



Richard Bamberger 1911–2007

Article · December 2007

DOI: 10.1353/bkb.0.0114



1st [Peter Schneck](#)

Abstract

Richard Bamberger died on Sunday, 11 November 2007 at his home in Vienna. He was 96. With him IBBY has lost not only its last living founder, but also a friend, a visionary, a giver of ideas and a great stimulator of talent.

During an interview in 1993, in which Richard and I discussed the 40th anniversary of IBBY, he recalled that in 1951 the idea of increased international collaboration in the field of children's literature was first broached while sitting in the Munich Brauhauskeller with Jella Lepman, Erich Kästner and himself after a passionate discussion on the possible effect of the joint guilt of fairy tales on National Socialism. What drew Richard Bamberger, Jella Lepman and Erich Kästner together from the beginning was their common attitude to activities for peace. In 1947 Richard gave up a promising political career in the Social Democratic Party because of his resistance to the re-creation of the Austrian army.

Because of his strong commitment, Richard Bamberger was a natural member of IBBY's founding group and stayed closely connected to IBBY for over 50 years. He was elected IBBY President in 1962 and served until 1966. While he was president, IBBY expanded, mainly in Eastern Europe and Latin America, and many permanent links to international organisations, including UNESCO, were established during this time. Also during his presidency, he co-founded IBBY's journal *Bookbird* with Jella Lepman in 1963, and served as editor until 1982.

Not only was he very active in IBBY, he was also busy in the promotion of children's literature in Austria, having founded the Austrian Children's Book Club in 1949, and later went on to establish the International Institute for Children's Literature and

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thirteen years later received one of the first Jella Lepman medals.

He was a visionary in children's literature, his book *Jugendlektüre* became a standard work in the German-speaking region and was also widely translated. With the founding of the Austrian Branch of the International Reading Association (IRA), he helped forge the special relationship enjoyed between the IRA and IBBY. Even after his so-called retirement at the age of 70, he founded the Institute for Educational Media Research in Vienna. In 1996 the International Reading Association honoured him by presenting him with the prestigious Citation of Merit. One of the last honours he received was an honorary doctorate from the University of Dortmund, Germany in 2003 for his services to reading promotion.

When I was a young teacher, Richard Bamberger was a shining example of how to teach reading successfully; he showed me priorities and principles not only for my personal development, but also in my work for and within IBBY. Let me finish with a citation of Richard Bamberger from his speech at the opening ceremony of the International Institute for Children's Literature in Vienna in 1965: 'In our times mankind is striving to vanquish the borders between peoples and find one world. But children have long known that in the kingdom of their imagination there are no border posts. In their favourite books they inhabit all the lands of the earth.'

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