Bridging the Gap between Cultural Authenticity and Cross-Cultural Transportability:
International Children’s and Young Adult Visual Narratives

Sabbatical Proposal Plan of Study
Spring 2016

Submitted by:
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Please Forward To Department Chair or Administrative Officer by September 16, 2014

Name _______ Catherine Kurkjian  
Date September 1, 2014________________________

Department_Reading and Language Arts________________________  
AAUP ___√____ SUOAF-AFSCME __________________

Preferred Time of AAUP Sabbatical: Fall 2015___ Spring 2016_√_ AY 2015-2016____ (please check one)  
Start and End Date of SUOAF-AFSCME Sabbatical:  
_____________________________________________________________________

Candidate Must Have Completed At Least Six Years Of Full-Time Service Since Initial  
Appointment Or Any Previous CCSU Sabbatical. (Candidates may apply in their sixth year of service; however only tenured members may take a sabbatical leave.)

Please Indicate Semester and Year of Appointment: __August 21, 1995________________

Semester and Year of Last Sabbatical: ___Spring 2007___________________________

___√__ Check here if your sabbatical leave is dependent on your receipt of a Fulbright or other fellowship. If, yes, please be sure to include information and explanation of the fellowship in the narrative below including the anticipated date of notification of award.

Application to All Disciplines in Research at University degli Studi di Milano under auspices of Dr. Francesca Orestano (See attached letter of invitation) (Fulbright Notification spring 2015)

Plan of Study  
In preparing the application, please be specific and detailed, while keeping in mind that not all members of the Sabbatic Leave Committee will share your exact background.

I. Title of Project

Bridging the Gap between Cultural Authenticity and Cross-Cultural Transportability: International Children’s and Young Adult Visual Narratives
ABSTRACT
This proposed plan of study is part of a Fulbright proposal for research and teaching at the University of Milan during spring semester 2016. The main objective of my Fulbright Proposal is to conduct a qualitative cross-cultural reader response investigation. Eighty percent of my time will be devoted to this endeavor. Secondary, but important objectives include 1) updating my knowledge by immersing myself in the world of International Children’s Literature through a variety of activities that a Fulbright Award at the University of Milan affords, and 2) networking and collaborating with Italian and European scholars and publishers to build scholarly bridges and to seek out venues for our Center for International Education studies abroad initiatives. My sabbatical is contingent upon being granted this award. Outcomes include at least one publication in a premier journal, as well as a presentation at The World Congress (International Bureau for Books for Youth) in September 2016. Additionally, groundwork will be set in place for cross-cultural study abroad opportunities for graduate students at CCSU.

II. Statement of purpose (or hypothesis) and objective(s)

Purpose of Research
Cross-cultural communication and understanding is an essential aspect of what it means to be a literate person in a global and interconnected world. Educators argue that children’s literature can play an important role in this process by helping to bridge cultural differences in understanding self and others (Lehman, Freeman and Scharer, 2010). The International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY), which emerged from the ruins of World War II, is based on the premise that children’s books are a way to promote international understanding. In the process of globalization, however, there exists a tension between the preservation of cultural identity in children’s literature and the need to make texts more universally comprehensible and marketable to international audiences.

Two opposing scenarios appear to equally defeat the purposes of promoting cross-cultural understanding through children’s literature. At one end of the spectrum is the production of international books that have been stripped of their cultural markers, so much so, that they no longer offer readers a real cultural interchange (Stan, 1997; 2011; Salisbury, 2006). At the other end of the spectrum is the production of books that are so local that they are seen by publishers to have limited marketability to readers from another culture. The purpose of my Fulbright Research Proposal is situated within this tension.

The notion of “glocalization” is a mediating concept that refers to global and local linkages (Stephens, 2008). It is based on concepts of cognitive science espoused by Fauconnier and Turner (as cited in Gutierrez, 2013). From this viewpoint globalization is described in terms of a cognitive process of conceptual blending of similarities and distinctions that result in a newly constructed emergent third space that is based on the “sharedness” versus “sameness.” The blending of similarities and diversity “allows global and local spaces to interact with and to enrich one another to the blending of shared elements and vital relations” (Gutierrez, 2013 p. 20).

