

NCB Quarterly

Nebraska Center for the Book

ARCHIVES

Vol. 3

No. 2

The

**THIRD ANNUAL
NEBRASKA
LITERATURE
FESTIVAL**

202 Andrews Hall

University of Nebraska

Lincoln, NE 68588-0333



Board of Directors

The Nebraska Center for the Book is the 23rd state affiliate of the Library of Congress's national Center for the Book. The Center is a non-profit corporation whose purpose is to stimulate public interest in books, reading, and the written word. The Center acts as a catalyst, bringing together individuals and organizations to build the Nebraska community of the book. The Center serves as a partner and supporter of programs, events, and unique projects which celebrate the written word. The current board members are:

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N/CB Quarterly is published quarterly by the Nebraska Center for the Book. Subscription is free with Nebraska Center for the Book membership. We welcome your contributions and correspondence. Write to *N/CB Quarterly* c/o Lincoln City Libraries, 136 South 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508.

On the Cover —

Ted Kooser designed the artwork on the cover for the Nebraska Literature Festival.

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ISSN 1063-9365



President's Message

— Elaine Booth

Loyal readers of this quarterly will remember that my last message was a nostalgic tribute to those who have helped in the formation and organization of the Nebraska Center for the Book. Therefore, in an effort to balance heritage with vision, I am pleased to utilize space in this issue to share some of the exciting plans being developed by our busy and diverse committee members.

Funding and Membership are inherently crucial considerations for the NCB as it continues to embrace a central mission to remain responsible to Nebraska's reading and writing community. Rod Wagner heads this committee which is currently managing an inventory of literary merchandise, acquisition and maintenance of membership and development of fundraising possibilities. Production of a play on censorship and establishment of categories for membership are new project ideas being entertained to boost participation and financial stability.

Golda Bockbrader has been assigned to spearhead our committee on **Reading, Writing and Literacy** which joined Ellen Scott's **Books, Bookstores and Publishing Committee** at our strategic planning meeting. Activist members of these groups proposed pilot versions of Grand Island's Book Read Aloud and Giveaway programs for several additional Nebraska communities. They also recommended replication of a seniors' memoir

— writing and critique model, application by NCB for a PEN American Center Grant to fund a book discussion and author-visitation project and announced still further plans to approach key newspapers regarding submission of NCB book reviews for inclusion in appropriate sections.

Members of the **Public Relations and Publications Committee**, with the leadership of Molly Fisher, have undertaken tasks related to the continuity of the reputation of our quarterly and NCB's general image. They are championing our publication by compiling specifications for quarterly production, enlisting member cooperation for upcoming issues and locating an editor before the fall issue deadline. A vote of the full board authorized this committee to work with Denise Brady on a new stationery and logo design and to begin work on a general NCB brochure to enhance our "community of the book" image for current and prospective members.

At this writing, the 1993 Nebraska Writing and Storytelling Festival has taken place and has been deemed a success by all in attendance. Forthcoming issues of the NCB Quarterly will be enhanced by writing samples gleaned from results of this event.

Steve Shively of UNL regaled us at our May board meeting with a report on the (quickly)

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approaching Nebraska Literature Festival. This three-year-old child of ours is a genuine source of pride and readers are sure to be tempted beyond resistance by the festival schedule included in this issue. As chair of the **Festivals and Conferences Committee**, Kira Gale is leading an effort to articulate our relationship to these festivals and to explore new formats and associations for meaningful consortia.

NCB officers and one at-large member make up the **Executive and Governance Committee**. This group is charged with establishing a budget procedure, providing interim committee support and determining the appropriateness and coherence of board and membership activities.

In closing, I urge all NCB members to become active in our committee scheme. Since the board of directors meets only quarterly, our committee structure must be responsible for the progressive and sound organization which is representative of our foundational goals and yet reflective, too, of an ever-changing Nebraska of readers.

Bellevue Book Talk Circle

Bellevue Public Library
— Dan Owens, host; Elaine Booth
Coordinator

**Meeting Dates: 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.,
September 29; October 21;
November 8, 30; December 16; and
January 11, 1994.**

Committees —

Following is our current committee composition. If you would like to serve on one of these committees, feel free to contact the committee chairs and you will be promptly included in an important activity.

