.

President's Note for May

Hello BAC friends and colleagues! I hope that everyone is well and dealing with these challenging times as best as possible.

While much of life seems to be on hold, I do have a couple of small pieces of BAC news for you. First, we will be launching the new BAC website within the next few weeks. It will have a more contemporary look, new features and better navigability. We're very excited about it! I want to thank my graduate student, Nick Woolf, for his tireless work on designing, re-designing and de-bugging the new site.

And while many events in the literary world have been cancelled or postponed, we are planning to move forward with our new Discovery Contest (see the information elsewhere in this newsletter). We are also in conversation with the Brookline Booksmith about trying to do the event we'd planned for early June virtually; information about this will be forthcoming.

Our reading committees are hard at work going through the many worthy entries for this year's Julia Ward Howe prizes. Thanks to all of you involved in this endeavor.

Finally, I hope that everyone has used some of the time at home to read for fun. At the start of this time of enforced isolation, I resolved to read something I'd long planned to: *Middlemarch*. Each night, in lieu of my usual habit of watching the news, which has become too unbearable to view for more than a few minutes, I retreat into a few chapters of George Eliot's remarkable construction of provincial life and the complex, intersecting complications of interior lives. I'm almost finished with it now and trying to decide what my next escapist novel will be. Perhaps we should be running a column with people's suggestions about good reads for a difficult time? Let us know what you think!

Stay well –
Julie

Julie Dobrow, BAC President

Featured Interview: Priscilla Alpaugh

Priscilla put her illustator talents to work on behalf of the BAC to design the new logo for our DISCOVERY AWARD contest announced in this



newsletter. (Thank you!)

She is a member of the New England Chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writer' and Illustrators (NESCBI), and was winner of the their Portfolio Showcase in 2015. In th is interview, Priscilla talks about her motivation for becoming a children't book illustrator, describes the process she follows in creating compelling picture book illustrations, and discusses some surprising things she has learned.

See more at her website: <http://priscillaalpaugh.com/about-us/>

Q: What motivated you to embark on children's book illustration as a major aspect of your artistic work?

A: I have always wanted to be an illustrator. I've long known that I'm not interested in making "art for art's sake" but do enjoy the process of trying to create on the page what I see in my mind. To solve problems visually. My work has always tended to be cute and humorous which lends itself well to children's books.

Q: Could you describe the process of working with a new book text and bringing it to life with your art work? (How long does one illustration project take? Do you typically work independently on the illustrations or it is a collaborative, iterative process?)

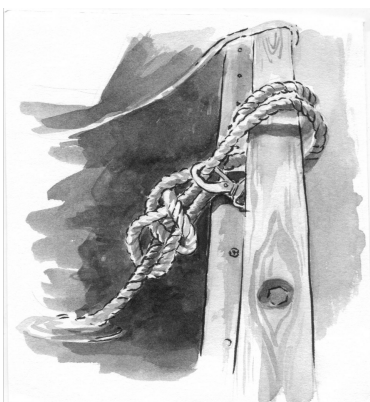
A: When I'm given a book, the publisher usually gives me the text paginated. I work with the Art Director and draw thumbnails (tiny versions of all the pages of the book) then design the characters, sketches for each page and final sketches. Each one of these stages requires multiple back and forths with the Art Director. (I'm sure it's similar to the revision process that authors often go through with their Editor or Agent.) After those are okayed I move on to final art. A picture book typically takes six months. For my last book I spent six weeks just making the final art.



Q: Have you had any especially satisfying (or challenging) experiences in finding inspiration for illustrating a particular story?

A: I think one of the most enjoyable things I remember was when I was doing a book about a rescue dog. "Don't Eat That!" I spent a good deal of time at the humane society. I drew dogs for hours. I find working from life to be incredibly satisfying.

Similarly, I loved spending time drawing and painting different parts of the Maine island I feature in my personal project, "Olive and Tidbit". It's always been a dream to be hired to do a book that requires research outdoors in a place that I love.



Q: Is there anything that you have learned as a book illustrator that would be surprising to readers outside of publishing?