This research will consider reader response of students enrolled at the University of Milan in light of cultural codes that come into play in response to a local Italian picturebook, illustrated, and written (authorstrated) by an Italian illustrator and poet. It will also consider the reader response of students enrolled at CCSU to a version of the book designed for an English speaking audience. This internationalized and perhaps “glocal” and hybrid book has been illustrated by the same Italian illustrator and written (authorstrated) by an American poet. Comprehension of each version will be considered in light of intertextual cultural background that comes into play as
Italian and American readers transact with local and a hybrid text, respectively. More specifically, cross-cultural reader response will be studied by:

- Examining the meaning constructed by American students to the picturebook *The House*, a hybrid picturebook, in which illustrations were created by Italian illustrator, Roberto Innocenti, and in which the text was written by American poet, J. Patrick Lewis. This is a picturebook which caters to an international audience of American/English speaking readers,

- Examining the meaning constructed by Italian students to the Italian version of this picturebook, *La Casa de Tempo*, a local picturebook, in which illustrations were created also by Italian illustrator, Roberto Innocenti, and in which the text was written by Italian poet, J. Roberto Piumini. This is a picturebook which caters to an Italian audience of Italian/Italian speaking readers, and

- Comparing and contrasting local and “hybrid” meanings in response to these texts.

III. Description of your existing knowledge and/or work to date related to the project (include citations to the literature as appropriate).

Visual narrative is an overarching term that refers to narration told via visual images, whether they be in the format of graphic novels, wordless books, or picturebooks (Evans, 2011; Foster, 2011). The visual narrative particular to this study is in the format of a picturebook. This format is considered to be bimodal with the modalities of text and images offering different kinds of information that work together to convey meaning (Nodelman, 1988). In a posthumous publication of an in-progress manuscript of Lawrence Sipe’s work (2012), he describes a myriad of complex ways in which text and images may interact and refers to this interaction as synergy. Others scholars have created taxonomies to characterize the complexity of text and image relationship. Siegel (as cited in Pantaleo, 2008) used the term “transmediation” to describe the synergistic way viewers/readers use one modality to mediate the other in the creation of meaning. Painter, Martine and Unsworth (2013) spotlight the visual image when they argue that readers must have “understandings about the nature of the meanings that can be conveyed by visual choices, and how these may relate to the structural and verbal components of the narrative text (p. 2). Bimodal visual narratives pose unique intellectual challenges that call upon the reader/viewer to bring to bear topical knowledge, cultural intertextual knowledge, knowledge of structural conventions of text and images.

Reader Response theory as espoused by Louise Rosenblatt (1978/1994) in which reading is seen as a transaction between text and reader informs this study and is a vehicle to explore the cultural interpretations of the text. From this perspective, meaning does not solely reside in the text; instead the “poem” is an act of construction of meaning as the reader brings to bear background and aesthetic response in interaction and under the guidance of the text. Rosenblatt’s theory is especially suited to this cross-cultural study in that the reader is seen to bring to bear all his or her experiences (cultural, cognitive, social, emotional, literary and linguistic) in interactions with the text (Soter, as cited in Styles, 2004) and this interaction with text is likened to an ethnographic exploration of cultural worlds (Beach as cited in Styles, 2004). Similarly, Iser’s (1978) notion of Implied Reader versus an Actual Reader gives credence to the reader as an active constructor of meaning who fills perceived blanks in texts by bringing lived experiences to bear in the reading of the text. For these theorists, certain
interpretations of text are more credible than others given that the structure of the text created by the authors and or illustrators shape comprehension as the reader interacts with the text (Rosenblatt, 1995; Ward, 2006). Thus, this may involve close readings of the text to find evidence to support interpretations.

Informing this study is the extensive body of research conducted by Pantaleo (2008; 2010; 2012; 2014), Pantaleo and Sipe (2012), Sipe and Pantaleo (2008), and Sipe (1998; 1999; 2001; 2008; 2011; 2012) on children’s response to postmodern picturebooks, books with metafictive devices, and Radical Change (Dressang, 1999), which point to the integral role of the social and intertextual nature of response. These studies also provide insights into the complexity of negotiating picturebooks.

Innocenti’s particular texts will be questioned in terms of Barthe’s (1974) notion of “readerly” and “writerly texts,” the relationship between text and images as they apply to his “codes of access” to literary texts, and to visual images as suggested by Nikolajeva (2010).

