



*Boston Authors Club*

## February 2022 Newsletter

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### Featured Interview With Megan Scudellari



*In addition to winning 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in BAC's DISCOVERY contest last year, Megan Scudellari is an award-winning freelance science journalist and the coauthor of *Biology Now*, a college biology textbook currently in its third edition.*

*Megan's life sciences and technology articles appear regularly in national magazines and newspapers. In this interview, she talks about the origins of *Emilie's Fire* and why she submitted her ms to the DISCOVERY contest last year.*

**Q: You have a stellar track record in science and technology journalism. Is there a connection between this work and your inspiration for writing *Emilie's Fire*?**

**A:** Absolutely. I've been a professional science journalist since 2008 and *Emilie* has been with me all that time. As part of MIT's Graduate Program in Science Writing, I took a class on science biography and was assigned Judith P. Zinsser's *Emilie Du Châtelet: Daring Genius of the Enlightenment*. *Emilie* was a French aristocrat in the 18<sup>th</sup> century who rejected a prescribed life of privilege—what she called “princesses and pompons”—to muscle her way into the male-dominated fields of science, mathematics and philosophy. I've long kept a dog-eared copy of Zinsser's book on the bookshelf in my office, but it wasn't until I had children of my own and began reading picture book biographies with them that I realized they could relate to *Emilie's* passion and ambition, and would love her as much as I did. Someone needed to write *Emilie's* story for a young audience, so I did.

**Q: What motivated you to submit *Emilie's Fire* to the Discovery Contest?**

**A:** I'm part of an active, enduring SCBWI critique group that meets once per month. Our small group has been meeting for years now, including virtually during the pandemic. Since we're so familiar with each other's books, we often notify one another if we see pertinent opportunities. Last May, deep in the never-ending days of pandemic year 2, one

of the members emailed out about the contest and encouraged everyone to apply. By that time, my manuscript was in a polished form, and I had even revised it with the help of Judith Zinsser herself, so I was ready to begin sharing it with the wider kidlit community.

**Q: Did you find the process of entering the contest and getting feedback helpful in moving your ms closer to publication?**

**A:** Absolutely. I revised prior to submitting, and then for the award I received a critique with super-agent Ammi-Joan Paquette. She read my book with a close eye and offered numerous suggestions that I've since incorporated. She also gave me a welcome morale boost, calling the manuscript "delightful" and adding a big heart and smiley face next to my last line. For now, I continue submitting.

**Q: Do you have any other fiction or poetry writing goals for 2022? If yes, could you tell us a little about your plans?**

**A:** I'm currently finishing a poetry chapbook about the effects of the pandemic on children, based on my experiences as a mother of three young children during these very difficult two years, and am about to start writing the fourth edition of my college biology textbook. That's all on top of my day job writing news stories, almost exclusively about the pandemic, so it's going to be a busy year!

For more about Megan's work visit: <https://meganscudellari.com/>

Interview by Mary J Cronin

## DISCOVERY 2022 - Call for Authors & Readers

**A REMINDER TO UNPUBLISHED YA AUTHORS THAT THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING YOUR YA MANUSCRIPTS (25 page excerpts) FOR THIS YEAR'S AWARD is March 1, 2022.**

**The judges committee is seeking additional readers to join us in evaluating the submissions this spring.**



### Award Information

The contest is open to participants who live within New England and who have not had a book traditionally published.

Submissions are limited to ONE excerpt per person. Please submit up to 25 pages of your manuscript

Excerpts accepted from January 1, 2022 to March 1, 2022 (11:59pm EST) only

A submission fee of \$25 per manuscript is required

Find more information and how to apply at <https://bostonauthorsclub.org/bac-discovery-award>

Readers will assist in rating contest submissions on a three-point scale (1= definitely move to the next stage, 2= consider for honor, 3= pass).

If you would like to volunteer as a reader, or have any questions, please contact Kate Farrell by emailing [bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com](mailto:bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com)

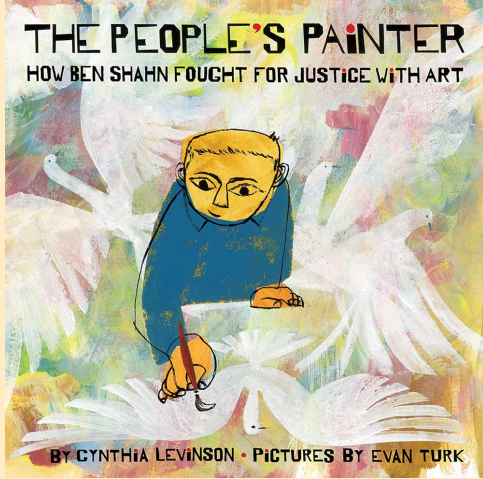
## BAC Author News

**JULIE DOBROW WILL PRESENT: *The Biographers Dilemma: How a Mother/Daughter Team in Amherst Made Emily Dickinson a Household Name***

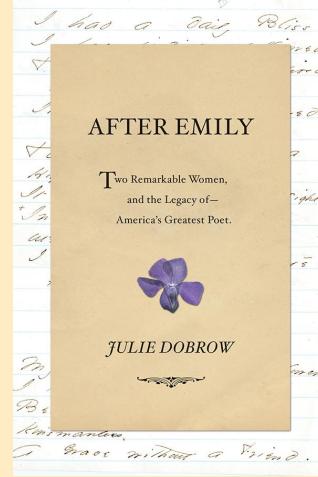
**THIS FREE PROGRAM IS HOSTED ON ZOOM BY UMASS BOSTON ON FEBRUARY 15 1:30PM - 2:30PM.**

