From the Editor

SCBWI Tokyo continues to grow! Accordingly the chapter has had a busy schedule of events, all organized and administered through tireless volunteer effort.

July included a writing workshop on plot with New Mexico author Chris Eboch. August was quiet with many members away, but on short notice Assistant Regional Advisor and Illustrator Coordinator John Shelley was able to meet with Russian illustrator Kirill Chelushkin visiting from Moscow. Kiyoko Matsuoka, Curator of the Itabashi Art Museum joined us in September for an information session on the Bologna Illustrators Exhibition to which SCBWI Tokyo members were urged to submit work. Matsuoka was accompanied by illustrator Ayano Imai, whose career took off after success at the Exhibition. In October we held another Manuscript and Illustration Exchange with a truly international group presenting a broad range of work for critique.

The Writers’ Day in November was the most ambitious event yet for SCBWI Tokyo and featured writing workshops with Linda Gerber on series fiction and David Schwartz on math and science books, and an evening talk and Q&A with Lynne Reid Banks. A few days later, SCBWI Tokyo members had the opportunity to dine with Chicago author and literacy advocate Esmé Raji Codell when she came to Tokyo for international school visits. The season closed with another lively Networking Night and a Meet the Illustrator Breakfast with pop-up artist Robert Sabuda in December.

This edition of Carp Tales includes write-ups of all these events, plus an interview with Prague-based illustrator Iku Dekune, an article on kamishibai abroad, an interview with translator Cathy Hirano, and an introduction to the bookstore Merry Go Round in Mie Prefecture. Watch the SCBWI Tokyo website Events page for upcoming events. 2007 promises to be an exciting year, including events with illustrator Satoshi Kitamura, illustrator Yangsook Choi and author Donna Jo Napoli.

Until the next Carp Tales issue, keep writing, illustrating, and promoting the good life with books.

— Holly Thompson
Since first breaking into the picture book market in the mid 1990s, illustrator and painter Iku Dekune has risen to the forefront of contemporary children’s publishing in Japan, a substantial achievement considering she actually lives and works in Prague in the Czech Republic. Her books often combine the darkest European themes with a distinctly Japanese sense of design and fantasy. Particularly notable for their rich colors and expressive naturalism, her illustrations invite the viewer into a uniquely personal and mysterious world.

Iku Dekune was born in Tokyo in 1969 and graduated in 1992 from Musashi Art University. Her first book Ofuro (Bath: Gakushu-Kenkyusha) was published in 1996. In 1998 her etchings of Grimm’s Fairy Tales were selected for the Bologna Book Fair Illustrators Exhibition, and in 2003 she won the Grand Prize of the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava, which success has widened her reputation across Europe as well as Japan. In 2002 she settled in Prague, though her commissions are still largely from Japan. Her most recent work, Marsha to Shiroi Tori (Marsha and the White Bird) written by Mikhail Blatov, was published by Kaiseisha.

Could you talk a little about the environment you grew up in and any books you liked when you were young?

I could never get to sleep when I was a child—I was scared of the dark. When I closed my eyes I felt as if I was being pulled into a strange world, so I always found it very hard to fall asleep. One day my parents gave me a picture book, Nenaiko Dareda (Who’s Not Sleeping?) by Keiko Sena. This book became the most treasured of all the picture books in my collection. It’s the story of a boy who won’t go to sleep until one night a ghost flies over to his room and sweeps him away to a spirit world. After I read this book, the night became even more frightening for me, and yet enchanting, so I ended up staying awake even later. In all the photographs taken of me from those days you can see I’m clutching this picture book in my hand, whatever the situation.

What made you want to be an artist?

Since I was very small my parents always gave me books on my birthday. Also I always looked forward to receiving periodical picture books once a month, which were delivered by subscription to the kindergarten I attended. You could say that I grew up with picture books. Gradually over time I began to think, “I wish I could be someone who paints picture books like these.”

What people have inspired you both as an artist and as a person?

I love reading and then illustrating texts written by others, at the same time I often get inspired to be a writer of fairy tales myself. When I read the stories of Japanese children’s book authors such as Naoko Awa, I get an inspiration to create my own stories.
You began as a painter before taking up illustration. What inclined you to begin working on children’s books?

While beginning work as a painter, little by little I began drawing for magazines and doing text illustrations for books as well. Concurrently, soon after graduating from art school my first picture book was accepted for publication. Following that there was a big gap before my next picture book was published. So right until now I’ve always maintained careers both as a painter and an illustrator.

What made you decide to move to Prague?

It’s due to my marriage. My husband is Japanese but works in Prague, so I settled with him here. I was already interested in the Czech Republic, and traveling here became a great turning point for me. I met my husband in Prague.

Could you describe your studio setting?

I work at home, which is on the top floor of a five-floor apartment building. My room faces north, but there are two big windows and the room is very bright. From the windows I can see many kinds of birds gathering on large bodhi (sacred fig) and acacia trees in the courtyard. In the room there are two big desks, a medium-sized press machine for printmaking and an easel. My two desks are placed back to back. I use one desk when I work on picture books and the other for printmaking and other processes that involve more of a mess.

Please explain something of your technique and how long it takes to illustrate a book.