Additionally, each text will be analyzed in terms literary and visual conventions, the grammar of visual design (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006), and to what is referred to as glocalization (Stephens, 2008) that relates to “sharedness” versus “sameness” as it relates to the creation and understanding of international texts.

This study builds on my previous graduate level teaching (Teaching Children’s Literature, Teaching Multicultural Literature, and most recently designed course, Teaching Graphic Novels), papers and articles written about multicultural and global/international children’s literature (Kurkjian & Abadiano 1997 to Fall 1999; Kurkjian, Livingston & Siu-Runyan, 2003; Young, Bruchac, Livingston & Kurkjian, 2004; Livingston, & Kurkjian, 2005; Kurkjian & Livingston, 2007; Valerie & Kurkjian, 2012) and presentations on global/international children’s literature (Valerie & Kurkjian, 2012; Kurkjian, 2012; Kurkjian, 2014; and on visual narratives (Kurkjian & Vardell, 2009; 2011; Kurkjian, C., 2010; 2010a.). It also builds on research centering specifically on visual narratives and reader response to multicultural and international literature (Kurkjian, Abadiano & Weiss, 1999; Weiss, Abadiano & Kurkjian, C., 1998-1999; Kurkjian & Kara-Soteriou, 2013).

My earliest research on reader response and visual narratives focused on cross-campus conversations on multicultural literature. The focus of this work was on teacher selection, use and response to and understanding of what counts as multicultural literature (Kurkjian, Abadiano & Weiss,1999; Weiss, Abadiano & Kurkjian, C., 1998-1999). Aspects of this work were presented at international venues (National Council Teachers of English World Congress, Netherlands, 2000; International Literacy and Education Research Network Conferences, Greece, 2001, and at national venues (International Reading Association Conference, 1999; National Reading Conference, 1998; National Association for Multicultural Education, 1998).

Most recently, and most relevant to the current research is an investigation (Kurkjian & Kara-Soteriou, 2013) focused on a wordless picturebook written by Australian, Astrid Lindgren Award Winner, Shaun Tan’s visual narrative, The Arrival. This qualitative investigation examined how readers responded and made meaning of this complex, award winning text and ways in which background knowledge, intertextuality and cultural codes came to bear in their understanding of the text. The ways in which teachers might best mediate the process of meaning making for their students were also examined. Aspects of this work have been presented in a variety of venues including the World Congress in New Zealand (Kurkjian & Billings, 2010) at the regional level (Kurkjian, Billings & Lynch, 2009) and at the statewide level (Kurkjian, 2011).
My work as editor of the quarterly journal, *Bookbird: A Journal of International Literature*, has sensitized me to international issues. Moreover it has afforded me the opportunity to edit a themed color issue dedicated exclusively to international visual narratives (Kurkjian, C., & Vardell, S. (Eds.), 2011) and to create an issue focused on Spain in print and an **Online Journal in the Languages of Spain** at [http://www.ibby.org/index.php?id=1036](http://www.ibby.org/index.php?id=1036).

The Bookbird editorship has also given me several professional opportunities such as participation at the Bologna Book Fair, a renowned world-wide publishing fair for international books, (2009, 2010, 2011), and including an interview with Roberto Innocenti, the illustrator of the texts on which my proposed research is based. Moreover, my extensive travel to Italy and ability to speak conversational Italian has laid the groundwork for the successful implementation of the proposed study and engagement in proposed activities.

IV. Description of proposed sabbatical activities and/or methodology (include as much detail as possible).

The proposed research is a qualitative hypothesis generating research investigation that situates itself within this global/ “glocal” framework within the context of the classroom in respective countries. The researcher serves as a participant/observer in this setting as small groups of students respond. Particular attention will be paid cross-cultural reader response to Innocent’s two language versions of *The House*, and *La Casa del Tempo*. More specifically the research questions include:

1. What meanings do Italian and US students construct in response to Italian and English versions of respective books?
2. What role (or roles), if any, does Innocenti’s visual narrative, in light of concomitant visual conventions and cultural codes, play in student response?
3. What role (or roles), if any, does the varying textual narratives of J. Patrick Lewis and Roberto Piumini, in light of concomitant literary conventions and cultural codes, play in student response?

