

Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children

Charge: *To select the recipient of the annual Orbis Pictus Award® and up to five honor books, and to promote the use of children's nonfiction books in the classroom.*

The Orbis Pictus Award® was established in 1989 to promote and recognize excellence in the writing of nonfiction for children. The name Orbis Pictus, commemorates the work of Johannes Amos Comenius, Orbis Pictus—The World in Pictures (1657), considered to be the first book actually planned for children. The award is presented at the Children's Book Awards Luncheon at the NCTE Annual Convention.

For more information on the Orbis Pictus Award, please go to: <http://www2.ncte.org/awards/orbis-pictus-award-nonfiction-for-children/>.

Major activities: What major actions, projects, initiatives, or studies in your charge have been completed by your group since July 1, 2016? In each activity describe the more important features of the work, and connect your work to the NCTE Vision Statement, if applicable.

1. What actions, projects, initiatives, or studies are “in progress” at this time?

In December of 2016, applications for membership on the Orbis Pictus Committee were collected by NCTE and shared with the committee chair. In January, invitations were issued to members. This year, the committee chair coordinated communication with children's book publishers with the Huck Book Award committee chair. We sent out our introductions to publishers on the same day, using the same letter, with appropriate changes made to share information on each committee. We encouraged publishers to send books as soon as possible, as a reminder that this would be the third year that we would be selecting our winners at the NCTE conference in November. The committee began receiving books in February.

In January, the Huck and Orbis Pictus Committee chairs and assistant chairs had a Skype session where we discussed our processes and procedures, including using google docs to document the work (monthly books received, monthly book recommendations, etc.). The new Orbis Pictus committee has had several Skype meetings to review processes and procedures, develop a group identity, answer questions, discuss the Orbis Pictus evaluation criteria, and discuss articles about the process of evaluating nonfiction and content analyses of prior Orbis Pictus book award-winning books. We have been making recommendations regarding books moving forward or getting dropped from consideration monthly since March. The committee chair continues to send reminders to publishers about sending titles. We have moved into our “Top 20” stage of deliberations, and look forward to making our selections at the 2017 conference. At the conference, we will also lead two sessions with the Huck Committee: 2017 authors and illustrators will present their work in one, and we will share information about the 2017 titles in the other.

2. What have you accomplished so far, and what is your timeline for future work?

There is still more work to be done on the publisher front. There is one major publisher that has still not sent any books, despite some of their titles already getting award Boston Globe Horn Book Award honors (those are announced in June) and multiple starred reviews. Several publishers are behind in sending us major titles. We have made a lot of progress, but publishers are not treating our award with the same urgency that they treat the ALA book award committees.

For future work, we are very interested in changing the format for the Orbis Pictus book presentation at the NCTE conference starting with the 2018 award and conference. We think it is very important that the award, honor, and recommended titles are being reviewed for the November/December issue of *Language Arts*. However, because of this, we think that those reviews can have hyperlinks on the NCTE website in the weeks leading into the 2018 conference (this has remained a work in progress for several years now). We can reference those at the conference and then spend time during our presentation discussing how to use those award winning books in the classroom at different grade levels (and for

both literacy and content learning). This means that it might be best to schedule the Huck and the Orbis Pictus sessions at separate times at NCTE 2018. It is more preparation work for the committee coming into the conference. But ultimately, we think it will be more beneficial for our membership. These ideas can also be written up and included on the NCTE website after the conference. We would also like to work on creating content for the NCTE website on using the twenty-years of Orbis Pictus award-winning books in the classroom. If we can demonstrate how the books can be used with one another, we think that will bring traffic to the NCTE site, elevate the award even more, and demonstrate that our previous winners can still play a vital role in classroom life.

3. How has the work of your group contributed to NCTE's role in shaping the profession of teaching and/or the understanding of literacy in educational contexts?

We think that the Orbis Pictus award is very important in the field of children's literature, and that there is a growing understanding of the significance of quality nonfiction in the classroom. Teachers still need more professional development on how nonfiction books operate and the multiple roles that nonfiction can play in the classroom. We think our revised ideas for how the Orbis Pictus Committee can present our titles at the 2018 conference will help further that.

Mary Ann Cappiello, Chair