

Looking for Jewish Content in Award-Winning Translated Children's Books

Association of Jewish Libraries Annual Convention,
Pasadena, June 18, 2012

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This talk will...

- Summarize presenter's research findings about how editors approach identifying and selecting children's books to publish in translation
- Apply findings to translated Jewish books for children by using the Batchelder Award and Outstanding International Books list as sources
- Provide annotated booklist (see handout) of award-winning translations with Jewish content
- Onus is on “looking” more than “finding”

Defining International Books

- Location, location, location!
- First published outside of one's country
- In the US: includes English-language imports and books translated from other languages into English
- Though international is not the same as multicultural (books about other cultures/countries, published in the US), both can focus on authentic cultural experience
- Other terms: global/world/transcultural literature

Why Read International Books?

- Bridges of tolerance (Lepman, *A Bridge of Children's Books*, ALA/O'Brien Press, 1969/2002)
- Fresh literary experiences with universal themes
- Can become part of every child's cultural heritage
- Deeper insight into others' lives
- Complements Social Studies curriculum...and more!
- Fight ethnocentrism
- 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% of U.S. children's books are translations
- Expensive to translate
- Perceived lack of interest from buyers and readers
— enough books here without needing them from abroad
- Possible reader discomfort

“Found in Translation”

Overarching Research Question

What is the decision-making process by which current U.S. children’s trade acquisitions editors select culturally conscious children’s books first written in a foreign language in a foreign country to be translated into English for the U.S. market?

Research Sub-Questions

1. What are the barriers editors encounter in making a decision?
2. What are the resources editors have at their disposal?
3. How do editors perceive the value of publishing translations?

Theory & Method

- Sense-making – Dervin and Weick
- Web-based survey of 93 editors
(includes those who have and have not published translations)
- Follow-up phone interview with ten editors, five who were more and five who were less positive about publishing translations; goal was to interview extreme cases

Survey Sample Description

- 93 editors: 85% female and 15% male
- 1-40 years' experience (mean – 12 years)
- 36.6% read in another language
- Sampling frame: Children's Book Council member publishers
- Editors work for a range of very small to very large publishing houses, half of them multinationals

Key Findings – Barriers

What are the barriers editors encounter in making a decision?

Rankings (in order of importance)

- Relying on others to read a book in another language
- Unfavorable exchange rate

Other Observations

- Editors do not worry much about controversy due to different cultural norms
- Sales and marketing issues present barriers

Key Findings – Resources

What are the resources editors have at their disposal?

Rankings (in order of importance)

- Attendance at Bologna Book Fair
- Connection with agents
- Award winners in other countries

Other Observations

- Dearth of training opportunities
- Importance of serendipity

Key Findings – Motivations

How do editors perceive the value of publishing translations?

Rankings (in order of importance)

- A positive personal response to the book
- Desire to broaden the perspectives of young readers in the U.S.

Other Observations

- A “books as bridges” (Lepman, 2002 / 1969) approach was common among editors

Key Findings – Propensity to Publish

Editors were more open personally to publishing translations if they:

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

No correlation between propensity to publish and:

- Years of experience
- Size of firm.

Limitations

- Sample is substantial but incomplete
- Excludes non-Children's Book Council member editors like VIZ Media, winner of 2008 Batchelder Award
- Study provides picture at a moment in time under specific political and economic conditions

The Mildred L. Batchelder Award

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/batchelderaward/index.cfm>

“Awarded to an American publisher for a children's book considered to be the most outstanding of those books originally published in a foreign language in a foreign country, and subsequently translated into English and published in the United States”

History and Importance of Award

- Mildred Batchelder, librarian who promoted cultural interchange through children's books
- Award encourages publishers to take on the risk of publishing translations for children
- Award goes to publisher
- Administered by ALSC, children's division of ALA
- Established in 1966; first given in 1968; honor books since 1994
- Children in the U.S. can have access to books that are popular in their home countries; nurtures international understanding

Eligibility – for children 0-14 years

- Picture books: “Primary attention must be directed to the text. Picture books should be considered only if the text is substantial and at least as important as the pictures.”
- Children’s/YA crossover titles: What is the cutoff for a YA book? There is no corresponding YA award.