**Participants**

This study will be conducted with graduate students enrolled in a literature-based course at my home university (CCSU), most of whom are classroom teachers earning their Masters Degree in Reading and Language Arts. In Italy the participants will be graduate and/or doctoral students at the University of Milan in the program entitled, Studi linguistici, letterari e interculturali in ambito europeo ed extraeurope, who are enrolled in a 20 hour laboratory session Children’s Literature: Picturebooks. Data sources include focus groups, individual participant interviews, and student artifacts such as assignments and blogs as well as researcher fieldnotes. The qualitative analysis of data will involve spotlighting and teasing out local, global, and cultural meanings of the texts from the perspective of graduate students from each university.

Data sources will be analyzed with the objective of describing identifiable themes, patterns and subcategories organized into representational categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Analysis of data will be conducted by research questions within and across texts and groups and in relation to levels of meaning. For each round of analysis, categories will be compared and contrasted, revisited and/or refined. The researcher will make use of NVivo 7, a computer-assisted data analysis program to “…increase the rigor of a
qualitative study” (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011, p. 70) and to aid in creating a node structure with broad categories and in creating “descriptive nodes to allow for the different dimensions of concepts to be coded (e.g. to differentiate between high and low levels of a particular concept)” (Hutchinson, Johnston, & Breckon, 2010, p. 290).

Timeline and Feasibility

By the time I begin my work at the University of Milan in spring of 2016, I will have piloted a design and have made application for review and approval of Human Studies (fall 2014 and spring 2015). I anticipate that I will have interviewed J. Patrick Lewis, poet of text from The House and the Publisher of Creative Editions. By fall 2015, I will have collected data from small groups of students enrolled in my RDG 588 Teaching Children’s Literature, transcribed it, entered it into NVivo, and have begun a preliminary qualitative analysis. Additionally, I will enroll and have taken an independent study Italian class to examine the texts by Roberto Innocenti written in Italian with a particular focus on La Casa del Tempo, in order to consider his texts more deeply and to develop some academic Italian vocabulary relating to the teaching of literature.

All of this preliminary work will have paved the way for the productive use of my time during my four months at the University of Milan. In the spring of 2016, I plan to collect data as part of my teaching assignment with graduate students at the University of Milan, and if feasible, conduct separate interviews with Roberto Innocenti and Roberto Piumini, and a publisher of La Casa del Tempo from La Margherita Publishing House. To heighten my awareness of cultural codes I would like to immerse myself in Italian literature by examining archives available to me at University of Milan’s P. A. Wick and Marengo-Baglio archival collections of children’s books and at the Brera Ministry of Cultural Heritage and the Mondadori Publishing House in Milan.

Once data is collected it will be transcribed, entered it into NVivo and I will begin to qualitatively analyze it within and across cultural groups and research questions. To ensure trustworthiness of findings there will be a member check regarding themes and patterns, and an audit to ensure that results were derived from the data. My plan is to have data analyzed and, if at all possible to create an outline and perhaps a very rough draft of a paper.

Other Proposal Fulbright Activities

As part of my time at the University of Milan I have the opportunity to work with Dr. Francesca Orestano who will be hosting me and with Dr. Peter Hunt at Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia. These scholars are leaders in literature and I have been invited to help them on developing a symposium on children’s literature. This will give me the opportunity to contribute and to learn from them. As evidenced by events listed on Dr. Orestano’s website at http://users2.unimi.it/childlit/events.html, it appears that University of Milan is a rich center for the study of Children’s Literature.

Additionally, my scheduled time in Italy will take place during the Annual Bologna Book Fair, (March, 2016), a convention that draws publishers, authors and illustrators from around the world. This will be an invaluable opportunity to enhance my awareness of the latest children’s international books and award winning international artists. All of this new learning will serve to enhance my teaching of Children’s Literature, Multicultural Literature.

V. Statement of potential value of your project to the university, to your professional growth, and to your particular field of study or discipline
The Fulbright project has value to the university especially as it pertains to the Center for International Education. I have been a long time committee member and believe in the importance of study abroad programs. While I am at the University of Milan, I will take the opportunity to explore the possibility of developing a study abroad program in Italy in relation to departmental and possibly cross-departmental collaborations. My connections with professors and students at University of Milan have potential too in developing online relationships in which students can respond to books online cross-culturally. In addition to enhancing and enriching the learning experience of my students, I can foresee opportunities for further cross-cultural research along these lines. Because I will learn so much about international children’s literature in Italy, I can envision a hybrid study abroad course in Italy for graduate students. In discussions with other professors teaching graduate students, we note that there is very little opportunity for them to study abroad. I anticipate my work in Italy may open some doors to this possibility in particular for the Department of Reading and Language Arts.

