

# Shadowing shines a light on resources

At one of the UK's newest universities, a passion for children's literature brought together librarians and academics to work on an initiative to shadow the CILIP Carnegie & Kate Greenaway Awards to publicise the Teaching Resources Collection and highlight the importance of reading for pleasure to both students and the academic community, explain **Janice Morris** and her colleagues.



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AFTER 150 years as a college and then university college, in 2012 Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU) became one of the UK's newest universities. A single-site campus on the outskirts of Lincoln, the university was originally established as an Anglican teacher training school, but now provides a broad range of teaching, education and arts and humanities programmes to a student body of approximately 2,200. A project to significantly extend and refurbish the university library was completed in September 2012, and incorporated a new home for the Teaching Resources Collection (TRC) of approximately 24,000 teaching materials and children's books.

## Passionate about children's literature

The initiative – to adapt the CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway shadowing scheme to promote the new space in the library – was motivated by our passion for children's literature. It brought together librarians and academics at BGU: Emma Sansby (Head of Library Services); Janice Morris (Teaching Resources Librarian); Sibylle Erle (Senior Lecturer in English); and Helen Hendry (Senior Lecturer in PGCE Primary Education). Not only did we complement each other in skills and areas of expertise, we found new common ground. It all started with Janice.

**Janice:** 'I am passionate about children's books, and have always believed that young learners need to be encouraged to read for pleasure by the adults around them. Research over the past decade by organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the National Literacy Trust has re-enforced this belief, and I have been encouraged more recently by the government's growing commitment to reading for pleasure. Teachers play an especially key role. Their knowledge of children's books and understanding of the value of reading for pleasure cannot be underestimated. As subject librarian for BGU's initial teacher training (ITT) programmes, I try to nurture both. In recent years, successful strategies have included the publication of a children's literature newsletter ([www.bishopp.ac.uk/hullabaloo](http://www.bishopp.ac.uk/hullabaloo)), themed bibliographies, and constantly changing displays of resources in the TRC.

'Whilst thinking up ways to publicise the TRC, in late 2012 I began to consider the benefits of a project to shadow the 2013 CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greena-

## CILIP CKG 2014 Awards

- **Nominations close on 18 October. The longlist will be announced on 5 November:** <http://bit.ly/13MfNW6>
- **CKG Shadowing site:** <http://bit.ly/av1JYE>

way Medals. Not only would it draw attention to these important awards, and all the past winners and nominees, but it seemed a fitting way to introduce people to the TRC and increase awareness of the resources within it. It also had the potential to benefit not only our ITT students but the academic community as a whole, by encouraging people to engage with quality literature, connect with fellow bibliophiles, and learn more about contemporary children's fiction and picture books. Having secured the support and participation of Head of the Library, Emma, I began to plan our "BGU Carnegie Greenaway Challenge" in earnest. For the challenge to succeed, I was keen to involve key academic staff. Their involvement ensured that the timing of events was appropriate and, more importantly, encouraged students to see the challenge not just as a bit of fun, but as something that could benefit them academically.'

**Sibylle:** 'I teach children's literature, so I jumped at this opportunity! At the beginning of the semester



**Bishop Grosseteste University Library.**

I asked my students about their attitudes towards reading: “Why do you read?” Here are some of the answers: “to get ahead”; “... to get information”; “... because I have to”; “...because I love it”. With an eye on assessment, I encouraged them to take part in the challenge, since they would definitely encounter something new. To win over those who had made a connection between the compulsory element of reading on the module and a perceived denial of pleasure, I acknowledged that we needed to face the facts and think about how to re-introduce pleasure, IF reading was important.... What could be done?’

**Helen:** ‘I immediately wanted to support the challenge because of its potential to raise ITT students’ awareness of quality children’s authors. In my experience, the emphasis on systematic synthetic phonics is, in some schools, narrowing the literacy curriculum. Whilst it is important that ITT students are able to use this approach to teaching reading, I feel strongly that all of us involved in ITT have a duty to increase the students’ knowledge and passion for children’s literature. The challenge brought this to the fore, and linked well to work being undertaken in our ITT programmes to promote wider reading, poetry and storytelling and our other initiatives like the Poetry Train project and Teachers’ Reading Passports. I also hoped that the challenge would encourage students to take time to select texts critically, to think about how and why texts appeal to readers, and to identify how books can support and inform classroom practice.’

**Emma:** ‘Initially for me the challenge was very much about promoting a new space and a terrific collection of resources to the BGU community, but as the project progressed I began to see that it was really about sharing; sharing space and resources, sharing knowledge and expertise, sharing enthusiasm and, most importantly of all, sharing some great books.’