Funding and Governance:

Chair — Rod Wagner, 3205 West Pershing, Lincoln, NE 68502

Members — Tom Boyle, Bob Runyon and Morrie Tuttle, NCB Treasurer

Reading, Writing and Literacy:

Chair — Golda Bockbrader, 3005 N. Webb, Grand Island, NE 68803

Members — Elmer Baker, Peggy Benjamin and Laureen Riedesel

Public Relations and Publications:

Chair — Molly Fisher, 1240 So. 37th, Lincoln, NE 68510

Members — Denise Brady, Carol Connor and Ron Norman

Books, Bookstores and Publishing:

Chair — Ellen Scott, 2908 So. 109th St., Omaha, NE 68144

Members — Denise Brady and Roland Luedtke

Festivals and Conferences:

Chair — Kira Gale, 3314 No 49th, Omaha, NE 68104

Members — Denise Brady, Mel Krutz, Steve Shively and Morrie Tuttle

In' Ter Ac'Tive; or, Where's the Book?

—Ron Norman

What is a book?

This should be an easy question to answer for those who have an interest in books, so stop for a moment right now and give yourself your definition of a book. It might be a good idea to write your definition down so you can refer to it later. This is not a trick question.

The question of “what is a book” came to me in the process of reading two different articles. The first article is a brief one that appeared in the March 22, 1993, issue of *The New Yorker* and is entitled “Into the Flames.” It was written by Philip Hamburger. He writes about entering the New York Public Library and going into the exhibit “Assault on the Arts — Cutler and Politics in Nazi Germany.” “In a building literally overflowing with millions of books,” he says, “I was looking at a small-screen movie of Storm Troopers gleefully tossing volume after volume onto giant pyres, their flames reaching high into the skies.” This exhibit brought back to Hamburger his time in Europe in 1945 when he was correspondent for *The New Yorker* and his visit to Buchtesgaden. He concludes his article, “and now the library is performing its most vital function: keeping memory alive. Impossible to erase the sight of those burning books.”

The second article is really a series of inter-related articles under the general heading of “Interactive: What It Means to You,” which

appeared in the May 31, 1993, issue of *Newsweek*.

“Today,” this series of article begins, “information is the wellspring of great fortunes, much as land was a century ago. And today information of any kind — words, images, voices — can race along electronic ‘superhighways’ at the speed of light.” The articles use terms such as “couch potatoes,” “channel surfing,” and “information highways” and refer to the vast amounts of information that will soon be pouring in over a 500 channel interactive network and how there will be an electronic device called “intelligent agent” which will be programmed to know each viewer’s preferences and make selections from the endless stream of data and how, when we watch a movie, we’ll check alternative story lines and create our individualized versions of, say, *Terminator XII*.

If “interactivity” is the biggest buzzword of the moment, “convergence” is a close second. As one article points out, “to scientists, convergence means that technology has reached a critical point where fantasy could now become a reality.”

Consider these facts: in the past decade the amount of data that could be put on a silicon chip has doubled every year while the price has been cut in half; and that, while in 1960 a high

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quality transistor cost several dollars, today a chip with the capacity of 4 million transistors costs about a tenth of a cent per transistor. Studies have indicated that while people retain 10 percent of what they see, 20 percent of what they hear, half of what they see and hear, they retain 80 percent of what they see, hear and do — the interactive edge.

In these interactive electronic information superhighways that are here and which with each passing year will be more pervasive, what is the place of the book? Or will there be a place for the book? And, back to the initial question, what is a book?

As you formulated your definition of a book, did you think of floppy discs and CD-ROMs? At least 20 companies publish books on floppy discs and Dorling Kindersley, Ltd., a British publisher, to cite one example, has formed an alliance with Microsoft to design and produce CD-ROMs based on its books. Its first book on disc sold as many copies in the first three months as it had expected to sell in the first year.

The unabridged edition of *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 1966, has several definitions for book, the first one being, “a written or printed work of some length as a treatise, novel or other literary composition, especially on consecutive sheets of paper fastened or bound together in a volume.”

This is the definition of a book that probably satisfies most of us and with which we are most comfortable. Actually, though, the book has a variety of forms: floppy discs,

CD-ROMs, talking books on tapes and records, a collection of sheets of paper fastened together in a volume.

Which of these forms of the book are we to promote?

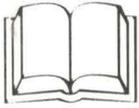
If we say that when we say “book,” we mean that form with which we are most familiar: a collection of sheets of paper fastened together in a volume, are we then restricting ourselves to a confining conceptual ghetto that separates us from all other book forms? If we limit ourselves to the “traditional” form of the book, are we then in some way fighting a rear guard battle against the steadily increasing presence of the electronic media and its various presentations of the book?

