



Giving school library staff the recognition they deserve

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11am 10th July 2020

The SLA School Librarian of the Year Award is the School Library Association's prestigious honour to recognize the excellent work that is carried out in school libraries every day and highlight the best practice of those whose work is outstanding.

2020 has been a challenging year for the Award due to the restrictions and pressure on schools, however, we are proud to announce our Honour List for School Librarian of the Year 2020. Due to the ongoing pandemic, and the uncertain situation in schools, as well as the increased pressure many of them will face in September it was felt we could not, in all fairness, carry out the final stage of judging to decide a winner. Therefore these excellent candidates will remain as our Honour List until we carry out the judging in a fair and consistent way; we hope to carry out visits in Spring 2021, and announce the School Librarian of the Year 2020/21 in June 2021.

SLA CEO, Alison Tarrant said: "Currently, the role that school and school staff have on the lives of children has never been clearer, but not being at school hasn't stopped many school libraries from reacting, adjusting and operating during this time. However, there has also been a renewed focus on the importance and power of reading (for pleasure, learning and wellbeing) and information literacy skills, as this generation is having to rely on these to determine the truth from scare mongering, and educational information from fake news. The Honour List of 2020/21 have all been playing a central role in ensuring this generation have these skills, and they thoroughly deserve this honour."

Our 2020/21 Honour List (in alphabetical order) are:

Claire Marris - Toot Hill School, Bingham (Nottinghamshire)



Claire works at a state secondary school. The school's library is named the Learning Lounge, and Claire is fun and energetic. If a student declares they hate reading they don't hold that view for long as Claire gets to know them and finds the book that is right for them. During break and lunch they are eager to tell her about their achievements, what they've been reading and invite her to play cards or board games. Claire runs both Reading Classics and Research Skills clubs. During these she teaches students how to understand and enjoy classics and how to find information in books – both are useful for students interested in pursuing further education.

Claire is most proud of her reading initiatives which include book gifting to all year 7s and developing a Reading Week; as well as a BookTrust Challenge utilising the school library packs.

Terri McCargar - Latymer Upper School, London



Terri works at an independent secondary school, and she embodies all the qualities of an outstanding librarian and provides an excellent service to the students. She constantly fights the corner of the library as a place for reading, study and learning, even when this means challenging systems or colleagues. On a training day she hosted all staff (including non-teaching staff) to broaden awareness of the resources in the library, with her team wrapping 140 individually chosen books as a 'Blind Date with a Book' activity. Terri has overseen a book award

grow from 6 schools to 30. One of her proudest moments was when the School Captain said during her Extended Project presentation: asked by a student what advice she would give to someone just starting their research, she replied, “Make Ms McCargar your best friend – she knows everything and wants to help!”

Éadaoin Quinn - Enniscorthy Vocational College, Co. Wexford (Ireland)



Éadaoin works in a post primary school in Ireland, and she makes sure the physical environment welcomes all students through the books and resources on display; while her professionalism has won the trust and respect of her colleagues. She says 99% of the work she does is done in partnership. Teachers remark that students regularly pull novels out of their bags unprompted when they have a chance to read, whether in a supervised class or even detention! There is a strong focus on feedback and impact, with twice yearly surveys, and tracking the level of library use. There’s a range of activities supported, which include chess and newspaper clubs, which gives space for students to be together with other students from across different year groups and friendship groups to share interests and make friends.

Rose Palmer - The Oaks Primary School, Ipswich (Suffolk)



Rose works at a state primary school, and works tirelessly and enthusiastically and has had an enormous impact on the reading culture in the school. Being well read and keeping up to date with publications is certainly one of the keys to her success. She has an unfailing ability to know just what her students will like and always encourages them to try new genres, authors and styles of text. Rose has started a week long book festival called Chantry Book Jam alongside author James Campbell, and runs ‘Adopt an Author’ for each class as well as a Patron of Reading for the school. When the library was being extended and remodelled, Rose was instrumental in the design, knowing she was creating a magical reading space in the school.

Kristabelle Williams - Addey and Stanhope School, London



Kristabelle works in a state secondary school, and has an unremitting and consistent focus on ensuring the best futures for her students, making reading, researching and library use the norm. There are weekly KS3 library classes and book clubs - focusing on RfP, book talks and information skills, activities including discussions, debates, Book Pen Pals, Kahoot quizzes, Padlet activities and Ms Williams’ popular mash up of Taboo and Heads Up called “Books Up”. By working with teaching departments and with student groups, booklists related to the curriculum, and empathy, inclusion and social justice are promoted across the school. Kristabelle has been instrumental in celebrating how reading for pleasure and mental health/well-being are intertwined, never stopping adapting and innovating to engage and encourage students.

