USBBY gives thankful acknowledgement to author and illustrator Chris Raschka for our unique USBBY logo.
The brainchild of librarian Jella Lepman, the Internationale Jugendbibliothek/International Youth Library (IJB/IYL) (http://www.ijb.de/en/about-us.html) in Munich holds the world's largest collection of children's books from around the world. The library was developed after WWII as a way to provide children in war-torn Germany with an opportunity to learn about the larger world around them and make cross-cultural connections. Situated within Schloß Blutenburg (http://www.blutenburg.de/), a historic Bavarian castle on the outskirts of the city, the IJB/IYL attracts scholars interested in exploring intercultural understanding through children's books. The local lending library provides Munich families with access to children's and YA titles in a variety of languages and offers outreach programs to encourage children to develop their writing skills as well as cultural literacy. The IJB/IYL also develops the White Raven Book List each year to highlight the best multilingual children's and YA books published the preceding year in countries around the world. Librarians in the US can use this list to develop collections of outstanding foreign language materials to reach their local immigrant or foreign-speaking populations.

Another program offered by the IJB/IYL is the research fellowship programme that provides support for librarians, educators, reading specialists, authors, professors, etc. to use the vast collection of the IYL to complete a given project. Generously supported by the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, the programme awards approximately fourteen prestigious fellowships annually to individuals from around the globe working on a research project broadly related to children’s literature.
Schloß Blutenburg and Me

In December 2013, I received word that I had been selected to be one of the Stippis (the affectionate name those at the IJB/IYL use for fellowship recipients) for Fall 2014 to identify and catalog a record of foreign language children’s picture books and easy-to-read children’s novels with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) content to add to the limited English-language scholarship on the topic of homosexuality in children’s literature and to build upon the work from my book *Rainbow Family Collections: Selecting and Using Children’s Books with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Content* (2012). My fellow Stippis during my visit were Lara Hedberg from Australia, Kelly Hübben from Sweden, Valerie Coghlan and Aine Mcgillicuddy from Ireland, Eka Tabliashvili from Georgia, and Mahshid Mayar from Iran.

After spending many months doing happy dances, buying travel guides, and searching for the perfect fully-furnished apartment, I finally boarded a plane in early October 2014, arriving in Munich on the last day of Oktoberfest. I rented an apartment in an old farmhouse in Langweid (a community a few miles from the IJB/IYL). My mornings were spent on brisk walks to the castle through fields and residential neighborhoods, and across the Würm River. Often I shared a few *Grüß Gotts* (traditional Bavarian morning greeting) with other commuters along the way. In the evenings, I would often go explore the city using the super efficient public transit system.

Occasionally, the other Stippis and I would go on impromptu tours generously offered by the librarians and lektorats. Vegetarians truly have not lived until they visit a traditional Bavarian restaurant where 99.99999% of the menu is accompanied by a huge slab of red meat! On the other hand, nothing compares to delicious *kaffee und küchen*, which we always seemed to find at the end of our excursions. My favorite place for these treats was the Café Katzentempel (http://www.cafe-katzentempel.de/) that offers guests a choice of playful cats to entertain whilst the *kaffee und küchen* is being consumed.
After a few days at the castle, several of the Stippis and I jumped a train to the Frankfurt Book Fair where we helped with the IJB/IYL program and explored an almost overwhelming world of lavish books from around the globe. It was truly exciting (and somewhat heartbreaking) to discover that one of my favorite illustrators, Ana Juan, had created a vast array of amazing books that we have never seen here in the U.S. While at the fair, I also tracked down a few children’s titles related to my research project on LGBTQ families. In addition to all the exciting exhibits at the book fair, the Stippis explored some of the other cultural venues that Frankfurt has to offer. I decided to take advantage of the Struwwelpeter Museum (http://struwwelpeter-museum.de/museum.htm) where I spent hours exploring the German classic and studying the many iterations and pop-culture references related to our slovenly friend.

Back in Munich and exhilarated from the book fair, I took advantage of my desk in the study library of the castle and began ordering books to examine for my project. During my time at the IJB/IYL, I identified and examined over 60 children’s picture books, novels for young children, and children’s informational books with LGBTQ content in the collection. These books were written in Czech, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish. I archived many of them to further analyze at a subsequent time. While in the study library, I discovered the most useful gem for my research: Famiglie: Papà, Mamme, Fratelli, Zii, Nonni, Cugini e Amici, a booklet from an exhibition at the 2013 Bologna Book Fair featuring LGBTQ picture books from around the world. I used various lektorats at the library to assist me with locating titles that I had overlooked or to better understand particular texts. The reference librarians were extremely helpful tracking down books that were unavailable when I originally requested them. Through resources at the IJB/IYL, I further identified some 120+ additional children’s books to order for my research project.
Jamie’s work space at the IJB/IYL Study Library

The Stippis also had the opportunity to help assist with and respond to the installation of the new *Guten tag, Lieber Feind!* exhibition at the IJB/IYL. For several years, the exhibition has traveled around the world using books as messengers of peace. In Fall 2014, it returned back to the castle for updates and renewed creative interpretations.

I would be remiss if I did not tell everyone about the interesting and often surprising cuisine that awaited Stippis and IJB/IYL staff during lunch at *Schlossschänke Blutenburg*. This charming Bavarian restaurant is onsite at the castle and offers a time for Stippis, visitors, and IJB/IYL staff to socialize, share ideas, and simply enjoy each other’s company. Those affiliated with the castle pay only a very modest fee for their lunch and have the option of *fleisch* (meat) or *vegetarish* (vegetarian). Being the latter, it was a welcome relief to have at least one meal a day where I didn’t have to try and ask about the contents on my plate. With that said, it was always interesting to see what the Bavarian *vegetarish* dish of the day would be. Sometimes, the cooks did not know quite what to do with us. My most memorable dish was a delicious and hearty bowl of lentil soup – with a whole boiled egg floating in the middle. The *fleisch* eaters had their sausage and we had our egg. Everyone was happy – though some of us were slightly confounded.

**The End . . . Or Just the Beginning**

I ended my time at the IJB/IYL in mid-December just in time to attend the annual holiday party at the castle. The food was delicious and the entertainment unforgettable; however, it was the warmth of the people that evening – exhibiting the same hospitality they had shown since October – that will remain in my heart forever. Like all the Stippis before me and all those yet to follow, I had come to the end of my short time at the Bloody Castle but just embarked on a lifetime of frequent return visits. *Vielen Dank, liebe Freunde!* I am planning my next visit already.

Thanks to USBBY State Ambassador Jamie Naidoo’s efforts to promote the use of literature to build international understanding!