A: The most common misperception is that the illustrator works with the author to create the illustrations. That almost never happens. With the exception of self-publishing projects, I deal with one person at the publishing company. That company purchased the manuscript and decided what they wanted the book to look like. They then looked for an Illustrator whose work matched their vision. It's quite common for the Art Director to need to see the specific thing they want illustrated. If I hadn't had mice in my portfolio I wouldn't have gotten my most recent book with Albert Whitman. (Space Mice, released March 1, 2020.) I was once told that an art director they knew had actually said something like, "well, I know they can draw a

pig but can they draw an elephant?" They needed to see an elephant in the portfolio in order to choose that artist.

I also think that a surprising amount of people assume that illustration is easy. That we just sit down and draw something amazing. Illustration (that is, quality illustration) takes a lot of work. It's really hard! The better you get, the higher your standards become and those standards are almost never within reach. I'm sure you see the inherent problem. We're rarely satisfied with our work which means we do it over and over again to make it as good as possible.

Q: What are you currently working on?

A: I have been working on a six book chapter book series and just sent off the art for book number six yesterday! Now I'm diving into some illustrations for an anthology of poems for The Writer's Loft, samples for another picture book and promotional images for my agent. I'm also looking forward to starting work on a couple of personal projects. What with Covid-19 determining my schedule, I have extra time and plan to paint a self-portrait and experiment with new media as well.

Interview by Mary J Cronin

Yesteryear at the BAC: Bountiful Josiah Benton

"I give to the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to be held as "The Children's Fund", and the income applied to the purchase of books for the use of the young". So read the will of Boston Authors Club member Josiah Henry Benton, Jr.



Benton became a trustee of the BPL in 1894 and was president of the board from 1898 until his death on February 6, 1917. Benton's bequest was turned over to the BPL in March, 1919. Ten years on, its disposition was contested by the Rector of Trinity Church so that today 60% of the income from the bequest goes to purchase children's books for BPL and 40% goes to the church.

But this was by no means the only gift that Benton left the BPL. The remainder of his estate, over a million dollars, was left in trust to his wife and upon her decease turned over to the BPL. The net income from one half of this bequest was to be spent on "books desirable for scholarly research." The bookplate below is from a 480-page Portuguese poem so presumably it was purchased from the scholarly research grant not the Children's Fund.

The other half of the million dollars was to be held in an accumulating trust until the total amount reached two million dollars at which time it was to be used to enlarge the library. Presumably this was used to build the Josiah H. Benton Hall adjacent to the library.



In addition to these monetary gifts, Benton bestowed his collection of the Book of Common Prayer to the BPL. Originally some 658 volumes, the collection is over 1,500 today.

https://www.bpl.org/archival_post/benton-josiah-1843-1917-collection-of-the-book-of-common-prayer/

But what about Benton as an author? Open Library shows over twenty works including "The story of the old Boston town house, 1658-1711" and "Early census making in Massachusetts, 1643-1765."

The entry that caught my eye however was "Illustrated catalogue of the notable autograph collection of the late Josiah Henry Benton." The collection itself was auctioned

off by his wife in 1920. The catalog is 272 pages long. While the title says it is a collection of autographs, it is in fact collection of signed letters including, in the words of the catalog, "... All the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the United States from Washington to the present day; All the Chief Justices, and most of the Associated Justices of the United States Supreme Court." The catalog goes on to say "...he also succeeded remarkably in his aim of collecting such examples as should contain interesting information relative to the writers' connection with important events of the period."

There is something titillating about reading somebody else's mail even if it's just a letter from Bret Harte to Henry A. Folsom: "I fear I must reluctantly decline the proffered honor of acting as yr. Poet from sheer inability to determine whether I shall ever have more time than I seem to have at present to prepare myself for such an occasion."

There are some things about being an author that don't change.

By Scott B. Guthery

The BAC newsletter is published the first week of every month except for the summer months. Please send news about upcoming events, awards, and new books to bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com by 5/30/20 for publication in JUNE

REMINDER Your BAC Membership for 2020

BAC membership dues are \$50 annually for the calendar year. You can join and renew online by [clicking here](#). If you would rather pay by check, please make your check out to Boston Authors Club and mail it to the following address:

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