Languages of Origin

- Translated most often from German and French
- Also Danish, Swedish, Dutch, Japanese, Italian, Hebrew, Spanish, Russian, Greek, Norwegian
- One title from the Turkish

Translators and Translating

- Continuum from “adequacy” (fidelity to the original) and “acceptability” (accessibility for the target reader)
- Reputation of the translator (e.g. Anthea Bell, Hillel Halkin, etc.) and publisher...

Selected Publishers of Translations

- Bloomsbury, London
- Henry Holt, New York
- Houghton Mifflin, New York
- Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, New York
- Front Street, Asheville, NC
- Random House, New York
- Roaring Brook, New York
- Scholastic, New York
- Simon & Schuster, New York

Identifying Judaic Translations

Omitted:

- Picture books with minimal text
- Retellings rather than translations
- Allegorical stories about war
- WWII stories with no clear Jewish content
- English-language imports

Batchelder Judaic Titles

Year	No. of Books
1972	1
1985	1
1986	1
1992	1
1994	1
1996	2
1999	1
2001	1
2004	1
2005	1
2006	1
2010	1
2012	1
Total	14

USBY Outstanding International Books Committee

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

“The Outstanding International Books (OIB) 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.”

OIB Criteria

NB: Not every book will meet every criterion.

- Represent the best of children's literature from other countries
- Introduce U.S. readers to outstanding artists and writers from abroad
- Help U.S. children see the world from other points of view
- Provide a perspective or address a topic otherwise missing from children's literature in the U.S.
- Exhibit a distinct cultural flavor
- Are accessible to U.S. readers
- Consider content and presentation: artistic and literary merit; originality or creativity of approach; distinctiveness of topic; uniqueness of origin; qualities that engage and appeal to children