I use a mixed medium of tempera and oil on a plastered panel. For picture book illustrations I usually work with acrylic and gouache on paper. After finishing rough sketches, it takes a minimum of around three months to complete a book, sometimes more than six months.

Has living in the Czech Republic had any effect on your art?

The landscape of the Czech Republic fits my character. I’ve been able to discover many colors and forms I like in this town [Prague]. Life’s interaction with the enormity of nature is the biggest influence on my work.

What are your impressions of children’s book publishing in the Czech Republic?

Since the population of the Czech Republic is much smaller in comparison to Japan, I believe publishing new books is very slow and limited. Compared to the past we’re beginning to see a fresh style in picture books developed with a more fun approach taken by writers.

Do you find working for Japanese publishers from the other side of the world difficult?

I already have established relationships with editors so I don’t have many big obstacles. In this day and age we can communicate easily through the Internet too, so it’s very easy to keep in touch.

Your work achieved the 2003 Grand Prize of the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava. How did this success affect your career?

I owe a lot to this major prize for being able to work here, far away from Japan. Before I received the award I didn’t have a great deal of experience in the picture book field so I mainly drew illustrations for magazines.
The landscape of the Czech Republic fits my character. I’ve been able to discover many colors and forms I like in Prague.

and such. Since I won the Illustration Biennial prize I’ve found myself able to concentrate mainly on picture books, though this is also of course partially due to me moving overseas. My working situation has become much better as I’m able to spend a lot of time on each piece.

Could you tell us about your other interests? What do you think you would be doing if you weren’t an artist?
I’m interested in wildlife, plants, and nature. I’d like to try living in the woods with animals.

Which of your books is your favorite?
My first book, Ofuro (Bath), and my most recent, Marsha to Shiroi Tori (Marsha and the White Bird).

What are you working on at the moment?
Among a variety of projects, I’m thinking of illustrating a Slav folktale.

In your opinion what are the essential ingredients to make a good book?
Devote yourself completely to the project. Keep in mind what is most important for you. Don’t take on more than you can handle.

What would be your dream commission as an illustrator?
I’d love to publish a bound volume of etchings, and also to make a picture book of a story I’ve written myself.

Originally from the UK, John Shelley has been a resident of Japan since 1987. He’s illustrated over 30 children’s books for both western and Japanese publishers, and is the Illustrator Coordinator and Assistant Regional Advisor for SCBWI Tokyo. He currently lives in Yokohama. Visit his website at http://jshelley.com
The protagonist of Allen Say’s latest book, *Kamishibai Man* (Houghton Mifflin Co., 2005), reminisces about the days he worked as a street storyteller in Japan. He was forced to retire when television spirited his audience away, but the former storyteller discovers that the “children” who used to come to see him perform kamishibai—colorfully illustrated storytelling panels—still have powerful memories of his visits. Kamishibai, literally paper theater in Japanese, does have a spellbinding effect on its audience, and of course, Say’s experience of watching kamishibai performances on the street when he was growing up in Japan inspired him to write this moving tale.

I was introduced to kamishibai in the 1970s by a friend from graduate school, Margaret Eisenstadt, who had discovered modern, classroom versions when she was teaching on a U.S. Air Force base in Hokkaido. She and her elementary school students were also captivated by kamishibai, and she asked me to join her in introducing it to American school teachers in 1992. This was the start of Kamishibai for Kids, which still consists of just the two of us but now produces English translations of kamishibai stories originally published in Japan and distributes them in North America.

What happened to kamishibai after it disappeared from the streets of Japan and where is it now? How does kamishibai differ from picture books and what is the secret behind its magic? I hope this article will help to answer these questions and stimulate the readers to find out more about this Japanese treasure.

Those of you who you grew up or have children who grew up in Japan are probably familiar with kamishibai. Although it was originally performed on the street, today kamishibai is a permanent fixture in Japanese nursery schools, kindergartens and libraries. Modern, published versions, called *kyouiku* (educational) kamishibai, consist of sets of twelve to sixteen sturdy, 15” x 11” (38.5 cm x 26.5 cm) cards, with attractive illustra-
tions on one side and the text, usually in dialogue form, on the other. The stories may be modern or traditional or pedagogical in approach and, in Japan, are usually aimed toward a young audience. They are often inserted into a wooden stage when performed but may be used without one.

The 1920s to the early 1950s were the golden years of kamishibai as a street-performance art in Japan. Riding a bicycle equipped with a box of drawers filled with candy and a small stage on top for showing the story cards, the kamishibai man, who was really a candy seller, would enter a neighborhood and signal that he had arrived by loudly striking a pair of *hyoushigi*, or wooden clappers. Children quickly gathered around him to buy sweets but also for the extras (*omake*), the stories!

Then, in the dramatic, stylized manner of a *benshi*—narrator of silent films—the kamishibai man would begin to perform his improvised script, sliding the hand-drawn cards one by one out of the stage and returning them to the back of the pack. He usually told one story for the younger audience. For the older children, there were melodramatic, historical or modern adventure tales that were told in serial fashion and stopped at a “cliff-hanger,” leaving everyone impatient for his next visit.

