What’s New in Award-Winning
Translated Children’s Books
with Jewish Content

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This talk will...

- Summarize my research findings about how editors approach selecting children’s books to publish in translation
- Apply findings to translated Jewish children’s books recognized by six awards:
  - Mildred L. Batchelder Award
  - USBBY Outstanding International Books list
  - National Jewish Book Awards
  - Sydney Taylor Book Awards
  - Jane Addams Children’s Book Award, and
  - GLLI Translated YA Book Prize.
- Provide booklist (see handout) of award-winning translations with Jewish content, 1970-2018
- Present hands-on activities to help readers engage with the books
- List additional resources
- Brief conclusion
The Research Context
Defining International Books

- Location, location, location!
- First published outside of one’s country
- In the US: English-language imports plus books translated from other languages into English
- International vs. multicultural (books about other cultures/countries, first published in the US); both can focus on wide-ranging authentic (genuine) cultural experience
- Other terms: global/world/transcultural literature
Jella Lepman
Why Read International Books?

- “Books as bridges” approach
- Fresh literary experiences
- Specific cultural settings with universal themes
- Can become part of every child’s cultural heritage
- Deeper insight into others’ lives
- Complement many parts of the curriculum…and great for pleasure reading too!
- Fight ethnocentrism (these books are not about US children) and prejudice – *tikkun olam*
- Philip Pullman (2005): “If we DON’T offer children the experience of literature from other languages, we’re starving them. It’s as simple as that.”
Issues in Publishing Translations

- Dearth of translations: approximately 2-3% of US children’s books are translations (3% for adult books)
- Expensive to translate longer works (hence most translations are picture books)
- Perceived lack of interest from buyers and readers
- Translator’s name often hidden or absent
- Possible reader discomfort with the unfamiliar
- Americanization (continuum from “adequacy” – fidelity to original – to “acceptability” (accessibility for target audience)
- Predominantly Western European languages

…but there are ways to address these issues!
“Found in Translation”

Research Questions

 What are the BARRIERS editors encounter?
 What are the RESOURCES they see as available?
 What are their MOTIVATIONS for publishing translations?
 Having considered the barriers, resources, and motivations, what is their PROPENSITY TO PUBLISH translations?
**Key Findings I**

**BARRIERS** include:
- Relying on others to read a book in another language
- Dealing with unfavorable exchange rate [data collected just before 2008 recession]

**RESOURCES** include:
- Attendance at Bologna Book Fair
- Connection with agents
- Knowledge of award winners in other countries
Key Findings II

MOTIVATIONS include:

- A positive personal response to the book
- Desire to broaden the perspectives of young readers in the U.S. ("books as bridges approach")

PROPENSITY TO PUBLISH is greater if editors:

- speak a second language
- perceive the industry as more open to translations than 5 years ago.

No correlation between propensity to publish and:

- Years of experience
- Size of firm.
Looking for Award-Winning Judaica Translations
Mildred L. Batchelder Award

http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awards/grants/bookmedia/batchelderaward/index.cfm

“Awarded to a United States publisher for a children’s book considered to be the most outstanding of those books originating in a country other than the United States and in a language other than English and subsequently translated into English for publication in the United States during the preceding year.”
USBBY Outstanding International Books (OIB) List

http://www.usbby.org/list_oibl.html

“The Outstanding International Books committee is charged with selecting international books that are deemed most outstanding of those published during the calendar year. For the purposes of this honor list, the term ‘international book’ is used to describe a book published or distributed in the United States that originated or was first published in a country other than the U.S.”

- website links to February School Library Journal annotated booklists, bookmarks, and Google maps showing locations of books
Sydney Taylor Book Awards

https://jewishlibraries.org/content.php?page=Sydney_Taylor_Book_Award

“The Sydney Taylor Book Award is presented annually to outstanding books for children and teens that authentically portray the Jewish experience. Presented by the Association of Jewish Libraries since 1968, the award encourages the publication and widespread use of quality Judaic literature. Gold medals are presented in three categories: Younger Readers, Older Readers, and Teen Readers. Honor Books are awarded silver medals, and Notable Books are named in each category.”
National Jewish Book Awards


“Inaugurated in 1950, the National Jewish Book Awards is the longest-running North American awards program of its kind and is recognized as the most prestigious. The Awards are intended to recognize authors, and encourage reading, of outstanding English-language books of Jewish interest.” There are several categories for young readers: Children’s Literature and YA Literature (sometimes combined) and Illustrated Book for Children.
Jane Addams Children’s Book Award

http://www.janeaddamschildrensbookaward.org/

“annually recognizes children’s books of literary and aesthetic excellence that effectively engage children in thinking about peace, social justice, global community, and equity for all people. A national committee of members with passion for and expertise in children’s literature and social justice is responsible for making the choices each year.”
The GLLI Translated YA Book Prize is the first award to recognize publishers, translators, and authors of outstanding books in English translation for young adult readers. It fills the gap between ALSC’s Mildred L. Batchelder Award (0-12 years) and the National Book Award for Translated Literature (adult). For at least the first few years, the committee will consider works published within three years of the submission deadline. This is to ensure a wide enough field from which to choose a shortlist. We follow the YALSA model of announcing the shortlist in late fall and the winner and honor titles during ALA Midwinter. Then at ALA Annual, we party!
The Booklist
Parameters

