

Call for Papers: Diversity Committee

Looking Back at 50 Years of ChLA, and Charting the Path Forward for Diversity Studies

For the 50th ChLA conference, the Diversity Committee calls for papers focusing on topics of looking forward/looking back in children's literature that focus on communities and stakeholders located in the peripheries of children's literature studies. For half a century, ChLA has established itself as an organization that values the place of children's literature studies in academic institutions and research centers. However, there is still the question of which children's literary traditions were and continue to be highlighted and which ones were and continue to be marginalized or made invisible, whether by the currents of colonial legacies and contemporary global circulations, or by pervasive racism, sexism, antisemitism, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism, and other violences. This panel aims to serve as a state of the field, offering reflections on the limitations, accomplishments, and possibilities of diversity studies in children's literature.

Sarah Park Dahlen writes that “[a]ll readers should be able to see mirrors of themselves in books, but historically this has not been true, and contemporarily, has yet to be realized.” At this critical juncture, it is valuable to consider the position of children's literature institutions, organizations, and other gatekeepers that provide or limit spaces in which diverse and multifaceted texts for young readers can be examined, highlighted, or reassessed, especially in contemporary contexts of globalization. Questions of representation, authenticity, languages and translations, and access to materials are all vital in showcasing where the organization has come from, and how to move forward with a renewed sense of action towards creating a more just and accessible world for all children.

We seek insights and perspectives on a range of subjects, including the roles of insiders and outsiders to the creation and study of diverse children's books, in order to amplify voices from across the country and around the world in the hopes that everyone's stories and experiences will become part of the greater discussion surrounding the future of diverse children's literature. We invite perspectives that consider the roles of scholars, authors, and sensitivity readers to the children's book industry and the academic field of children's literary studies. This session will serve as a call to action to encourage everyone to renew and recommit professional practices and individual efforts in order to advance principles of diversity.

We invite papers related to the state of the field, but not restricted to the following topics:

- Insiders, outsiders, and the politics of publication
- The history and impact of ChLA, and the future of ChLA's efforts
- Discussions of cultural authenticity and accuracy, and “Own Voices”
- Disrupting heteronormative mindsets, theories, methodologies, and practices

- The position of disability studies to the field, and the representation of disabled characters in children's literature
- Censorship and book bans, and the relationship of the scholarly field to K-12 education
- Producing/publishing children's texts in the Global South
- Transnational networks of resistance and movements that advance global solidarity
- Anti-colonial, decolonial, and postcolonial practices in children's literature
- Historicity and historiography of children's literature studies outside of the Global North
- Intersectionality and its relationship to insider/outsider questions
- Monocultural and/or monolingual children's literature and invisibilizing children from minority backgrounds
- Reflecting on representation of diverse identities in books published in the past fifty years
- Multilingualism in children's literature
- Reconceptualizing DEI in an anti-Critical Race Theory culture, emphasizing the role of children's books
- Pedagogy and praxis in using children's literature to discuss DEI: where we are now
- Justice, change, and the politics of profit in the children's publishing industry

Deadline: October 1, 2023

Send 250-500 word abstracts no later than October 1, 2023 to the committee chair at capshaw@uconn.edu. Proposals for complete panels of 3-4 papers will also be considered. Black, Indigenous, scholars of color, and LGBTQ+ identities are especially encouraged to apply.

Please note that our deadline precedes the general CFP for the conference so that scholars whose papers are not selected can be notified in time to submit to the general ChLA CFP.