Instead, should we say that the form is less important than the content, that the book in whatever form conveys ideas and information and these are what are ultimately important?

I have no answers to these questions.

I know that I love the “book” that is that collection of sheets of paper formed together in a volume in all of its various manifestations, but I know, too, that the “book” is more than this.

**Next NCB Board of Directors' Meeting
September 2, 1993
Heritage Room,
Lincoln City Libraries
9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**



BOOK REVIEW

— Ellen Scott

Nebraska from A to Z: An Educational Coloring Book and Travel Guide

Compiled and illustrated by Linda S. Meigs. Omaha, NE, 1993, \$8.98

A hearty welcome to a new Nebraska author/illustrator and her book about Nebraska! Organized as an alphabet book, Linda Meigs has written a page for each letter: K is for Kearney; C is for Chimney Rock, Champion Mill and Carhenge, and so on. On the facing pages Ms. Meigs has done a black and white line drawing to illustrate, for instance, Fort Kearny and Chimney Rock. Each illustration has an authentic quilt pattern border and the location noted on a small state map on each page.

A fan of Nebraska history for some fifteen years, Meigs has been working on this book for three years while caring for home and family. The book is well-researched and included two pages of historic highlights, state facts, and a map of the counties and their license plate numbers — the latter essential for across-the-state travel. Ending the book with the words to the song *Beautiful Nebraska* makes this a beautiful book from start to finish.

This book with its brightly colored cover should be in bookstores and tourist stops across the state very soon; or you may write to Linda Meigs at 5215 Jackson, Omaha, NE 68106 or

call The Bookhouse, Omaha, NE (402) 392-1931.

Nouns

On a stairway leading to a space
beyond which there are no steps
there is a small wind made up
of the cries of the dead.

These are our others,
the most recent breaths of
who we were.

Yet there are days
when we are more than alive
because of our stories,
when in that great humpbacked
muscle in our mouths
there is sound
and its way is long.

Nouns: any of a class
of words designating small births
and later discoveries.

—Don Welch



Festival is “A Shot in the Arm for Writers”

“Great...,” “Excellent...,” “The best one yet...” attest to the enthusiasm of the attendees at the 13th annual Nebraska Writing and Storytelling Festival. “Couldn’t it last longer — for two days...?” “Would like an opportunity to attend more sessions...” “Keep up the writing critique sessions — but make them longer!” Such

evaluative comments sum up the experience of those who enjoyed a day with other writers and storytellers.

Writing and storytelling for children was the focus of the June 5th event, which attracted serious and secret writers/storytellers from all

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*Nancy McCleery's session, **Writing for Young People**, launches writers immediately into the writing experience as each quickly writes a paragraph which is used as the basis for subsequent activities. Nancy is a Lincoln writer and teacher.*



Mary Jackson, Lincoln, discusses those qualities essential for effective children's writing. Participants write in teams to explore beginning, middle and ending elements of stories.

Mel Krutz, Columbus college professor, helps her attendees explore those aspects of children's literature that make writing appealing to children, then encourages the group to put what they discover into practice.

points in Nebraska. Sixty persons gathered on the Southeast Community College Campus in Lincoln to explore many facets of literature for children. Dr. Mel Krutz opened the conference with a retrospective look at the history of the Festival through the themes of past keynote speakers, the writers who have grown through their yearly attendance, and the importance for writers to have publishing outlets such as the NCB Quarterly.

Eight presenters offered a mix of training sessions designed to involve participants in exploration of their own strengths and interests.

During the luncheon, Festival participants had opportunities for informal discussions and table talk was lively. Many writers also appreciated the opportunity for a personal critique of their writing by one of the writer/presenters. Independent publisher Linda Dageforde was also available for consultation on publishing possibilities. Sales of books from Nebraska Book Store and the Book House of Omaha



Connie Yost, Hastings teacher, touches on the pain and insecurity of adolescence and demonstrates how storytelling can help young adults express anxiety through humor.

added to the air of festivity. In addition to focusing on writing and storytelling for children, kids were encouraged to attend and eight young people, from ages eleven to eighteen, added their enthusiasm and energy to that of more seasoned writers.

