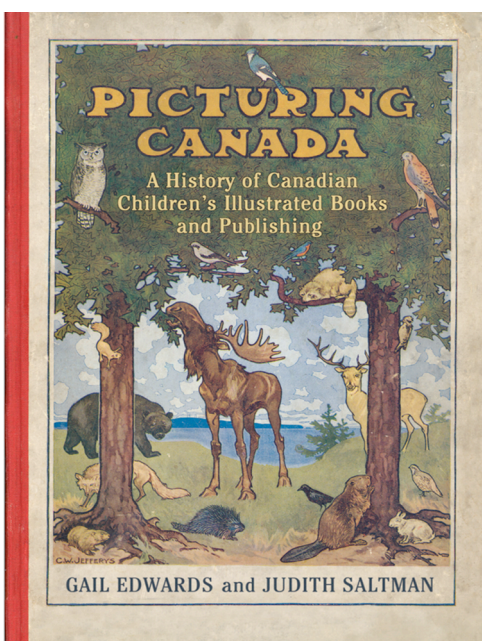


Librafiles: Lives of Remarkable Librarians

Judith Saltman: A Modest Life of Riches

By Pamela Fairfield.

Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books and Publishing (University of Toronto Press)—an essential literary collaboration between Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman—landed on the publishing scene in May 2010, not only as an integral work of Canadian publishing history and the history of childhood in Canada but also as a fitting culmination of the many accomplishments in the rich life of Judith Saltman. It is remarkable to have a text that analyzes the artistry and consumption of illustrated books for children in Canada, while also addressing the engendering of children's librarianship. On a cellular level, this volume embodies Judi Saltman's love for literature and all things delightful in the literacy process that unfolds during the life of a child.



As students of Judi Saltman, both past and present, we take with us into our journey through children's librarianship not only Judi's vast knowledge of children's literature and publishing but her fervor that conjures a renewed sense of "the wonder of childhood." A lecture from Judi is not just about a child's literature choices and the essential elements

of children's programming but weaves together life lessons for the new librarian that are punctuated by the stars we see in Judi's eyes as she takes us across a landscape where we witness once again the sweet naivety of a child's heart and the delights that alight therein and stay with us throughout life. This unique talent for teaching that invokes renewed passion and uncovers a deep understanding for children's literature by giving memory to that tentative time in life when we were once constantly discovering new worlds through words won Judi the prestigious University of British Columbia Killam Teaching Prize in the spring of 2003, an award that requires the nomination of her students. That she considers this to be one of the most important honors during her life as a teacher speaks to Judi's commitment as an activist for children's literacy, as she helps shape and shepherd the interest of new students into a living passion for Children's Librarianship. By doing so, she ensures the constant cultivation of a vibrant and knowledgeable community of librarians who help spread the word of literacy to all children.

The Early Years

Luckily for us Judi returned to Vancouver in 1973 after her first major role as a Children's Librarian at Toronto Public Library (TPL) (1970-1972), where she rapidly developed her true colors as a professional, ready to spearhead any project that came her way. During her years at TPL, she works with a team of talented librarians. TPL had become known internationally from the early twentieth for its quality children's services and high standards of selection, attracting librarians from around the world to join in their expertise. This was also the training ground for Judi's mentor, Sheila Egoff, acclaimed author, professor and children's librarian, who would continue to inspire Judi throughout her life.

It is in Toronto where Judi fully encounters the capacity of the picture book that "now occupies a significant position in the world family of Canadian and international children's literature." She discovers the importance of Canadian publishers like Kids Can Press as independent specialists of the book trade, publishing some of the first Children's books of the era

containing current, valuable and significant stories by and about Canadians that contribute to the creation of history and myth; in short, a child's story of Canada. In Toronto, she also discovers that the power of the story not only materializes in books but is embodied by the unique creature—the storyteller. She encounters an important mentor—Alice Kane—one of the founders of the Storytellers School of Toronto. It is here where she learns the depth of the storyteller's role and how to release the power of the story through voice and presence. This will become the root of her ability to present successful storytimes to children of all ages.

The charm of Judi's personality comes from a modesty she brings to everything, despite her remarkable life of accomplishments. During our interview she fondly remembers her first moments as a young librarian and the terror we all feel as we enter the room for our first preschool storytime. It is hard to believe that a woman with such a prestigious history once walked the very path we all take as we graduate with curiosity and trepidation into our new profession. We can only hope that we transform as quickly as Judi once did into librarians that mark the world of early literacy with such an eloquent yet sizzling zeal. But this is a tall order to fill as her accomplishments are far reaching.

