

Media Release

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### **New site celebrates Canadian picturebooks**

A new web site celebrating the diversity and success of Canadian illustrated children's literature has been launched.

The Canadian Children's Illustrated Books Project web site is now accessible to the public via the World Wide Web at <http://www.slais.ubc.ca/saltman/ccib/home.html>. Visitors to the site are treated to a sampling of the literary and visual contributions of Canadian authors and illustrators to children's literature. The site features an extensive list of multi-media resources, including an annotated list of picturebooks that won national awards between 1970 and 2001 in Canada, Australia, Great Britain, and the United States. These awards consist of the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrator's Award in Canada, the Australian Book of the Year Award for picturebooks, the Kate Greenaway Medal in Great Britain, and the Caldecott Medal in the United States.

The web site is just one part of a three-year project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and spearheaded by Canadian children's literature authority, Judith Saltman, a professor in the University of British Columbia's School of Library, Archival & Information Studies.

She chose the picturebook as a focus for her research because "the children's literature of a nation is a microcosm of that country's literary and socio-cultural values, beliefs, themes, and images, including those of geography, history, and identity." She says as a condensed literary and artistic genre, form and content are more concentrated and immediate in picturebooks than in the broader genres of fiction and nonfiction. "The perceptions of individual authors and illustrators are naturally distilled to a personal or cultural essence. The picturebook portrays in bold relief the themes of a specific Canadian literature for children."

In addition to the web site, Saltman, with co-author Gail Edwards, sessional lecturer in the Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, is compiling the research into a book on Canadian children's illustrated books, featuring interviews with selected award-winning Canadian picturebook authors and illustrators, as well as editors, book designers, booksellers, and academics. Saltman and Edwards hope to raise Canadians' awareness of the rich tapestry of culture, history and character that exists in Canadian picturebooks for children. This project will provide Canadians with a comprehensive examination of the historical context and current state of Canadian children's illustrated books in English from an interdisciplinary perspective. Together, the site and the book explore the historical development of illustrated books for children in Canada, and provide a critical understanding of Canadian identity as presented in picturebooks. The book has been accepted by the University of Toronto Press.