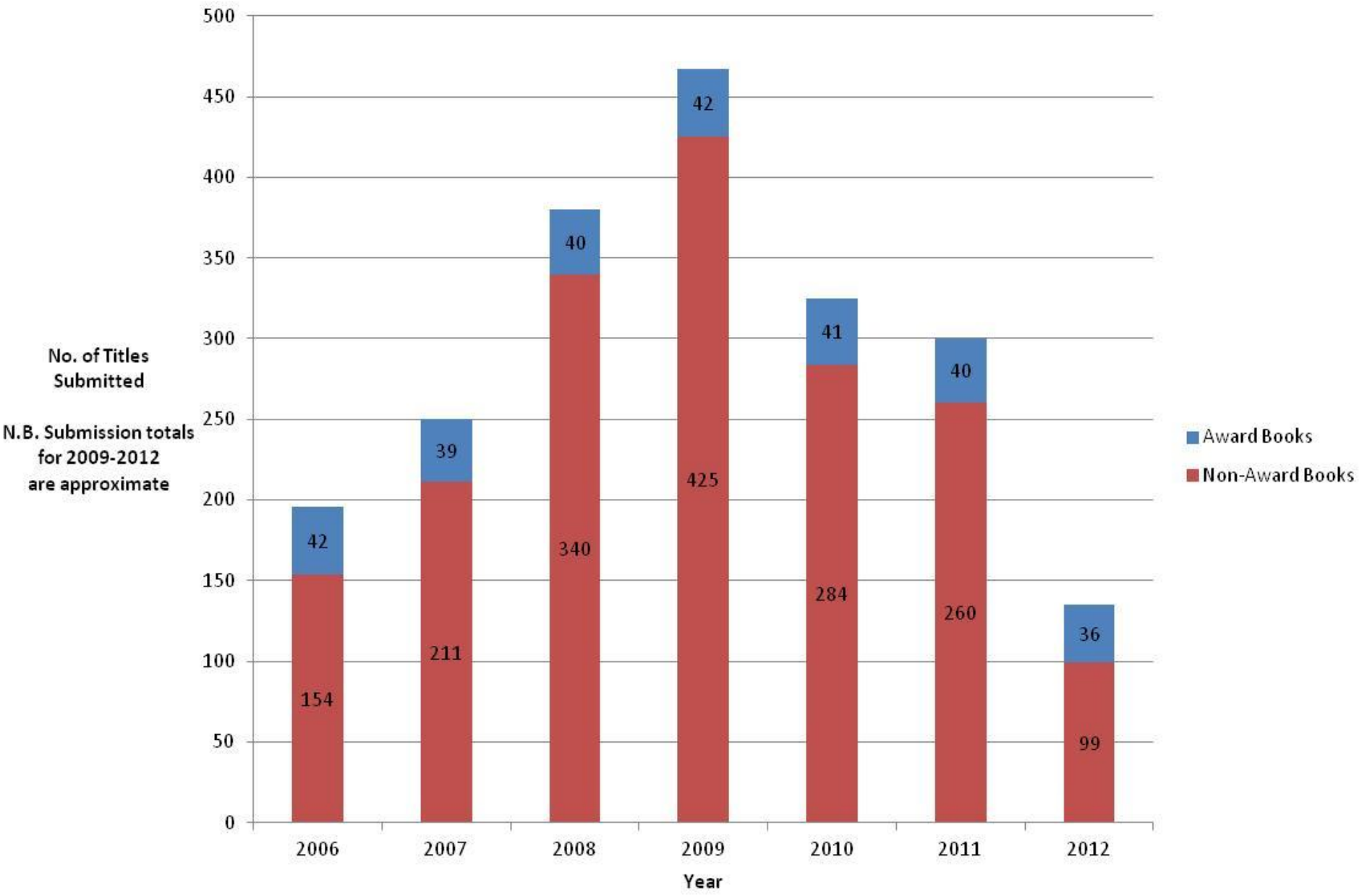
How the OIB Committee Works

- Nine members, two-year term
- Every year half of the members are replaced
- Reading pairs read everything in designated section of the alphabet (e.g., authors G-L)
- Members suggest titles for inclusion in the list; everyone reads those books
- Straw poll produces 100-title shortlist
- Selection meeting in December