**To register, just send your name and email address to:**

**[bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com](mailto:bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com)  
by 2/10/22**



***Congratulations to Cynthia Levinson and Evan Turk, author and illustrator of *The People's Painter: How Ben Shahn Fought for Justice with Art*, the winners of ALA's 2022 Robert F. Sibert Medal for the most distinguished informational book for children published in 2021.***



***Barbara Shapiro is happy to announce that her latest novel, *Metropolis*, will be released in May from Algonquin Books. For more info on the book and other works by Barbara, visit her website at [bashapirobooks.com](http://bashapirobooks.com)***



***Ralph Fletcher shares the cover of his forthcoming children's book, *The World's Loneliest Elephant*, illustrated by Naoko Stoop.***

## President's February Note

The boxes of books on the floor of my study have started to disappear as the chairs of the different BAC reading committees for the Julia Ward Howe awards pick them up to disperse them.

Our four reading committees (fiction, non-fiction, poetry and young readers) will be busily evaluating entries for the 2021 Julia Ward Howe prizes over the next few months. It's exciting for me to receive these boxes of books from publishers: I open them eagerly, smell that ineffable wonderful smell of new books, see the enormous variety of beautiful and intriguing covers, and often find myself drawn in. This year I couldn't resist and read two of the books before any of my colleagues got to see them!

Stay tuned to the BAC Newsletter for upcoming articles in which the chairs of the different reading committees discuss some of the selection criteria, and, of course, for news about when we announce this year's ultimate winners in each category.

I want to remind all BAC members that it's time to renew your membership. We've tried to make the process as easy as possible. You can renew online here: <https://bostonauthorsclub.org/renew/annual-membership-fee> We value your membership! Membership for a year runs from January to December, so



please renew today.

Wishing you all good reading with a cup of hot cocoa by the fireplace on these cold winter days!

**Julie Dobrow**  
**BAC President**

## **Yesteryear by Scott Guthery** **Between the Lines in the 1913 BAC Bylaws**

***During the blizzard, I dug into a thin little twenty-two page book that was printed in 1913 by The Plimpton Press of Norwood, MA. The book's title is Year Book of the Boston Authors Club.***

***Pages 21 and 22 contain Coorigenda, Changes in Address, and Addenda so I'm guessing this wasn't the first BAC year book. The list of deceased members goes back to 1902 so either that was the year of the previous year book or the list was intended to be cumulative. Reading between the lines, it provides an interesting picture of our bygone BAC colleagues and their social mores.***



The book is mostly a recitation of the Constitution and By-Laws of the club. This early version gives us a sense how the BAC founders and the early members set about to conduct the club. For example, there were five standing committees: the Membership Committee, the Clubroom Committee, the Literary Committee, and the Entertainment Committee. To become a member one had to be proposed by an existing member and endorsed by two other members. The names of applicants "...shall be posted in the clubroom ten days prior to election."

The annual dues for resident members were \$5 which was about equivalent to two tanks of gas in 2022. If BAC annual dues had kept abreast of inflation they'd be around \$140 today. (Have you remembered to take advantage of the terrific bargain of our \$50 dues?) There was also an initiation fee of \$3. For their dues, the BAC members were well entertained in a dedicated clubroom. According to a note on page 21, "The new clubrooms are at Trinity Court, Dartmouth Street, Suite A, in Tyler Hall." The historical photo above may date from its heyday. I haven't been able to find anything on Tyler Hall itself, but there is still a Trinity Court at 175 Dartmouth Street today. During WWI it featured a service canteen with "comfortable club rooms, reading and writing rooms, and six bowling lanes with dressing rooms and showers." Somehow I can't picture Julia Ward Howe and her BAC colleagues going bowling, so maybe these are different clubrooms.

In 1913, the number of resident members of the Boston Authors Club was limited to 150. At the time the book was published there were 140 members along with thirty non-resident members and three honorary members and forty-four deceased members. The honorary members were Mrs. Lillian Aldrich (Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich) 59 Mount Vernon Street, Boston, William Dean Howells, 48 West 59<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City, and Mrs. Mary Augusta Ward (Mrs. Humphry Ward) 25 Grosvenor Place, London, S.W.

Mrs. Lillian Aldrich apparently raised the ire and endless enmity of Mark Twain (another early member) who described her in writing as "an idiot" and even more colorfully, as "this clothes-rack, this twaddling, blethering, driveling blatherskite!" Taking the higher ground, according to Wikipedia, Lillian Aldrich had affectionate words for Twain in her memoir, although she does mention that at their first meeting she turned a cold shoulder on him, not recognizing him and "mistakenly believing him to be inebriated." Apparently Twain was a champion grudge holder.

The 1913 year book has a poem by Byron on the verso of the half-title page:

***Dear Authors! Suit your topics to your strength  
And ponder well your subject and its length;  
Nor lift your load, before you're quite aware  
What weight your shoulders will, or will not bear.***

Seems just as good advice for writers today as it was a century ago.

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**For inclusion in the MARCH BAC  
Newsletter, send your events,**

authors!  
AUTHORS!

news, and publications by 2/26/22  
to  
bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com  
THANKS!

***Become a member OR RENEW NOW for 2022!***

***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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