A number of writers submitted poetry, short stories or prose pieces to be published in a special issue of the *Nebraska Center for the Book Quarterly*. Selected pieces will be printed in the Fall *NCB Quarterly*.

Members of the planning committee for the Festival were: Mary Jackson, Mel Krutz, Rose Beck, Dick Allen, Jim Bahm, David McCleery and Connie Yost. Next year's Festival will be held in Norfolk. The theme is Appreciation Of Cultural Diversity.



Mary Heise, Omaha media specialist, gives her audience pointers on how dramatic elements may be effectively injected into storytelling.



Report on the Nebraska Literature Festival

—Steve Shively

Once again the Center for the Book will sponsor the Nebraska Literature Festival. The third annual Festival will be held this year on September 17 and 18 at the Nebraska Union on the UNL campus in Lincoln. Other sponsors are the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, the Nebraska Humanities Council, the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association, and the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater.

This year's Festival will continue the successful traditions established at previous Festivals in Omaha and Kearney while adding some new and exciting activities. The Festival offers a wonderful variety of activities; there's truly something for everyone!

The Festival will begin on Friday with a day for high school students and their teachers. The focus this year will be on active participation; all students will have the opportunity to work on their own writing as well as listen to other students and enjoy a range of workshop activities and presentations.

Friday evening will bring a special opportunity for those who enjoy the fine arts and who want to demonstrate their support for the Festival. A special benefit performance of Randal Snyder's composition "Across the Sandhills," which uses the poetry of Roy Scheele, will be performed by soprano Margaret Kennedy and pianist Stephen Krahn. It will be held at the

Great Plains Art Collection on the second floor of UNL's Love Library. Both Roy and Randy will talk briefly about their work. A fine display of art from the collection will be available for viewing. The price of this event is twenty dollars and includes refreshments. All proceeds will go to the Festival fund.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find a copy of the schedule of events for the main part of the Festival on Saturday, September, 18. The biggest problem for most people will be that there isn't enough time to do everything they want to do! In addition to sessions on Nebraska's best-known writers, new authors featured this year include Paul Johnsgard, Sophus Keith Winther, and Benjamin Botkin.

We think sessions on multiculturalism, libraries, Native American storytelling, the Oregon Trail, and reading circles will be popular. Special showings of films based on the works of Tillie Olsen and Mari Sandoz will be offered. An impressive group of authors will read their work, and everyone will have the chance to read during open reading sessions. Several interesting writing workshops are being offered.

This year we have decided to hold a special Festival Luncheon at the Wick Alumni Center. John Janovy will be the featured speaker, and the Mildred Bennett Award will be presented.

The fee is only fifteen dollars, part of which will benefit the Festival fund. Another special feature for this year's Festival will be a reception at the Nebraska State Capitol, where you can view busts of several Nebraska writers who are in the Nebraska Hall of Fame. Finally, we hope that this year's book fair will be bigger and better than ever!

We still need your help. Please promote the Festival whenever you can. Plan to attend as many events as possible, and bring friends. Encourage book dealers to participate in the book fair. Call the co-directors of the Festival Robert Narveson or Steve Shively, if you have questions, want to register or wish to volunteer to help. We can be reached at the UNL Department of English, 202 Andrews Hall, Lincoln, NE 68508-0333 or at (402) 472-1808.

We should all be proud of Nebraska's rich heritage. The Nebraska Literature Festival offers a chance to learn from and honor the literature of the past, celebrate the diversity and power of contemporary writers, and promote the development of new talent to ensure that the tradition continues. I hope to see you all in Lincoln this September.

The Painter and the River

He wants to be there at dawn,
to paint the vermilion channels
and the sun's gong. Or there
when the river turns silver,

making it lithe; when noon fattens it,
reddens it. If he can only cup
water in his palm, in one quick stroke
dipping up the motherstock,

then he can paint the trees
like Chinese written characters,
each one styled by weather
and wood love; or capture

the water as an utter of sunlight,
a trickle of balm, where
the late afternoon river is golden,
an odor of quince and lemon.

And he wants to return in winter,
feeling those great sheets of ice
building up, slugging down,
grinding the edges of the sandbars

macerating the roots of the willows.
He wants to stand on that ice,
on that blue-white time, looking down.
And he wants to be there at night,

when black, the river flows
like a woman in a silk sheath,
when it loses its smooth gray tones
and takes on the moon.

—Don Welch

The Third Annual Nebraska Literature Festival

September 17 and 18, 1993



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