With the introduction of television to Japan in 1953, the kamishibai man, like the protagonist of Say’s book, disappeared from Japan’s streets. But kamishibai’s potential as a powerful educational tool had already been tapped by groups as diverse as Christian Sunday school teachers and public officials, who created patriotic kamishibai tales for juvenile and adult audiences during the war. Eventually the popular story cards made their way into nursery schools and libraries, in printed editions with more educational subjects.

The greatest difference between kamishibai and picture books is that kamishibai is formatted to be enjoyed by a group, not an individual. While a picture book can be read alone, there must be at least two people to make kamishibai work! Kamishibai is also meant to be performed. The story is written in simple, dialogue form, and the storyteller’s voice, the audience’s imagination and the pictures fill in the details. Stage directions are included, and even novice storytellers are surprised to find how quickly the audience gets involved in the story.

As the cards are changed at a fairly quick tempo, the audience has to digest quickly what it sees. Ideally the drawings are uncluttered and use bold, primary colors and large figures often outlined in black. Because the cards are slid from the audience’s right to their left, the action on the cards always moves in this direction, creating a strong sense of movement and continuity between the pictures. Some kamishibai theorists say that it is the sense of anticipation that keeps the audience so focused on the story. Perhaps it is this and other unique characteristics of kamishibai—the dramatic narration, the bold illustrations—plus the presence of a live storyteller and the audience’s sense of community that make it such a magical storytelling technique.

Kamishibai for Kids has been actively promoting the use of kamishibai in U.S. schools and libraries, and educators at the pre-school, elementary, junior and even senior high school levels have had great success with them, not only to teach multicultural education but also language arts, music, art, drama and so on. The stories invite discussion and motivate the students to read and perform and eventually write and illustrate their own.

Kamishibai is enjoying a renaissance in Japan and in addition to the U.S., has also been introduced by various individuals and organizations to places such as Vietnam, Laos, China and Europe. And now with the popularity of Say’s book Kamishibai Man, kamishibai has become known to a larger segment of the English-speaking population. Kamishibai is Japan’s special gift to the children of the world, and we hope educators, writers, illustrators and publishers can work co-operatively to make kamishibai a universal fixture in the world of children’s literature.

*Donna Tamaki* lived in Kyoto for over 30 years, working as a teacher of English and as a translator. As cofounders of Kamishibai for Kids (www.kamishibai.com), she and Margaret Eisenstadt have been working actively to make English-language kamishibai stories available to U.S. educators. Donna and her husband moved to Maine, in the U.S.A., in 2006.
Children’s Book Translation: An Interview with Cathy Hirano
by Avery Udagawa

Cathy Hirano inspires readers and writers alike with her translations of Japanese YA fiction into English. Her deft translation of Kazumi Yumoto’s Natsu no Niwa as The Friends won the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for fiction in 1997. She has also translated The Spring Tone and The Letters, both by Yumoto, and Dragon Sword and Wind Child by Noriko Ogiwara (all for Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Her essay “Eight Ways to Say You” (www.hbook.com/publications/magazine/articles/jan99_hirano.asp), which discusses The Friends, provides a rare glimpse of the Japanese-to-English translator’s craft.

Hirano works full-time as a freelance translator in several fields, including anthropology, sociology, architecture and medicine. She responded to questions for Carp Tales from her home in Takamatsu, Kagawa Prefecture.

Are you working on any YA translation projects right now?
Right now I am working on Seirei no Moribito (Guardian of the Spirit) by Uehashi Nahoko, a young adult fantasy. It has a great main character—Balsa, a 30-year-old female warrior and bodyguard—and the author, who is an anthropologist, explores such themes as how legends are made and manipulated by those in power. Very interesting.

Where did you grow up, and when did you come to Japan? How did you become interested in Japanese and studying the language?
I grew up in Canada (Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg) and came to Japan in 1978 when I was 20. I was not directly interested in Japan at the time but was invited by a Japanese-Canadian friend. My image of Japan was of a highly populated, highly polluted country that manufactured cars and cameras—not a very attractive picture. I had very little idea of Japan’s history or culture and saw traveling here as a stepping-stone to other countries in Asia, and then to the rest of the world.

My interest in Japan and the Japanese language began as soon as I arrived in Japan. I got lost in Tokyo on my second day here and realized that if I did not acquire reading, writing and speaking skills, I would be lost forever in more ways than one. I studied for a year in Kyoto at a private language school called Nihongo Kenkyu Center. It was very small with creative teachers who were always experimenting with new methods. I fell in love with kanji at that time. The concept that a “letter” could be a picture with meaning was fascinating. To help memorize them, I used to make up my own stories about how each part of a kanji combined to make the meaning of the whole. In 1979, I went on to study anthropology at ICU (International Christian University) in Tokyo, which had a fantastic Japanese language program.

How did you discover and cultivate your skills as a translator?
I think it was my Japanese teachers in Kyoto and at ICU who first pointed out to me that I had some ability in this area. Reading has always been a great source of pleasure, inspiration and comfort, and when we had to do translation exercises in class, I wasn’t content with just a literal translation. I had to play with it until it sounded as natural and literary as the Japanese.