Excited about the cutting edge tools for librarianship she gathered in Toronto, Judi returns to Vancouver in 1973 to accept the role of Head of Children's Services for West Vancouver Memorial Library. Here she has the opportunity to transform her unique Toronto experiences into the development of a host of inventive programs: preschool storytimes, puppetry, children's literature courses for adults and creative dramatic storytelling for older children. She quickly realizes that developing a contemporary library collection that includes a significant audiovisual component is integral to the process of creating programming that will effectively enhance a child's interest in literacy. It is the very spark that is initiated during a successful children's program that propels children to the library shelves to seek out their favorite story in whatever format they so choose. The ultimate goal is to maintain the light that turns on as a child's mind opens memory to the first reading of that story.

A Path to Teaching

Throughout the 70's Judi continues to develop and deliver effective programming to preschool and school-age children, visiting classrooms in her catchment area on a constant basis, capturing

more and more children in her literacy net as she goes. In 1979, Judi leaves West Vancouver Memorial Library, when she is asked by Sheila Egoff to become her research assistant for her latest venture, *Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature*, (ALA, 1981), covering children's literature from 1960 to 80 inclusively. It is during this time that her passion for teaching comes into full view as she takes on her first instructor's role in 1980 for the SLAIS department and Education Faculty at UBC, followed by a year of teaching one course in the Education department at Simon Fraser University. In 1981, realizing the importance of augmenting her education, Judi travels to Simmons College in Boston with renowned children's author, Kit Pearson, where in 1982 she receives her Master of Arts in Children's Literature. In 1983, Judi leaves her beloved position as Children's Librarian at the Kerrisdale Branch of Vancouver Public Library and accepts the tenure track position of Assistant Professor at SLAIS, UBC. During this prolific year she also begins work on *The Riverside Anthology of Children's Literature* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985) which ends up selling over 100,000 copies and has been used extensively as a textbook in English, Education and Library and Information classrooms throughout North America. Shortly after, Judi is approached by Oxford University Press to produce a book called *Modern Canadian Children's Books: Perspectives on Canadian Culture* (1987). In this snapshot of the period 1975 – 1985, Judi states that picture books are a "microcosm of a country's literature for children, reflecting in miniature the nation's themes and cultural vision," by marrying "art and text into an indivisible whole," and offering children a "bright kernel of experience." During this same year she publishes *Goldie and the Sea* (Groundwood Books, 1987), the story of a child artist who wants to visit the ocean so she can reproduce in drawings what she sees there. During this monumental year, Judi also becomes pregnant with her daughter. Becoming a mother transforms her work from print-centered to child-centered; and her new experience as a mother propels her into the emotional life of children and by nature, influences her decisions in the development of syllabi within the Children's Literature focus of SLAIS. In the following years at UBC Judi continues to develop youth services and children's literature courses into a unique concentration that attracts students, professors, authors and library professionals from beyond Canada to join in a special experience that takes us back to "the wonder of being in the world."

Today

Judi Saltman is now Associate Professor for the Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) at the University of British Columbia's School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, as well as the Chair of the Master of Arts in Children's Literature Program (MACL) at UBC. Areas of special interest that have inspired her to develop and teach eight separate courses at SLAIS are: the historical development and criticism of Canadian literature for children and young adults; the historical development of illustration and design in children's books; the historical development of Canadian publishing for children, within the context of the history of the book in Canada; and services for children and young adults in public libraries. Judi's expertise in these areas and the talents of other faculty members and adjunct faculty at SLAIS have helped to develop a specialization within the MLIS program that is respected both nationally and internationally and inspires students across North America and beyond to become master candidates in the MLIS program at UBC.

Judi spearheaded the planning committee to establish the Master of Arts in Children's Literature Program (MACL) at UBC, for which she became Chair upon its inception in 1999 (a seat she maintains to this day). The MACL Program is a unique university program based on multidisciplinary and academic cooperation, jointly offered by English, Creative Writing, Language and Literacy Education and the School of Library, Archival & Information Studies. The program offers a multidisciplinary perspective on the full life cycle of children's literature—the creation and publishing of the literature, its critical analysis and the pedagogical approaches to literature in interaction with children in schools, homes and libraries. The MACL Program is the only one of its kind in the world offered from such a broad, multidisciplinary perspective and the only Master's program in Children's Literature in Canada.

Judi Saltman's publications, awards and life experiences can not really be told in such a brief story. But some of her latest and most prestigious accomplishments include: the 2009 CAPL/Brodart Outstanding Public Library Service Award, presented annually for outstanding service in the field of Canadian Public Librarianship. There could not be a more fitting award for someone who has dedicated so much of her life to literacy for children and families.