Clearly, the Fulbright opportunity will be enriching to me intellectually and professionally. The application process has helped me to consolidate what I already know and has opened new avenues in ways of thinking about international children’s literature. I know that immersing myself in this experience will be rejuvenating and will bring new life to my teaching as I learn more and become familiar with new international books and authors that are out there via networking, collaboration, and participation at the Bologna Book Fair.

This study is important because it has the potential to begin a line of research that will broaden our understanding of reader response to international literature across cultures that will be of significance in particular to publishers. It can begin to tell us if, and, or which types of international publications are building cross-cultural bridges in authentic ways. It will be informative in regards to the concept of “glocalization” and what cultural meanings are constructed from localized texts in comparison to hybrid “glocal” texts. There is a potential to generate hypotheses regarding the notion of glocalization that can be tested, refined or discarded in other studies.

The findings will have significance to teachers as they evaluate select and teach with international picturebooks in a way that builds an authentic understanding of the cultures represented. Because picturebooks are considered bimodal, in which readers must transact with images and text in a process referred to as transmediation, this study will be relevant to teachers as they support students’ visual literacy development, and become familiar with postmodern and now with what is called “transmodern” picturebooks.

**Intangible Value of Fulbright Activities**

The intangible benefits of this sabbatical are personal in nature. I am sure I will come back enriched with a new perspective on our own culture. In *The Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain makes one of his many comments on the virtues of travelling abroad:

> The gentle reader will never, never know what a consummate ass he can become, until he goes abroad. I speak now, of course, in the supposition that the gentle reader has not been abroad, and therefore is not already a consummate ass. If the case be otherwise, I beg his pardon and extend to him the cordial hand of fellowship and call him brother. I shall always delight to meet an ass after my own heart when I shall have finished my travels. (Ch. 23)

VI. Statement of expected outcomes of your project. (Describe the outcomes and relationship, if any, of any previous sabbatical projects to the current one.)
This research will enable me to write at least one article for a premier journal (Bookbird, Journal International Children’s Literature, Cambridge Journal of Education, Journal of Children’s Literature, Children’s Literature Association Quarterly etc.). Findings will be presented in a variety of national and international forums (e.g. International Reading Association Annual Conference, National Council of Teachers of English, IBBY’s World Congress New Zealand (September 2016), International Research Society for Children’s Literature, etc.) Results will be shared with the students in my classes and insights will lay the groundwork for a subsequent investigation.

My previous sabbatical was taken spring 2007. This work was done in conjunction with my role as Co-Chair of the Connecticut Association for Reading Research (CARR). Previous to the sabbatical, as Co-Chairs, Dr. Julia Kara-Soteriou, then at the University of Bridgeport, and I facilitated a study on behalf of CARR, entitled New Literacies: Domains of Expertise in the Integration of Technology and Literacy: A Connecticut Association for Reading Research Investigation. This survey research examined how high school teachers across educational reference groups, who teach in the content areas of the English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Technology, and Media Specialists within the state of Connecticut, understood the new literacies (Coiro, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004) of the Internet and other Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Data was collected from a stratified random sample of teachers (grades 9-12) from 2952 teachers drawn from 191 schools. The return rate was 32% with a sample of 1476 respondents.

The sabbatical component of this research involved a labor-intensive qualitative analysis of the open-ended items. As part of this work I enrolled in an NVivo, qualitative software, training workshop to support this analysis. The analysis was completed during the spring semester along with a rough draft of findings. Subsequently, qualitative and quantitative final reports were written, integrated and reviewed.