Cultivating my translation skills was very much a hit-and-miss, learning-on-the-job experience. I was hired as a translator by a Japanese engineering consulting company after I graduated. I didn’t know any other translators when I started out, and as far as I know there were no courses in it. This was slightly before SWET [the Tokyo-based Society of Writers, Editors and Translators] and JAT [the Japan Association of Translators] were established. So I read as much as I could in English about whatever subject I was translating to get a feel for the right language, consulted the Japanese engineers I worked with frequently to make sure I understood, used the dictionaries and references in their library and got native speakers (including my father, who is an engineer) to read what I had written and give me feedback. This is still the approach I use today for any type of translation. The only difference is that with the Internet, I no longer need to accumulate reference books and dictionaries. Thanks to email, I also have an extended network.
of friends and relatives, both Japanese- and English-speaking, who I can consult for different subjects. For YA literature, my daughter and my Canadian niece, who is a budding writer herself, are invaluable sources of helpful advice about what sounds natural and what is understandable to people in their age group.

What other interests or practices have enhanced your work as a translator?

For children’s literature, I would have to say that raising two kids [a son and a daughter, both now teenagers] has definitely enhanced my work. For many years, they were my audience and my inspiration. I read to them every night even when they were in senior high school, and they returned the favor, introducing me to new authors and new worlds. They gave me moral support and later constructive criticism, especially my daughter who has inherited my love of reading. Belonging to the Baha’i community has also been a definite asset. Its diversity has forced me to be more flexible and open-minded than I would normally be, and the attitude of service to humanity and striving for intercultural understanding has inspired me to translate children’s literature for love and for the joy of it. There certainly isn’t much money to be made doing it!

You have translated a number of picture books—including A Calf Is Born by Kiyonori Kaizuki (Orchard Books), Holimlim: A Rabbit Tale from Japan by Keizaburo Tejima (Philomel Books) and An Orange for a Bellybutton by Haruo Fukami (Carolrhoda Books)—as well as YA literature. What attracted you to these two categories? Was there a progression from one to the other?

I fell into [children’s and YA literature] entirely by accident. My sempai [fellow student in a higher class] from ICU, Kayoko Yoneda, worked for Fukutake Shoten. She asked me to review English children’s books for possible translation into Japanese, a dream job for someone who loves reading. She would give me a stack of books, and when I had finished reading them I would meet her in a coffee shop and tell her what I thought. She then began asking me to translate Japanese picture books for promotional purposes. She was a passionate and dedicated editor who looked for and supported new Japanese talent in children’s picture books and literature, and it was very inspiring to work for her. When Fukutake Shoten published Noriko Ogiwara’s award-winning Sora Iro Magatama, she asked me to read it and write a summary. This was followed by a request from Farrar, Straus and Giroux for a sample and finally to translation and publication of Dragon Sword and Wind Child. This then led to translating Kazumi Yumoto’s three novels for the same publisher.

The publications [of picture books] were byproducts of the promotional translation. The English publisher liked the translation and asked for permission to use it from the Japanese publisher.

Many of your translations have been published in North America. What do you find most challenging about translating Japanese books for a young North American audience?

Probably one of the hardest things for me is keeping in touch with North American culture, particularly with contemporary lifestyles and with the verbal expressions of children and young people. My language, especially for conversations, is dated, and I need my network of friends and relatives to help keep it current, as well as for access to English books and movies. Keeping my confidence and motivation up is another challenge. Living in a rural area in Japan and translating at home, I sometimes feel so isolated that I begin to doubt my ability. It helps to have a good editor who responds to questions, points out any problems and really likes and takes an interest in the book. One final challenge is the general mentality of North American publishers. Besides the fact that there is a very low interest in publishing translations, there also seems to be a more rigid definition of [target age categories] than I find in Japan. All four novels I have translated have a very broad and enthusiastic fan base.
Are there other Japanese children's writers whose work you would like to translate, or see translated?
My main sources of introductions to [books for YA readers and above] are my daughter, whose favorite authors are Fuyumi Ono, Kaho Nashiki, Shinji Ishii and Natsuhiko Kyogoku, and Japanese publishers and book agents. If I had the chance, I would love to translate the remaining two books in Noriko Ogiwara’s Magatama series. In the picture book category, I’m a fan of Yuichi Kimura. I particularly like the way he collaborates with different illustrators.

Do you have any advice to share with people interested in translating Japanese children’s literature?
The Japan Foreign-Rights Centre [JFC; see the Spring 2005 issue of Carp Tales] and Japanese publishers need people to translate picture books and to write summaries of Japanese children’s and YA literature to use as promotional material at book fairs, etc. The latter involves summarizing a book in enough detail that the publisher can get a good grasp of the contents, while keeping [the piece] short and succinct and adding a short review with comments on why you think it is worth publishing. These summaries are important promotional tools, so you need to have excellent Japanese reading and English writing skills. You also need to be willing to do the work for little or no pay . . . [The JFC and Japanese publishers] have a very limited budget for PR because, unfortunately, there is only a very narrow chance that they will successfully sell the copyright for a children’s or YA book to a foreign publisher and see it published.