Included:
- Winner, honor, shortlist, and notable titles

Omitted:
- Picture books with minimal text
- Retellings rather than translations
- Allegorical stories about war
- WWII stories with no clear Jewish relevance

Final list = 54 titles
## Number of Award-Winning Judaica Translations by Year

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About the Booklist

Format/genres:
- Fiction (36)
- Nonfiction (8)
- Graphic novels (5)
- Picture books (4)
- Poetry (1)

Languages:
- Hebrew (13); German (11); Dutch (9); French (8); Swedish (3); Czech, Italian, Spanish, Yiddish (2); Flemish, Norwegian (1)

Authors with multiple entries:
- Uri Orlev (#26-30), Annika Thor (#39-41), Hermann Vinke (#43-44); Ida Vos (#46-49), Valérie Zenatti (#53-54)

Publishers:
- 37 (69%) titles from large publishers; 17 (31%) titles from smaller independent houses
To Watch For

- Picture book publisher Enchanted Lion to publish middle grade books, including *Snoozie, Sunny and So-So* (August 2019) by Dafna Ben-zvi, translated from the Hebrew by Annette Appel, and illustrated by Ofra Amit: “a story about loneliness and the hope that new friendships bring, which stars two dogs and a cat.”

- French graphic novel, *Catherine’s War*, by Julia Billet and Claire Fauvel, forthcoming from HarperCollins (2020): “A Jewish teenager living in the occupied zone of France in 1941, must change her name, forget her past, and flee Nazi persecution.”

- New publisher: Levine Querido. Committed to include translations on first list (2020). Interested in Jewish content.
Revisiting Issues in Publishing Translations

- Dearth of translations – there is increased activity – new children’s/YA publishers are appearing: Levine Querido, Pushkin Children’s Books, Yonder: Restless Books for Young Readers, and Elsewhere Editions

- Hard to find translators, expensive to translate longer works – cultural organizations offer translation subsidies; GLLI can help publishers and literary translators connect

- Perceived lack of interest from buyers and readers – supply vs. demand – role of publishers to publish and market translations and persuade librarians to buy them; role of librarians to ask for translations so publishers will know there is a market
Revisiting Issues (continued)

- Translators need to be acknowledged – it takes two writers to create a translation. The name of an accomplished literary translator on a book should be an asset.
- Possible reader discomfort with the unfamiliar – adults should model interest in translations, as with any kind of reading they support.
- Americanization – we can trust children to be curious about the unfamiliar – after all, they are learning new things all the time!
- Going beyond mostly Western European languages is still a challenge.
Helping Children & Teens Connect with Translations
Activities with Translations

- pair with US book on a similar theme/topic
- author study
- compare covers of original and US editions (for example, #40 A Faraway Island)
More Activities

- readers’ theater -- choose scenes from middle grade Holocaust books like #6 *Adam and Thomas* and #45 *My Family for the War*
- in a language class compare excerpt from the original with the English translation
- make a Google map of books by country of publication and/or country of setting
- booktalk prompt: distribute notes with the name of a country and ask people to choose one... and its books (example: Chile – #4 *I Lived on Butterfly Hill*)
- your ideas!
Keeping Up with Translations
USBBY Bibliographies

“Bridges to Understanding” series of annotated bibliographies sponsored by USBBY and published by Scarecrow Press (now Rowman & Littlefield):

Additional Professional Texts


Organizations

Int’l Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY)
http://www.ibby.org/ 78 national sections including USBBY www.usbby.org/
- Next USBBY regional conference: Austin, TX, Oct. 25-27, 2019
- Next international IBBY congress: Moscow, Sept. 5-7, 2020

Global Literature in Libraries Initiative (GLLI)
- Website: https://glli-us.org/
- Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/GlobalLitinLibs/
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/GlobalLitinLibs
Libraries & Websites

International Children’s Digital Library (ICDL)
http://en.childrenslibrary.org/ -- check out the free iTunes app for iPhone and iPad

International Youth Library (IYL)
http://www.ijb.de/files/Page00.htm -- includes White Ravens, books considered worthy of translation:

World of Words (WOW)
http://wowlit.org/ hosted by University of Arizona
Journals

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children’s Literature
http://www.ibby.org/bookbird/

The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children’s Literature

WOW Review
http://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/
Conclusion

- Translations are important to share with our children and teens – and there are lots of creative ways to do it!
- Librarians have the power and responsibility to help create and sustain the market for translations
- Award-winning Judaica translations can educate and entertain but also challenge us as readers – a very good thing!
References


Thanks for listening!
Questions? Comments?
Let’s talk!