This research resulted in three research reports that were originally published on the CARR website (Kurkjian & Kara-Soteriou. 2008, Full Report; Kara-Soteriou & Kurkjian, 2008, Summary and Executive Report). The results were also disseminated in a compact disk format to CT schools in cooperation with the Connecticut State Department of Education, and this work resulted in one journal publication (Kara-Soteriou & Kurkjian, 2009). Additionally, a national presentation (Kara-Soteriou & Kurkjian, 2008) was made on this research on behalf of CARR. The completed reports were sent electronically to the Dean of School of School of Education and Professional Studies, Dr. Mitchell Sakoff, Provost, Dr. Car R. Lovitt, and to President John W. Miller. Although the proposed research is not directly related to my current work, my sabbatical work enhanced my skills as a qualitative researcher. Our work with a team of scholars and researchers was an important learning experience for me. Additionally, the NVivo training served me well in subsequent studies and in my teaching (Reading Research Seminar). Moreover, I will analyze my data using this software tool for the proposed research.

All References Attached
Fulbright Letter Attached
Curriculum Vita Attached
Letter from Dean, Fulbright Recommendation (separate document)
References


publication. Doi: 10:1037/a0022711


Publisher URL: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10583-006-9007-3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10583-006-9007-3)


Styles, J. (2004). From chameleons to koalas: Exploring Australian culture with pre-service teachers through children’s literature and international experience (Doctoral dissertation) The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.


Literature Cited


Twain, M. (1869) The Innocents Abroad. Harford, CT: American Publishing Company

Retrieved from http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3176/3176-h/3176-h.htm

Presentation citations are listed in Curriculum Vita
Dr. Catherine Kurkjian  
Professor, Department of Reading and Language Arts  
School of Education and Professional Studies  
Central Connecticut State University  
Appointment: August 21, 1995 - Graduate Faculty

**Academic Degrees**

- D.Ed. University of Northern Colorado, Elementary Reading and Language Art 1994
- M.Ed. University of Massachusetts, Elementary Education/Reading 1979
- B.A. University of Massachusetts Psychology/Human Development 1973

**Service to Department, School and University**

- Department: Student Advising, Thesis Advising/Chair, Conference Committee Chair, Program/Curriculum & Course Development, Faculty Mentoring
- School of Education: Governance ad hoc committees, Technology Committee

**Courses Taught - Graduate Level**

- Teaching Children’s Literature
- Teaching Multicultural Literature
- Bibliotherapy
- Integrating Technology into the Language Arts
- Reading Research Seminar
- Creative Language Arts
- Foundations of Reading K-12
- Teaching Graphic Novels

**Professional Work Experience**

**2005-Present**  
Professor, Reading and Language Arts, School of Education and Professional Studies, Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, CT 06050

**2001**  
Tenured, Central Connecticut State University

**2000**  
Promotion to Associate Professor

**1995**  
Appointed Assistant Professor

**1990-1992**  
University of Northern Colorado, Research Assistant, Teaching Assistant (Reading Assessment)
1989-1990 Denver Public Schools, Literacy Projects, Consultant, Metropolitan State College, Instructor, (Developmental Reading)
1982-1985 Seaman USD #345, Topeka, Ks, Reading Specialist
1979-1982 Littleton Public Schools, Littleton, CO, Reading Specialist
1975-1979 Amherst Public Schools, Amherst, MA, Special Education
1973-1975 Somerville Public Schools, Somerville, MA, Special Education

Leadership Positions and Honors

- **President** of Connecticut Reading Association 2014-2015
- **CT Ambassador**, Outstanding International Books, United States Board on Books (USBBY) for Young People (2012-present)
- **Elected Board Member**, Children’s Literature Assembly (CLA), National Council Teachers of English (NCTE) January, 2012 - December, 2014
- **Co-Chair**, Children’s Literature Assembly, Silent Art Auction, NCTE, Washington, DC. November 2014
- **Conference Chair**, Connecticut Reading Association 62nd Annual Conference, Cromwell, Connecticut, October 17 & 18, 2013
- **Elected Board Member**, National Council Teachers of English Liaison to, USBBY 2012-2013
- **Liaison** to USBBY Board, Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award Committee 2012-2013
- **Coordinator**, Gently Used Book Drive, 2013-present
- **Editor**, *Connecticut Reading Online Journal* debuted December 2012- to present, Initiated the development of this online members-only Journal
- **Editor** of *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children’s Literature* (Refereed Process 2008-2011)
- **Chair**, Connecticut Association for Reading Research (CARR) with Dr. Julia Kara-Soteriou (appointed) 2000-2004.
- **President**, New England Reading Association 2009
- **Conference Chair**, New England Reading Association Annual Conference 2008
- **Editor**, *New England Reading Association Journal* (Refereed) 2001-2008
- **Literacy Award**, Presented at the Annual Conference of New England Reading Association, October 21, 2005
- **State Literacy Award** for International Reading Association and Connecticut Reading Association, 2004
- **Editor**, *Dragon Lode, Children’s Literature Journal* SIG, International Reading Association, 2004-2005
- **President** of Children’s Literature SIG, (International Reading Association, 2000)
Department Editor and Columnist, Computers in the Classroom New England Reading Association Journal (Appointed position) Initiated this column (1998-2001)