If foreign publishers are interested in the book, they or the Japanese publisher may ask you to do a sample translation. This can, if you are lucky, lead to a contract to do the translation of the whole book if the publisher likes it. It is the foreign publisher, of course, who selects the translator. In the U.S., for example, if they become interested in publishing the book from reading the sample, they may ask several other translators to translate the same part in order to select the best one.

In conclusion, if you are good at both English and Japanese and sincerely desire to use those skills to introduce Japanese books overseas, despite the fact that your labors will earn you neither fame nor money, then I would suggest contacting JFC and asking if they can use your services or know of a publisher that does.

If you could recommend some translations of Japanese children’s books to parents overseas, which ones would they be?
Of the ones I have read, I would definitely recommend John Bester’s translation of Once and Forever: The Tales of Kenji Miyazawa, and Dorothy Britton’s translation of Totto-chan: The Little Girl at the Window by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi.

What children’s book translations (from any language) do you admire?
Anthea Bell’s translation [from the German] of Cornelia Funke’s Inkheart, and Thomas Warburton’s translation [from the Finnish] of Tove Jansson’s Tales from Moominvalley.

Many more books are translated from English into Japanese than vice versa. Should publishers and booksellers in English-speaking countries pay more attention to translations of Japanese children’s literature?
I don’t know if they “should,” but I wish they paid more attention to foreign books in general, not just Japanese. They are windows onto other ways of thinking and experiencing the world and, at the same time, a glimpse into our common humanity. Japanese children are very fortunate to get such a wide exposure to different cultures through translations.

Good news! Following this interview, Cathy Hirano learned that Arthur A. Levine Books, an imprint of Scholastic, will buy the rights to her current work-in-progress, Seirei no Moribito (Guardian of the Spirit) by Nahoko Uehashi. Fans will want to stay tuned.

Avery Udagawa translated two short stories for Inside and Other Short Fiction: Japanese Women by Japanese Women (Kodansha International). Currently living near Bangkok, she is researching an article for Kyoto Journal about the market for Japanese children’s literature in English translation. E-mail her at averyudagawa@yahoo.com
Thirty years ago Yoshiaki Masuda gave up a safe existence working for a trading company to explore the world of selling children’s books. At the time, he envisaged himself behind the counter of a tiny little bookshop, quietly selling books to local children. Thirty years down the road, his tiny little bookshop is still there, but the Merry-Go-Round empire has grown to a staff of fourteen people working in the shop and out in the community.

At first glance the Merry-Go-Round building is a humble three-story facility, a gray box in the industrial countryside of Yokkaichi City, Mie Prefecture. The first floor houses the bookshop, a toy boutique and a coffee shop. On the second floor are educational facilities, while the third floor is an event hall and martial arts dojo.

The event hall attracts speakers from far and wide. Masuda is living his dream—once a mere fan from afar of such writers as Shuntaro Tanikawa and Ryoji Arai, now he welcomes them as regular visitors to his picture book haven and considers them his good friends.

Merry-Go-Round is an educational facility in many ways. A regular story reader at local kindergartens, Masuda has also managed to reach out further into the greater community to take children on unique trips to places such as Okinawa and Australia. While in Australia recently the children avoided the usual koalas and kangaroos—instead they spent their time following locals around on harbor boats and creating giant murals for Sydney Harbor. The Okinawa trip had children cooking their own meals on a deserted island. No child attends a Merry-Go-Round trip empty handed—they always have at least one book in their bags, as books are an integral part of their experiential process.

For those inspired to become professional picture book and children’s story writers, Merry-Go-Round has something special to offer. An Ehon Juku (picture book school) and a Dowa Juku (children’s story school) run on weekends has seen several professional writers make their debut, and is now in its eleventh year. Applications are accepted once a year, and then only when space

(above) Owner Yoshiaki Masuda and a fan inside Merry-Go-Round; (bottom) Yoshiaki Masuda (right) with children’s author Shuntaro Tanikawa at a Merry-Go-Round event.

Children’s Bookstore: Merry-Go-Round
by Sue Conolly
becomes available, and then only by audition. For the application fee, each writer receives a critique of their work, even if their application to the school is unsuccessful. Applications for 2006 closed in March (for an April start). Only manuscripts in Japanese are accepted.

A quick glance at the handwritten Merry-Go-Round newspaper gives you an idea of the true nature of this bookshop oasis. Seminars for kindergarten teachers from all over the country, children’s concerts, lectures by authors, illustrators and child psychologists, book readings and kamishibai programs, bug-finding expeditions and camps, a trip to Sweden and London, seaside excursions and a summer festival are all part of the Merry-Go-Round world. For an ex-salaryman who dreamed of a little bookshop, that’s an extraordinary achievement.

As for the books, Merry-Go-Round stocks a range for all ages (mostly Japanese titles, with a limited offering of foreign language texts). There are books you might find hard to track down in other stores, and some more popular titles may be missing. The reason for this is that Masuda only stocks books of which he approves, no matter how high on the best seller list they rise for other bookshops. Each and every title passes by him. If he has doubts about a book that one of his staff want to stock, he expects them to explain the reasons they believe the book deserves a place on his shelves.

Parents who don’t care what their kids read can shop at the station kiosk. Parents who want their children to really love books and live books come to Merry-Go-Round.

