

Celia Cole.

The recipient of the Muriel Barwell Award for 2016 for distinguished service to children's literature is Celia Cole. This presents a delightful symmetry for the Award this year as Celia's long career as a specialist bookseller in children's literature echoes that of Muriel Barwell, whose shop Haddons in London Court was the first bookshop dedicated to children's literature in this state.

As a bookseller, Celia's dedication to promoting literature to young people far exceeds the demands of the professional position. In the store she never waits behind the counter, but actively and sincerely engages with customers, responding to their needs and generously sharing her vast knowledge.

For many years, Celia lectured in children's and young adult literature at university level. Her special skill was to provide aspiring students and librarians with the necessary skills and background to give them the confidence to share their newfound knowledge of literature. Celia has continued to be a support over the years to many of these students as they seek her out to update and revitalise their reading programs.

Celia has been a popular presenter at state conferences over many years where delegates look forward to her presentations on new resources and her fearless reviews and recommendations of new titles. Her enthusiasm is infectious, sending teachers and librarians back to their classrooms better equipped and freshly motivated about the literature they want to promote to their students. Celia also has an envied ability to stand before a group of young people and share her insights, her joys and then send them out to seek the titles she recommends.

In her advocacy of local authors and illustrators, Celia has organised and hosted many author talks in schools and community venues and in this way has been a valued facilitator for writers and illustrators finding their new audiences. She has delivered countless presentations to parents and community groups. Rather than a rehash of previous talks, each has a fresh and inspiring message particular to the group in front of her.

And this typifies Celia's special contribution to children's literature in this state. She is a voracious reader, keeping current with publishing trends and young people's changing interests and this allows her professional support to be accurate, appropriate and therefore useful. Celia's contribution has not been about selling books but about fostering reading for the joy of it; it is about outreach, about dedication, about giving her time freely to share with so many students, professionals, parents and grandparents the special book which can enliven and nourish them.

She is a most worthy recipient of the Muriel Barwell Award for 2016.