Judge Stephen King said: “I’m excited and proud that we are able to announce our 2020 Honours List for the School Librarian of the Year. All five of the nominees have demonstrated commitment and dedication to their schools and their students by consistently going over and above their remits and requirements. In these difficult times, they should all, in their own ways, be seen as beacons of what staff in school libraries can achieve with hard work, passion, and support from their line managers. I congratulate them all in achieving this important distinction.”

While co-judge Margaret Pemberton said: “Once again in 2020 we have been presented with a large number of high quality nominations for this award. The candidates come from a cross section of schools and have a wide range of

experience. However they have all shared in their common purpose of providing the best library service they can and in enthusing their pupils and staff about reading and information skills. Congratulations to all.”

Our thanks go to Amy McKay and Ellen Krajewski, who in addition to Stephen and Margaret were a brilliant judging panel and have been working since nominations opened in September. Our thanks also go to the schools, their library staff and leaders for enabling us to have an Honour List for 2020/21.

Belinda Ioni Rasmussen, Publisher at Macmillan Children's Books, says: "Macmillan Children's Books is pleased and proud to be long term sponsors of the School Librarian of the Year Award. A school library that is run by a good librarian is something to be both celebrated and treasured. The role of a librarian, along with the physical space itself, is wide ranging from educational to pastoral and this award goes a long way to recognising this. We hope it also reminds everyone of what a valued part of school life a library can and should be."

Notes for editors

The School Library Association is committed to supporting everyone involved with school libraries, promoting high quality reading and learning opportunities for all. For information please visit www.sla.org.uk

The School Library Association created the School Librarian of the Year Award in 2004 in response to the need for recognition of the excellent work that is carried out in school libraries every day, and to highlight best practice through celebrating those whose work is outstanding. Nominees do not need to be members of the SLA, and may be from any phase of education.

The selection process

When the nomination forms reach the SLA office they are opened by the office staff and anonymised so that each nomination is unidentifiable when seen by the SLYA panel at the first selection meeting. At the first selection meeting the forms are discussed and a long list is compiled. Those on the list are asked to provide a range of paperwork to support their nomination. The judging panel looks at the documents and finally selects a long list of between 7 and 10 candidates. These longlisted candidates are sent a detailed questionnaire to complete and asked for further evidence to help the judges select those whom they will visit, normally 4-6 candidates. Over the next few months at least two panel members visit each school. One member of the panel goes on every visit to provide continuity. After the round of visits, reports are prepared for each nominee and shared with the other members of the panel prior to a final selection meeting where all the candidates are discussed at length and there is an opportunity to add personal comments to the reports. An Honour List of 4 or 5 is selected. Due to COVID-19 the visits weren't able to take place this year, and the remainder of the process will resume in 2021.

The selection panel, all of whom have donated their time to enable the awarding of the School Librarian of the Year 2020 comprises:

- Amy McKay Librarian at Corby Business Academy, SLA Board Member and past winner of SLA School Librarian of the Year Award (2016)
- Stephen King School Librarian at The Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover, and SLA Board Member
- Margaret Pemberton SLA Board Member and freelance School Library and Book Consultant
- Ellen Krajewski SLA Board Member

Previous Winners of the SLA School Librarian of the Year Award

2019: Ros Harding - The King's School Chester

2018: Emma Suffield – Saint Wilfrid's C of E Academy, Blackburn

2017: Lucas Maxwell – Glenthorne High School, London Borough of Sutton

2016: Amy McKay – Corby Business Academy

2015: Annie Brady – St Paul's CBS Secondary School, Dublin, Republic of Ireland
2014: Liz Millett – Weatherfield Academy, Dunstable
2013: Hilary Cantwell – St Paul's Community College, Waterford, Republic of Ireland
2013: John Iona – Oasis Academy, Enfield, Middlesex
2012: Adam Lancaster – Monk's Walk School, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire
2011: Carol Webb – Forest Hill School, London
2010: Duncan Wright – Stewart's Melville College, Edinburgh
2010: Kevin Sheehan – Offerton School, Stockport
2009: Lucy Bakewell – Hill West Primary School, Sutton Coldfield
2008: Nikki Heath – Werneth School, Stockport
2007: Ingrid Hopson – George Abbot School, Guildford
2006: Anne-Marie Tarter – Ripon Grammar School, North Yorkshire
2005: Anne Robinson – Nicholas Chamberlaine Technology College, Bedworth

Sponsors

The 2020 School Librarian of the Year Award is supported by the Foyle Foundation (www.foylefoundation.org.uk), and is sponsored by Macmillan Children's Books. The Foyle Foundation have supported the award since 2018. The Foyle Foundation is an independent grant making Trust supporting UK charities which, since its formation in 2001, has become a major funder of the Arts and Learning. The Foundation also operates a community small grants programme and a national school library improvement scheme.

For more information about the SLA School Librarian of the Year please contact: info@sla.org.uk.