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MAURICE SAXBY CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Maurice Saxby Creative Development Program has been successfully completed and the four mentees are very appreciative of all the activities and events they attended.

Thanks must go to Helen Chamberlin for organising a complete program which was inspiring and educational and covered all aspects of children's publishing. A major part of the program of course is the mentees meetings with their mentors – and for all our mentees those seem to be very satisfactory. The mentors were Erica Wagner, Judith Rossell, Jane Godwin and Penni Russon; all first choices of the mentees – which is very hard to achieve!

Meeting each other in person (after two years of getting to know each other via email) was a great pleasure for the mentees as it was for the committee after such a long delay. Following our initial meeting we all shared lunch with a former mentee and now a very successful author/illustrator, Lucinda Gifford. She very generously and candidly told Tracey, Helen, Shelly and Lucie about her own process of getting published and the demands of school visits and author talks etc. as well as showing and discussing the publication process of most of her successful picture books.

Following lunch with Lucinda the group went to meet Shaun Tan for coffee and hear him talk about his own approach to his work and his work practice which was of particular interest to Lucie, the budding graphic novelist, but of course of great interest to all the mentees.

On the following day – Saturday – we met with John Marsden at his Candlebark School and we sat in one of the classrooms while he spoke to the group about his own long career of publishing experiences and his writing process.

We then travelled to Dromkeen where Bernadette Joiner had organised lunch for everyone. We spent some time in the Gallery looking at the beautiful artwork by Mark Wilson, followed by storytime with Corinne Fenton who read from her new book *Subbie and His Mate*, based on the story of the racehorse Sub Zero who won a Melbourne Cup, but focussed on the moving relationship between trainer and horse.

Then Corinne launched Mark Wilson's new book *Votes for Women* which is the story of the fight for votes for women in Australia and the amazing woman at the forefront of the campaign.

Mark Wilson then did a drawing workshop session with a group of young children, which was part of our aim to show emerging children's writers how they would need to address children's groups in schools, for example as an essential part of publicising their own work, but also as an alternative source of income.

A delicious afternoon tea was served to the full house of attendees and some of the group bought paintings by Mark. All round a fabulous day.

On Sunday the group went to the launch of *Speck of Stars* by Henry Boffin at Ford St. Publishing where they experienced a typical launch of a children's book and established contact with Paul Collins. Children's book publisher.

On Monday they visited Allen and Unwin to meet Jodie Webster, Publisher and Editorial Manager and Elise Jones, Acting Children's Publisher, where the mentees learnt about the current market in all genres of children's and YA publishing and were invited to submit their mss to Jodie and Elise without having to follow the usual submission guidelines – a huge bonus for them with this leading Australian publisher.

On Tuesday they met with Miriam Rosenblum at Scribble Publishing – the children's imprint of Scribe Publications, where they learnt about the Scribble list and the kinds of books they are looking for, which was inspiring in particular to the illustrator mentees, Shelley and Lucie. As with all the publisher meetings the mentees learnt about the passion and commitment of children's publishers and that the process is such a cooperative one between people of like minds – whereas emerging writers often see children's publishers and editors as stern gatekeepers. We think this is an extremely valuable part of the program.

In the evening they went to the Wheeler Centre for Postcards from the Cities of literature followed by a talk by Jay Carmichael about his book *Morio*. This session was intended to show the mentees what is available to them in terms of joining the literary life of Melbourne and also in terms of publicity for themselves when they are published.

On Wednesday was a visit to Hardie Grant to meet with Marisa Pintado, children's publishing director and Sorcha, marketing manager, in which the mentees heard all about the publishing ethos, processes and goals of that publishing house and, once again, of the passion of those key people in the industry.

Thursday was spent at the Writer's Festival, where we asked them to choose what they would like to attend because they had such diverse interests in their different genres, so all chose sessions with the most interest to them: for example Helen Jarvis, a published poet as well as an aspiring YA author, enjoyed a poetry session whilst Lucie went to a graphic novel session.

On Friday the whole group met with Angela Crocombe at Readings Kids who spoke to them for an hour about her approach as a bookseller and buyer and answered their questions so candidly and helpfully. They all gained so much from talking with such an expert in that part of the industry. After that they went again to their own choices at the MWF.

Saturday sessions at MWF were booked all day for all mentees. Firstly Helen Garner and Chloe Hooper, though not children's writers – aimed at having them hear from two consummate Australian authors. For the rest of the day they attended four more children's and YA sessions.

On Sunday they attended Karys McEwan's session about her children's book *All the Tricky Little Things* at MWF, followed by other sessions of their choice.

On Monday they met with Tash Besliev and her team at Affirm Publishing for another inspiring session from dedicated publishers devoted to the cause of good books for children and helpful in their advice to the mentees.

On Tuesday they met with Anna Welch at the SLV rare books collection and had a library tour which inspired them all and was designed to show them resources to writers they may not have known about,

In the afternoon they visited The Little Bookroom to meet with Leesa Lambert and her staff and found out about the importance of that bookshop particularly, but also of all the independent bookshops in the Melbourne market, especially in children's books. As well it's important for them to know the great service that such shops do in promoting local authors with launches etc. Again they were inspired by Leesa's passion for children's books and her entrepreneurial spirit.

Wednesday was a visit to Ann James and Ann Haddon at Books Illustrated. They have long been vital supporters of children's book illustrators and authors and gave the mentees the benefit of their long experience and wisdom.

Next was a visit to Clare Forster at Curtis Brown Literary Agency to inform them how agency works and the benefits of having an agent. She was able to talk to each of them about their work and the possibilities, advisability and at what stage of getting an agent to represent them. This is a crucial part of the industry they need to know about.

In the evening they attended a Teens Talk panel session with Lili Wilkinson at the Wheeler Centre as a further experience of what is available to them as potential authors in terms of publicity.

On Thursday they visited Penguin to meet with Amy Thomas, commissioning editor Young Readers who talked to them at great length about the books she was working on, the Penguin list in general and then took them to a talk by the in-house designer- an unexpected addition to the meeting, but of great interest to Lucie and Shelley, the two illustrators in the group and to all in terms of seeing this essential part of the publishing process.

On Thursday evening we had a farewell cocktail party for our mentees which included some of the mentors and several past mentees. A wonderful evening with thanks to Suzanne and David Thwaites, for hosting in their beautiful home.

It has been a very busy and fulfilling time for the organisers and the mentees and we thank the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund for helping to make it all possible. We now look forward to seeing published books by our mentees to follow in the tradition set by our past mentees.

Pamela Horsey and Helen Chamberlin
Co-coordinators