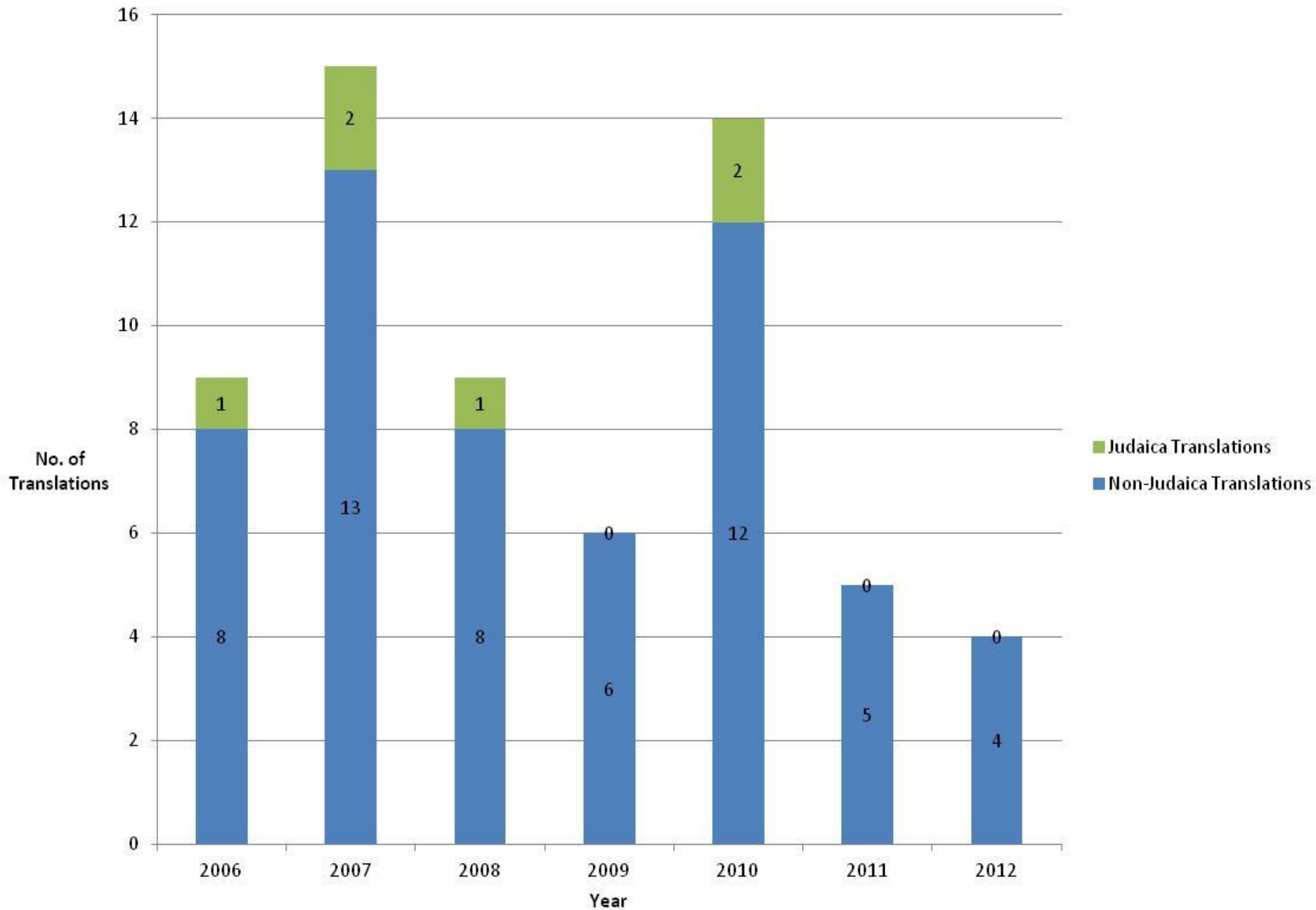
The Final List

- about 40 books chosen from approximately 300+
- English-language imports and translations
- organized by grade level K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12
 - usually a USBBY session at ALA Midwinter to unveil the list; also often sessions at ALA Annual, IRA, NCTE
- web site links to February *School Library Journal* annotated booklists and bookmarks

Outstanding International Books -- Award Books vs. Submissions



Outstanding International Books -- Judaica Translations



About the Bibliography

Subject matter:

- Holocaust-inspired; wide-ranging geographically
- Contemporary life in Israel

Sequels:

- Annika Thor: *A Faraway Island* (#19), *The Lily Pond* (#20), two more to come

Authors:

- Valérie Zenatti: *When I Was a Soldier* (#26); *Bottle in the Gaza Sea* (#25)
- Uri Orlev (#10-13): many untranslated titles too!

Print Resources

- “Bridges to Understanding” series of annotated bibliographies sponsored by USBBY and published by Scarecrow Press:
 - Tomlinson, Carl. *Children's Books from Other Countries*. (1998)
 - Stan, Susan. *The World Through Children's Books*. (2002)
 - Gebel, Doris. *Crossing Boundaries with Children's Books*. (2006)
 - Pavonetti, Linda. *Bridges to Understanding: Envisioning the World Through Children's Books*. (2011)
- Freeman, Evelyn and Barbara Lehman. *Global Perspectives in Children's Literature*. Allyn & Bacon, 2001.
- Lehman, Barbara, Freeman, Evelyn, and Patricia L. Scharer. *Reading Globally, K-8*. Corwin, 2010.

Organizations & Web Sites

Int'l Board on Books for Young People (IBBY)

<http://www.ibby.org/> 70 national sections including USBBY
www.usbby.org/ -- journal is *Bookbird*

Next international IBBY congress: London, Aug. 23-26, 2012

Next USBBY regional conference: St. Louis, Oct. 18-20, 2013

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:

<http://www.ijb.de/files/whiteravens/wr12/Einleitung12.htm>

The Looking Glass (int'l youth literature e-journal)

<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/ojs/index.php/tlg>

World of Words (WOW)

<http://wowlit.org/> hosted by University of Arizona – includes review journal, *WOW Review*

Activities with Translated Books

- pair with U.S. book on a similar theme/topic
- author study
- compare covers of original and U.S. editions (for example, *A Faraway Island*)
- hold a mock Batchelder using older titles (i.e. titles from last 10 years – “Best of the Decade”)
- in a language class compare excerpt from the original with the English translation
- your ideas!

Thanks for listening!