In 1990, she published an important text with Sheila Egoff: *The New Republic of Childhood: A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English*. It discusses such topics as realistic fiction, fantasy, science fiction, picture books, historical fiction, folk and fairy tales, poetry and verse, and the growth of Canadian publishing.

This volume brings essential literary criticism to the most relevant titles in Canadian children's literature from the 19th Century to 1989 with some classic titles from the world of children's literature serving as reference points.

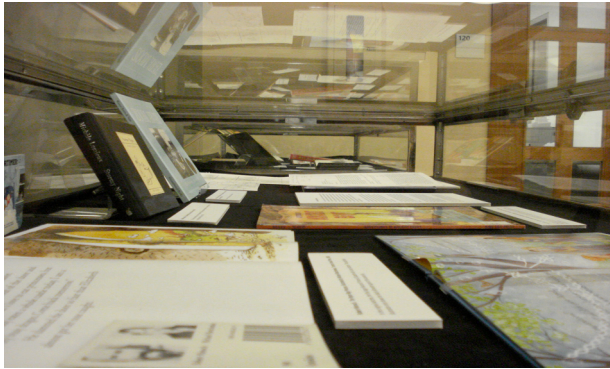
An ongoing project that holds great importance for children's and teacher librarians, as well as students and researchers in children's literature is a website and database that Judi and Gail Edwards have developed as part of the research for *Picturing Canada*. The website, Canadian Children's Illustrated Books in English (<http://ccib.arts.ubc.ca/>) was developed with the research collaboration of SLAIS graduate students over 11 years. This website provides hundreds of annotated resources on aspects of Canadian children's books, international illustration and children's publishing in Canada, as well as links to electronic resources and a searchable database of award-winning Canadian children's illustrated books. Here, the history of publishing for children in Canada is examined through the lens of the illustrated book.

Equally as important are a number of grants won for Gail and Judi's most recent collaborative effort: *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books and Publishing*. This volume, so essential to the fields of Book History in Canada, Early Literacy, Children's Literature, Education and Library and Information Studies, has been supported by the following granting agencies: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Moss Rock Park Foundation, the UBC Hampton Fund and HSS Research Grant, IBBY-Canada and the Bibliographical Society of Canada.

Picturing Canada

Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books and Publishing is celebrated in a summer-long exhibition at UBC Library's Rare Books and Special Collections department. The exhibition takes a thematic look at the evolution of illustrated books for children - considering the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples, the reflection of the country's national and regional identities, multiculturalism, the evolution of Canadian publishing for children and the

introduction of different technologies and formats used to create illustrations for children's books.



The exhibit serves as a visual companion to *Picturing Canada* and contains Canadian illustrated books from 1825 to the present. Those who have read the book will see a large amount of the artwork that Judi and Gail discuss. The exhibition is also designed to be accessible to the general public so that those who have not yet read the book or do not have background knowledge will still embark on a meaningful experience. Many of the books cannot be seen anywhere outside of the special collection environment and have been made available through the support of UBC's Rare Books and Special Collections and the Canadian Children's Book Centre Collection at the Education Library (UBC). In addition to rare treasures, there are well-known books by authors and illustrators like Robert Munsch, Dennis Lee and Richard Van Camp. The exhibition also features original art by Kathie Shoemaker, Ann Blades and Stefan Czernecki.

Three SLAIS master's graduates worked under Judi's supervision on this evocative exhibit: Shannon Ozirny, Meaghan Scanlon and Genevieve Vallleau.

The exhibition opened on May 7, 2010 and will run until August 31, 2010. It is free to everyone and can

be viewed during the opening hours of UBC's Rare Books and Special Collections (RBSC): 9:00am-5:00pm, Monday-Friday and noon-5:00pm on Saturdays. RBSC is located on the first floor of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre.

Today, to quote Judi from her work, *Modern Canadian Children's Books*, "the picture-book genre is the fastest growing, most aggressively marketed, and most vital sector of the industry in Canada." We can only hope that our field continues to be inundated with the passion and intelligence we have witnessed in the life of Judith Saltman in the effort to keep the Canadian picture book alive as an essential element of early literacy. Come to UBC to experience the exhibit and to celebrate the inauguration of *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books and Publishing* into the canon of Children's Literature.



Exhibit photos provided by Shannon Ozirny.

Pamela Fairfield is a children's librarian for Vancouver Public Library and the Membership Coordinator for YAACS, BCLA Interest Group.