

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, 2017? 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 2017, applications for membership on the Orbis Pictus Committee were collected by NCTE and shared with the committee chair. In January, a single invitation was issued to invite a new member onto the committee to replace our outgoing member.

The committee chair continued to 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. The committee began receiving books in February.

From March-May, the 2019 committee met monthly via Zoom Conference to mentor our new member, review processes and procedures, develop a group identity, answer questions, and 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 Assistant Chair has been handling the record-keeping regarding monthly considerations, and we will soon transition to documenting our “Top 20” in the final months leading up to the conference. The committee chair continues to send reminders to publishers about sending titles.

The 2018 committee also met several times during the winter months to discuss changes to our format for the 2018 conference presentation.

Finally, along with the Huck Chair, the chair outlined a process and materials for a Mock Huck/Mock Orbis Pictus Award process for Fall of 2018 that is currently rolling out.

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

Instead of presenting on the books at our Orbis Pictus book presentation at the NCTE conference, we are presenting on teaching with the books. While this has created a new layer of work for the committee, we think this is an important next step in supporting teachers as they try to scaffold more nonfiction into the everyday lives of their elementary and middle school classrooms. We hope that these teaching ideas will be uploaded and available from the Orbis Pictus page of the NCTE website, so that we can begin to curate teaching ideas each year.

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 format for the Orbis Pictus Committee presentation at the 2018 conference will help further that.

Mary Ann Cappiello, Chair