To find out more about Merry-Go-Round, visit their website or subscribe to their home-grown newspaper by calling 0593-518156 or writing by e-mail to mgr-nc@cty-net.ne.jp or by snail mail to 3-9-6 Matsumoto, Yokkaichi City, Mie Prefecture, 510-0836. The newsletter and website are only in Japanese.

Take a train to Yokkaichi City to explore Merry-Go-Round and find the little children’s bookshop with big, big dreams.

Sue Conolly is Australian and has been living in Japan for fourteen years. She has written in publications such as Avenues and Eyes, and writes the informational newsletter the X-Pat Files (www.xpat-files.com). Writing in both English and in Japanese, she maintains her professional blog at www.sueconolly.net. New to the field of children’s book writing, she hopes to be published in this area in the near future.
Be Cruel to your Characters: Writing Workshop on Plot with Chris Eboch
July 8, 2006

Author Chris Eboch traveled from New Mexico to visit SCBWI Tokyo and SCBWI Philippines in July. In Tokyo she offered manuscript critiques in the morning followed by a workshop on plot in the afternoon. Manuscript critiques of picture books and novels were available by advance sign-up and included a detailed written critique, as well as a private meeting between Eboch and the writer.

In the afternoon workshop, she began by inviting participants to discuss the elements of a good story. She then delved into the three basic types of plot (person vs. person, person vs. nature and person vs. self) and gave story examples that clearly illustrated each type. Participants were then asked to create an outline for a story that escalates a plot problem and next to share these outlines. After a break, the workshop focused on character, with participants writing brief character sketches.

Eboch urged everyone to examine published stories for plotting and structure. She also advised writers to make sure they clearly understand the goals of the characters they are creating. As for structuring stories, she recommended opening with action and not starting too far back in a story. Participants were given helpful handouts on developing character and conflict and on plot tricks. Eboch teaches writing through the Institute of Children’s Literature. For more information, visit www.chriseboch.com.

The Bologna Illustrators Exhibition: An Information Session with Kiyoko Matsuoka, Curator, Itabashi Art Museum and Ayano Imai, Illustrator
September 10, 2006

Kiyoko Matsuoka, Curator of the Itabashi Art Museum in northern Tokyo, led an information session on the Bologna Illustrators Exhibition about six weeks prior to the deadline for submitting to the Exhibition. In charge of the Bologna Illustrators Exhibition in Japan since 1989, Matsuoka began her talk with background on the Bologna Book Fair, begun in 1964 and unique from the start for its focus on children’s books. The Illustrators Exhibition now held at the book fair each year includes work by illustrators from around the world. Every autumn, illustrators submit original artwork created for a children’s book, published or unpublished, to be considered for the spring Exhibition. According to Matsuoka, more than 2,500 illustrators now submit work each year, and that number is steadily growing. In 2006, works by 92 illustrators were selected for the Exhibition. Of these, 27 were by Japanese illustrators, 17 of whom traveled to Bologna for the book fair to meet publishers, and 12 were subsequently offered book contracts. Selected works are exhibited in Bologna during the book fair, as well as in Japan—at the Itabashi Art Museum and other museums around the country. Matsuoka showed books that have been published by both foreign and Japanese publishers as a result of the Exhibition. Each year exhibited works are published in the Exhibition’s Annual. In 2007 the book fair will be held in Bologna April 24-27.

Illustrator Ayano Imai is one success story from the Bologna Illustrators Exhibition. Her work was selected in 2003, and a publisher subsequently showed interest without realizing that she had only completed the five exhibited illustrations of her story at that point. Ultimately Imai
added ten illustrations and worked out the story, and the resulting book *The 108th Sheep* was published by Bloomsbury in September. Imai shared her dummy for the book and urged illustrators who do travel to Bologna for the fair to be fully prepared with their own promotional material.

The Illustrators Exhibition clearly opens doors for illustrators to connect with publishers, both Japanese and foreign, the speakers agreed. Further, submitting to the Exhibition is free. Both Imai and Matsuoka urged SCBWI Tokyo members to meet the October 31 deadline and submit work for the 2007 Exhibition. See www.bookfair.bolognafiere.it for more information.

**Manuscript and Illustration Exchange**
**October 29, 2006**

The fall Manuscript and Illustration Exchange held at restaurant Sonoma in Shibuya drew a lively international crowd despite being held on a perfectly beautiful October Sunday afternoon. The event started with a thirty minute silent reading period during which participants read and closely examined each other’s picture book dummies and manuscripts. Material brought to this event included a number of kamishibai and picture book dummies by newcomers and veterans alike, and the opening sections of two YA novels, one in verse and one in prose. Participants also set out published works for display. The critique discussions followed the reading period.

Due to the high number of participants, discussions of each particular creative work were necessarily limited, and as with previous exchanges, talk continued long after the scheduled end time and over dinner at Sonoma. Plans are afoot to hold future Manuscript and Illustration Exchanges in meeting rooms that will enable longer small group discussions according to genre and language, as necessary.

**Writers’ Day 2006**
**with Authors Linda Gerber, David Schwartz and Lynne Reid Banks**
**November 11, 2006**

SCBWI Tokyo held its first Writers’ Day in November with two craft-based workshops in the afternoon and an evening talk and Q&A with bestselling author Lynne Reid Banks.