Refereed Grants

- BOT/AAUP-Faculty Student Research Grant: (2010, 2003, 1999)
- Title II Grant- State Department of Education: Performance Assessments in Higher Education, Commendations from Auditors 2003, 2002)
- BOT/AAUP- Curriculum Development Grant- Preparing Literacy Teachers in the New Millennium: Reconstructing the Reading and Language Arts Curriculum within New Technologies Summer (2000, 1999)

Publications

Edited Journals

Juried Publications
Lisi, P. & Kurkjian, Č. (2013). Creating a culture of literacy in Connecticut and Ireland: Research and recommendations for teachers and educational
leaders. CARR Reader. Connecticut Association of Reading Research publication.

Kurkjian, C., & Kara-Soteriou, J. (2013). Insights Into Negotiating Shaun Tan’s The Arrival Using a Literature Cyberlesson., Sequential Art in Narrative Education. 3(1) online at http://www.sanejournal.net


Invited Children’s Literature Publications and Proceedings


Selected International/ National/Regional/State Presentations


Kurkjian, C. (2011). Reading Comprehension and the Graphic Novel: Reading Between the Panels. 63\textsuperscript{rd} Annual New England Reading Association Conference, Sturbridge, MA (September)

Kurkjian, C. (Invited Presenter) (2010). Leading out our profession through advocacy: Empowering teachers, learners and researchers in the advancement for all: 'Multicultural and Global Children's and Adolescent Literature in the Advancement of Literacy'. Annual Convention of the National Council of Teachers of English (November)


Kurkjian, C & Kara-Soteriou (2010). Using Internet Methods Frameworks to Support Learning and Teaching in the Language Arts, 62\textsuperscript{nd} Annual New England Reading Association Conference, Nashua NH (September).


Kurkjian, C. (2008). Engaging in literature study and promoting reading comprehension through Literature Cyberlessons. 53rd International Reading Association Convention, Atlanta, GA (May)


Kurkjian, C. (2002). Beyond the walls of the classroom: Email as a tool to create a shared frame of reference for reader response. 47th Annual Conference of International Reading Association, San Francisco, CA (May)


Kurkjian, C. (2001). Program Chair: Day-long poetry institute: For the love of poetry and all that jazz! 46th Annual Convention of the International Reading Association (IRA), New Orleans, LA (May)


Kurkjian, C. (1998). I didn’t know THAT was multicultural children’s literature. 48th Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference, Austin, TX (December)


Kurkjian, C. (1996). The mediation of literacy in a selected bilingual Head Start classroom. 46th Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference, Charleston, SC (December)


Kurkjian, C. (1994, June). Literacy interactions in selected head start classrooms: Data analysis workshop. Ethnographic & Qualitative Research Conference, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA
The Fulbright Commission

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Milan, 29 July 2014

Dear Sirs,

I have received the Fulbright application and proposal of Dr. Catherine Kurkjian, entitled "Bridging the Gap between Cultural Authenticity and Cross-Cultural Transportability" and having viewed the candidate’s profile I am very pleased to endorse her program, and to invite Dr. Kurkjian to the University of Milan.

As her application specifies, Dr. Kurkjian is an expert in children’s literature, and especially in graphic novels. In addition to this, she is an experienced teacher in these areas. Her profile is ideally suited to the research we are carrying out at Milan University, on children’s literature in Italy and abroad (see our dedicated website http://users.unimi.it/childlit). Moreover, she would profit of the Peter Arns Wick children’s literature collection and the Marengo-Vaglio collection both housed at the University of Milan APICE center.

In our Department Dr. Kurkjian may devote her skills both to research and to teaching activities with a 20% teaching and 80% research agenda.

