

Spotlight on Books is one of the best regional conferences for “adults focused on youth literature.” I was able to attend every session offered, beginning with Doug Johnson on Friday afternoon. Although his presentation “Facing our Challenges in Positive Ways” seemed more directed to school rather than library staff, he made connections to public libraries throughout the presentation and discussion. I was hoping that he would provide pate answers to copyright issues, but now understand why he did not – rather, *could* not – do so. I enjoyed his down-to-earth style and approach to difficult situations.

The Friday evening “Lightning Rounds” were informative. I appreciated the wide variety of institutions involved and the topics covers, and was interested to discover more about the CCYAB. The quick pace of the presentations was perfect for an evening session. Henry Cole’s exquisite drawing and Ben Mikaelson’s humorous tale were memorable.

Thank you for including the regional authors on Saturday morning; it’s valuable to be familiar with the talent in our region. The featured authors/illustrator made a great team: picture book writer Dara Dokas, author and illustrator Henry Cole, and author Ben Mikaelson. All told stories of their personal journeys that brought them to writing and illustrating. Dokas was entertaining about her trials of getting published, Cole passionate about his love of nature, and Mikaelson honest about his painful youth.

While I enjoyed the panel discussion, I think it could have been more effective with a series of prepared questions. The audience was shy about and unprepared to ask questions.

Hearing from Dokas, Cole, and Mikaelson gave me a greater understanding of their work, which is helpful in Storytime planning and readers’ advisory. In particular, Cole gave me insight on the art in picture books that I will bring to Caldecott Committee work. I usually have a couple of opportunities a year to do booktalking, and I am certain that more of Mikaelson’s work will appear on my booklists. Finally, I talked to Dokas about the possibility of her doing a presentation for adult writers about getting their books into publication.

Thank you for this opportunity.

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