SCBWI Tokyo member Linda Gerber (www.lindagerber.com) started off the afternoon with the workshop *Series Fiction for Children*. She began by asking participants to consider the definitions of a series, a trilogy and a companion novel and gave examples of each. She next zeroed in on series and discussed the differences between packager-driven series, publisher-driven series and author-driven series. She pointed out that series books must have particularly strong characters and that voice is especially important to carry from book to book. Examples were drawn from her own experience of selling her book ideas to the Puffin editor of the S.A.S.S. series through which Gerber’s recently published book *Now and Zen* and the forthcoming *The Finnish Line* have been published, and she went on to discuss her subsequent three-book mystery series deal that derived from a light, fun novel she’d been working on. Gerber gave tips for hooking an agent and advocated trying series writing as a great way to break into the children’s book market. She warned, however, that series writers must be able to meet particularly tough deadlines as series books are often produced under extremely tight schedules.

Writer David Schwartz (www.davidschwartz.com) followed with his presentation *Putting the “Wonder” Back in Wonderful: Making Math and Science Come Alive in Children’s Books*. Schwartz recalled moments from his childhood when he found himself wondering about the universe and explained that the things you wonder about, you can write about. On school visits Schwartz urges chil-
dren to wonder, even to the point of challenging material in his books. He suggested that writers should always wonder and reminded participants that other books can often spark original ideas. Schwartz gave a Power Point presentation that showed the process involved in creating works such as *How Much is a Million*, and other books in the *Million* series, *Q is for Quark* and *G is for Googol* science and math alphabet books, *If you Hopped Like a Frog* and others. He explained that the amount of time spent researching a book often exceeds the amount of time writing his texts. Schwartz also gave various tips to the group for making author school visits successful.

The evening event featured Lynne Reid Banks (www.lynnereidbanks.com) speaking on *The Stories Behind the Stories*. A former actress, Banks’ presentation was especially lively, with the characters she was portraying presented in voice as she spoke about the inspiration and process behind her well-known works. She described an episode of teaching reading as her early beginnings in storytelling. She also recounted seeds for novels sown from stories told years before by her parents, as well as stories she told her own children that she later turned into books. She shared the origins of *The Indian in the Cupboard* and other *Indian* books, her fantasy books *The Farthest Away Mountain* and *The Fairy Rebel*, the hamster tale *I, Houdini*, the companion YA novels *One More River* and *Broken Bridge* set in Israel, and her personal favorite middle grade book *Angela and Diabola*. Banks thoroughly entertained the audience with humorous background tales, interspersed with two readings. A brief question and answer period followed the full presentation.

**Meet the Author Dinner with Esmé Raji Codell**
November 15, 2006

Author and literacy advocate Esmé Raji Codell came to Japan in November for visits to international schools. SCBWI Tokyo held a Meet the Author dinner open to SCBWI members at Orto restaurant in the President Hotel in Aoyama, Tokyo, to welcome Codell, her husband and son to Japan. Codell is the award-winning author of the middle-grade novels *Sahara Special, Vive La Paris* and *Diary of a Fairy Godmother*, picture book *Hanukkah Shmanukkah*, memoir *Sing a Song of Tuna Fish*, the parents’ guide *How to Get Your Children to Love Reading*, and *Educating Esme: Diary of a Teacher’s First Year*. She maintains the Chicago Bookroom and the website www.planetesme.com which is full of reading recommendations, the Book-A-Day Blog, the excellent teacher resource Storytime Central, links and more. SCBWI Tokyo felt especially fortunate to meet with Codell as she has recently returned to a full-time librarian position and now has even less time for public appearances, school visits and of course writing. Codell explained the change by saying that she felt she needed to return to the source of her stories once again. Over Orto’s organic fare, we talked about writing, reading, books, school visits and more.

**Meet the Illustrator Breakfast with Robert Sabuda**
December 14, 2006

At the time of publishing, pop-up book designer Robert Sabuda was in Japan for an exhibit at Seibu Department Store in Ikebukuro, as well as workshops, talks and book signings throughout Tokyo (see Bulletin Board). SCBWI Tokyo organizers and members enjoyed an early morning breakfast with Sabuda at restaurant Brise Verte on the top floor of the Tokyo Prince Hotel Park Tower overlooking Shiba Park’s foliage, Tokyo Tower and the skyscrapers and rooftops of the metropolis. We were joined by several other members of Sabuda’s New York studio including Matthew
Reinhart and Teen Liu. Sabuda, a member of the SCBWI board, offered hearty encouragement to SCBWI Tokyo. In addition to talk about his whirlwind visit to Japan, Sabuda shared stories of his first illustration opportunities and some of the less glamorous jobs he undertook early on that gave him valuable experience in design, color, folding techniques and publishing. He told of predictions that his first pop-up book would most definitely fail given the relatively high retail price and the fact that the pop-ups were all white. Many books later, with first printings that now reach a half million, we can smile in amazement. Visit www.robertsabuda.com for a peek at Sabuda’s work, information about the pop-up production process, pop-up instructions and more.