‘Initially we purchased copies of all books on both longlists, and established a display area in the TRC. In February, we put on a special event to launch the challenge. We encouraged students and staff to read as many of the books as possible and provide feedback on special date labels and comment slips. Sibylle and Helen also contributed by speaking about some of the



Greenaway nominee Jackie Morris signing her books in the TRC with Emma Sansby, Sibylle Erle, Janice Morris and Helen Hendry.

books that had already caught their attention.

Sibylle said in her reflection on the event: ‘To start with, I emphasised that while reading over the next few months, we had to take a closer look at the selection criteria because an immediate consequence of an award is a rise in sales. What constitutes a good book and who says so? One of the books I had brought along was an illustrated fairy tale. I held it up to my audience, which consisted of students and colleagues, but suddenly I noticed that the two little children who had been playing on the floor in front of me were listening as well, not perhaps to what I was saying but they were definitely listening. This reaction was more than I had bargained for, and my somewhat cynical opening seemed irrelevant. What struck me was the power of the oral tradition and of storytelling.’

### Visit from a Greenaway nominee

Over the next six weeks, the books circulated and we received an encouraging amount and variety of feedback, ranging from ticks and emoticons to short comments and full reviews. Following CILIP’s announcement of the longlists in March 2013, we held an event to launch the next stage of the challenge, and were delighted to hear Greenaway nominee Jackie Morris talk about her work. When we were designing the TRC, Jackie had given us permission to use two of her illustrations to decorate the space. One was from *The Cat & The Fiddle: a treasury of nursery rhymes*, which we were thrilled to see included on the Greenaway Medal longlist less than a year later. Our event seemed the perfect opportunity to extend both our thanks and congratulations to Jackie. The event was enhanced by book signing and book selling organised by Marilyn Brocklehurst from the Norfolk Children’s Book Centre.

### Reconnecting with children’s books

Helen stressed how much the initiative was personally enjoyable: ‘I was surprised by the intensity of the experience as it re-connected me with my love of children’s books. I had so much fun looking through the titles and selecting my own favourites to share with students. The extra-curricular nature of the events provided a



Illustrative panels by author Jackie Morris.



Inside the library extension.

special, relaxed space where students and tutors from different courses enjoyed books together on the same level. During one event I read my favourite longlisted picture book to a group, which included the children of university staff. As the children enjoyed the book with us, I was transported to my past as a primary teacher reading to my class and I remembered the joy that sharing a wonderful book brings.'

For the final stage of the challenge, we encouraged people to vote for their favourite from each of the shortlists, enter a draw to win a copy of the two official winners, and continue to read and comment on the books that weren't shortlisted. When CILIP announced the official Carnegie & Kate Greenaway Medal winners (Sally Gardner's *Maggot Moon* and Levi Pinfold's *Black Dog* respectively) in June, we announced the results of the BGU vote. Our BGU chosen winners for the Carnegie Medal were jointly R. J. Palacio for *Wonder* and Sarah Crossan for *The Weight of Water* and our Kate Greenaway Medal went to Jon Klassen for *I Want My Hat Back*.

### Report validates our challenge

A few months into the challenge, Janice became aware of a 2012 report on a two-year Open University study, commissioned in association with the UK Carnegie Trust, entitled *Report to Carnegie UK Trust and CILIP on a two-stage study of the Carnegie & Kate Greenaway Shadowing Scheme*. One of the report's key recommendations was to 'develop links with initial teacher education (ITE) institutions' and 'raise awareness of shadowing amongst student teachers' (Cremin et al. 2012: 117) This was just the validation we

needed and gave us plenty of food for thought as we decided whether to repeat the challenge in 2013-14.

Although we knew we were presenting the BGU community with a challenge, we perhaps underestimated the one we had set ourselves in administering, organising and publicising it. However, we all ultimately agreed that it was time well spent and it didn't take us long to commit to doing it all over again, though this time with better publicity, more people helping out, and an earlier start in the academic year.

### Hungry for more...

The challenge definitely raised the profile of children's book awards at BGU. It also encouraged a level of engagement with quality children's fiction that we had not seen before. We were impressed with the amount of feedback from students, staff, parents and children. The opportunity for librarians and academics to work together was invaluable and we are already discussing other ways that we can collaborate in the future. In terms of promoting our new TRC, we were particularly pleased to overhear student ambassadors enthuse about the challenge when taking prospective students on tours of the Library. We discovered and enjoyed a whole range of creative and critical responses and are hungry for more shared reading experiences. [U]

#### Further reading

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### Library concourse

