

Children's Writer-in-Residence



Holly Storck-Post

Associate Editor

Library as Incubator Project



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/uk/)

Published 2013 on [CultureHive](https://culturehive.org/), a place to discover and share best practice in cultural marketing

Supported by



Created and managed by



In partnership with



Background

The Children's Writer-in-Residence program started in 2004 to provide an emerging children's writer with the financial support and quiet space needed to complete one literary work within a nine-month period (October – June). The programme is funded by the Associates of the Boston Public Library (BPL), an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to conserving the Boston Public Library's special collections and promoting the importance of books, reading, and writers. The Associates host a variety of programs to heighten public awareness of the BPL collections and services, and enrich the role of the library in Boston.

The Children's Writer-in-Residence programme is a wonderful example of a library serving as an arts incubator. By providing an office – and a stipend – the scene is set for the writer; in many cases, time to dedicate to their art is one of the hardest things to come by. In addition, many writers are inspired by the library's collections, or even by the very fact that they are in a library.

Objectives

- Provide an emerging children's writer with the financial support and office space needed to complete one literary work for children or young adults.
- Encourage the imagination of young readers, and in so doing draw attention to the importance of authors and the essential role they perform in nurturing developing minds and furthering our culture.
- Promote the awareness of the Boston Public Library and its resources, by establishing a living link between library and community.

Target audience

Young library users, both those who have the opportunity to work with Writers-in-Residence, and as future readers of the works produced through the program.

Process

Applicants for the Children's Writer-in-Residence apply to a panel of judges from the children's literature world, including librarians, editors, and authors. To be eligible, authors must not have published more than 3 books previously. By limiting eligibility to authors who are relatively early in their career, the Associates ensure that they are supporting authors who might not otherwise have the support needed to finish a work.

Once selected, the author receives a room to work in from October to June, and a stipend of \$20,000. The resident must work in the library a minimum of 19 hours per week on a piece

of fiction, non-fiction, a script, or poetry intended for children or young adults. This programme is funded by an anonymous donor.

Outcome(s)

Two of the prior writers-in-residence have published books. In 2012, the first writer-in-residence, Hannah (Rodgers) Barnaby, published the book that she wrote during her residency, and Anna Staniszewski published her first book in November 2011 and her second in March 2012. The writers-in-residence receive not just financial support, but also invaluable resources and a connection to others' work. The existence of the Children's Writer-in-Residence program also places value on the work of authors for the greater community to see.

While completing her residency, Writer-in-Resident Sarah Searle offered comic making workshops for children and teens at multiple library branches, museums and schools, and noted that this was one of the most positive aspects of her residency.

Key points for effective practice

The Associates stipend is one of the largest in the country – not every library can afford this, and it is dependent on a very generous donor. The Library as Incubator Project interviews with previous Writers-in-Residence (linked below) ask this very question: what can other libraries without the means to fund a similar program do to support writers?

In addition to the financial support, the other really important factor is the time, space, and moral support validating the author's work.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Children's Writer-in-Residence program has been extremely successful over the last ten years. Not only has it offered an incredible opportunity to emerging authors, but it has also assisted the BPL in promoting the importance of writers, libraries, and literature in the community.

Additional information

Library as Incubator features on the Children's Writer-in-Residence program and interviews with previous Children's Writers-in-Residence.

<http://www.bpl.org/general/associates/childrensres.htm>

<http://www.bpl.org/general/about/>

<http://www.bpl.org/general/associates/index.htm>