Holly Thompson is the author of the novel Ash (Stone Bridge Press; www.stonebridge.com/ash/WorldOfAsh) set in Kyoto and Kagoshima and is Regional Advisor of SCBWI Tokyo. She teaches creative writing and EFL at Yokohama City University.
**Chiisana Ehon Bijutsukan**, Okaya City, Nagano prefecture features an exhibition of SCBWI member Naomi Kojima’s artwork, *Illustrations from The Christmas Song Book* November 3 to December 10. For details see http://ba-ba.net/cms/ or call the gallery (tel. 0266-28-9877).

**The International Library of Children’s Literature** at 12-49 Ueno Park, Taito-ku, Tokyo, is currently showing an exhibition of children’s books from Scandinavia, *Hokuou kara no Okurimono* including such classics as Astrid Lindgren’s *Pippi Langstrump* (Pippi Longstocking) and Tove Jansson’s Moomin. Some public lectures (in Japanese) accompany this exhibition (December 16: 13:00 Sweden with translator Akirako Hishiki, 14:00 Finland with translator Miharu Inagaki; January 20: 13:00 Denmark/Norway with Tokai University Assistant Professor Nobuko Fukui, 14:00 Sweden with translator Akirako Hishiki). The exhibition runs through January 28. Visit www.kodomo.go.jp/english/index.html for more information.

**Seibu Gallery**, Seibu Department Store, Ikebukuro, Tokyo is hosting the exhibition *Pop-up Celebration* by Robert Sabuda December 13 through December 25. There will be book signings by pop-up artist Sabuda December 13 at 11:00 and 14:00. Books must be purchased at the gallery, and signings will be limited to 50 books per session. The gallery is open from 10:00 to 21:00 (20:00 on weekends). Admission is ¥800 adults, and ¥600 students, with junior high school aged children and under free. See https://www2.seibu.co.jp/wsc/010/N000014949/0/info_d for more information.


**The Society of Writers, Editors and Translators (SWET)** features monthly guest speaker events in Tokyo; there is also a Kansai branch. Visit www.swet.jp for details. Also, SWET is offering *Japan Style Sheet* (Stone Bridge Press), a slim “Japanese Chicago Manual” packed with advice for handling romanized Japanese in English text, for ¥1,700 (postage included). To order, write to SWET at info@swet.jp and mention this notice in Carp Tales.

**SCBWI Tokyo Member News**

Tammy Boulerice’s co-edited book *Stories of Teenagers from Around the World* was published in Beijing by Commercial Press. The book was co-edited with Jayapriva Vasudevan and includes stories written by and illustrated by teenagers for teenagers.


Debbi Michiko Florence has secured a book contract with Ideals Publications for an activity book on China for the Kaleidoscope Kids series. The tentative publication date is late 2007.

Suzanne Kamata’s story *Feeding Time* appeared in the September issue of *Ladybug*. Her story *The Diver* was recently published in the anthology *Summer Shorts*. Kamata also gave a reading from her young adult story, *Pilgrimage* at the Four Stories event in Osaka in July.

Keiko Okamoto joined the illustrator’s show *Touching the Heart* at the High Road Gallery in Columbus, Ohio, along with illustrators such as Jan Ellis and Steve Harpster. Okamoto was chosen as runner-up for the People’s Choice Award.

John Shelley held an exhibition in May at Space Yui in Aoyama featuring his artwork in a series of stories by Hans Christian Andersen, translated directly into Japanese and published by Hyoronsha. Shelley completed artwork

Shelley is currently working on illustrations for the Grimm story The Cobbler and the Elves for Oki na Pocket magazine (Fukuinkan Shoten).

Naomi Kojima has just celebrated the English-language release of Singing Shijimi Clams (Utai Shijimi) translated from Japanese and published by Kane/Miller in September 2006. For details on a current exhibition of Kojima’s work, please see this issue’s Bulletin Board.

Holly Thompson won Honorable Mention in the 2006 “Smart Writers Write It Now!” picture book category for her story The Three Sunlights.

**SCBWI Tokyo Upcoming Events**

**January**
Friday, January 12, 2007
An Evening with Illustrator Satoshi Kitamura

**March**
Saturday March 3, 2007
Illustration Workshop with Yangsook Choi

Saturday March 10, 2007
Writing Workshop with Donna Jo Napoli

Visit www.scbwi.jp for details on these and other SCBWI Tokyo events.

**ABOUT SCBWI TOKYO**
SCBWI Tokyo, the Tokyo regional chapter of The Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, offers support, information and community to illustrators and writers of children’s and young adult literature in Japan. Holly Thompson is Regional Advisor and John Shelley is Assistant Regional Advisor and Illustrator Coordinator. The SCBWI Tokyo Advisory Committee includes Naomi Kojima, Joanna Meck, Mariko Nagai, Keiko Okamoto, Annie Chikamatsu, Sue Conolly and Rose Hoger.

**WEBSITE**
The SCBWI website www.scbwi.jp features information about SCBWI Tokyo, an online gallery, a speaker directory, a member books section, FAQs, a volunteer page, listserv information, useful links for writers and illustrators, announcements of upcoming SCBWI Tokyo events, and this newsletter. Bookmark the site and come back again and again!