The ideal period for the candidate and for our department schedule would be between Spring 2016 and Fall 2016. I should be very happy to encourage Dr. Kurkjian to have contact with my students, both undergraduate and graduate, and with the PhD candidates in “Studi linguistici, letterari e interculturali in ambito europeo ed extraeuropeo.” In addition to this, Dr. Kurkjian will have access to graduate students for the specific aims of her research project, as they will be her data sources. During her teaching time (which would be of at least 20 hours of a dedicated laboratory course ) she may collect all the relevant data.

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Aside from teaching, she may also work in relevant seminars, and her research may be enhanced by contacts with the Arnoldo Mondadori Foundation and Archives in Milano, and the Fondazione Tancredi di Barolo in Turin.

In my position as Professor of English Literature in the Department, with a specific focus on children's literature and visual studies, I should be very happy to host and welcome Dr. Kurkjian in our academic institution, in order to facilitate her research and to avail myself of her great professional skills. I trust that our institution, colleagues and students alike, would greatly benefit from Dr. Kurkjian presence and work in Milan.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

Francesca Orestano
Chair of English Literature
July 21, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

It is a professional pleasure to recommend Dr. Catherine Kurkjian to the Fulbright United States Scholar Program, All Disciplines Award for Research and Teaching. I have known Dr. Kurkjian, a full professor in the Department of Reading and Language Arts, since taking over as Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies (SEPS) at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) in June of 2013. Since that time, Dr. Kurkjian she has distinguished herself to me as a thoughtful and talented teacher-scholar.

Dr. Kurkjian is truly an expert teacher, particularly in the areas of children’s and young adolescent literature, multicultural literature, new literacies, and bibliotherapy. Her department chairperson has observed her classes on many occasions and reported to me that all aspects of Dr. Kurkjian’s lessons are purposefully designed and skillfully implemented in order to meet her learning objectives. Student evaluations rank her very high for depth of content knowledge and pedagogy, passion for teaching, and deep understanding of student needs. She engages students and motivates them to establish challenging tasks and goals for their own learning. Students’ comments on her teaching emphasize her expertise in organizing content in ways that allow them to relate new subject matter with their prior knowledge and other knowledge and experiences they have gained from other courses throughout their program. They also cite Dr. Kurkjian’s tenacity at keeping current with research and literacy trends, as well as encouraging them to do the same, as one of her strengths.

Engagement in international literature, with a focus on cultural issues, has been an important part of Dr. Kurkjian’s research and teaching agenda. She has presented outcomes of her scholarship in several countries including Denmark, The Netherlands, France, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, Spain, United Kingdom and Italy. As such, Dr. Kurkjian has developed a network of scholarly colleagues across the globe – including two prominent researchers working in Italy named in Dr. Kurkjian’s current Fulbright Proposal. Dr. Kurkjian is clearly culturally adaptable and, based on her demonstrated teaching and academic record, will make an excellent cultural ambassador for the United States.

Dr. Kurkjian possesses excellent communication skills, including conversational ability in Italian. She intends to make use of her communications skills to engage in an Italian-based research agenda that will task her to interact with both cultural archives as well as with local, practicing experts in children’s literature. The significance of this scholarship will benefit her work as Editor of the Connecticut Reading Association Journal, and will have implications on the knowledge base of reading comprehension of visual narratives for international audiences. Outcomes of this scholarship will also allow for the development of a cross-cultural, collaborative symposium on children’s
children’s literature, as well as opportunities for cross-cultural teaching and learning opportunities for students at both CCSU and at the University of Milan.

In sum, Dr. Catherine Kurkjian is an exemplar in teaching, research, and professional and community engagement. I recommend her, without reservation, for the Fulbright United States Scholar Program, All Disciplines Award for Research and Teaching. Her proposal, “Bridging the Gap between Cultural Authenticity and Cross-Cultural Transportability: International Children’s Literature” is well conceived and takes full advantage of her expertise and experience. The proposal, if implemented, has the opportunity to be benefit the field of children’s literature in Italy and the United States.

Sincerely,

Michael Alfano, Ph.D.
Dean
Department Sabbatical Leave Committee Appraisal:

Recommend:  Yes _____  No _____
Departmental Sabbatical Leave Committee Signatures:

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Reviewed By Dean or Administrative Officer ________________________________

Reviewed By Provost ________________________________