

Events

Toronto celebrates Alcuin awards

THE ARTS AND LETTERS CLUB, for the fifth consecutive year, hosted a gala presentation of the Alcuin Society's annual Awards for Excellence in Book Design in Canada to winners from eastern Canada. Held on October 1, 2012, the ceremony has become an event that many in the arts community eagerly anticipate. As Richard Moorhouse, president of the club, pointed out in his remarks, book design is an area where the interests of the club converge with the interests of those outside of the club, making its support of the Alcuin Society and its design competition a pleasure.

As in past years, winning entries were displayed in the LAMPS room. (LAMPS is an acronym for Literature, Architecture, Music, Painting, Stage—the major groupings at the club.) Before and after dinner, the room was abuzz with the conversation of designers, publishers, illustrators, and Arts and Letters Club members catching up with one another and discussing the finer points of the books on display.

During dinner attendees were entertained with a slide show of pictures from the history of Coach House Press (more on this below).

The time immediately after dinner was devoted to the presentation of the awards. Linda Gustafson, a designer and one of the evening's organizers, spoke about the awards and their significance to her as a designer—especially as someone who received one in her first years as a designer.

Awards were presented to Andrew Steeves for *Curious Masonry*, *Incitements* and *The Shell of the Tortoise* (all Gaspereau Press, with Wesley Bates accepting on Steeves' behalf); Mark Goldstein for *Killdeer* (BookThug); Jeff Kulak for *The Learn to Speak Series* (Owlkids Books); Jennifer Lum for *Two Generals* (Random House); Leah Springate for *Folk* (McClelland & Stewart); Michael Solomon for *A Few Blocks* and *City Numbers* (both Groundwood Books); and Underline Studio for *Blast Counterblast* (Mercer Union/Whitewalls, Emily Tu accepting).

I had the pleasure of briefly introducing John Maxwell, an assistant professor with the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. His teaching and research focus is on the ongoing impact of digital technologies in the cultural and creative sectors and also historical research on digital innovation at

Toronto's Coach House Press in the 1970s. His talk was titled "Coach House Press as a Digital Pioneer," a presentation he had delivered in Vancouver earlier this year (see *Amphora* 161).

While members of the audience were familiar with Coach House Press as the incubator of Canadian literature—being an early publisher of Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, Ann-Marie MacDonald, George Bowering, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Christopher Dewdney, bpNichol and Anne Michaels, among others—there is also the behind-the-scenes story about how Coach House Press played a role in taking the physical book into the new electronic age.

John shed light on the innovative work of Stan Bevington and the people around him at Coach House. He told stories punctuated with pictures of how Stan and his group tinkered with the new computer technology, trying to solve the problems of typesetting the books they were publishing. As familiar as some of us are with Stan and Coach House Press, these stories were new to many in the audience.

The reason for inviting John was to celebrate Stan Bevington, the 2012 recipient of the Robert R. Reid Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Book Arts. Stan had the last word and surprised us with the brevity of his remarks but not with the graciousness of his thanks to, among others, the Alcuin Society, Robert R. Reid and Yosef Wosk, whose vision and generous financial support helped established the award.

Also in attendance was Will Rueter, recently named as the 2013 recipient of the Robert R. Reid award and medal. Rueter's award was announced during the evening, but the accompanying medal will be formally presented to him at a separate event in early 2013.

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At dinner left to right: Stan Bevington, Warren Clements, Nigel Beale, Camilla Gryski, Chester Gryski, Will Rueter, Richard Moorhouse (president of the Arts and Letters Club), Nola McCann (chair of the Art Committee)

All photographs by Don McLeod



Mark Goldstein and his award



Stan Bevington