

PRESS RELEASE -- Massachusetts Book Awards 2005

CONTACT: REBECCA FRANK, Program Coordinator, Massachusetts Center for the Book
massbook@hampshire.edu 413.559.5678

Embracing Massachusetts Authors:

5th Annual Massachusetts Book Awards in Lowell, Massachusetts

What do Dennis Lehane, Jorie Graham, Jayne Anne Phillips, Nathaniel Philbrick, Lois Lowry, Steve Almond, and Jack Gantos have in common? All live and work in Massachusetts, all have been recognized by the *Massachusetts Book Awards* for writing books of outstanding merit, and all have seen their award-winning titles deposited in the Massachusetts Book Awards Special Collection in our State Library.

“We’ve embraced this place in all its intensity, variety and complexity. Today, symbolically, Massachusetts is embracing us,” noted author Jayne Anne Phillips last fall at the State House, during the ceremony that opened the Massachusetts Book Awards depository.

This year, twelve new books, representing outstanding achievements in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and children’s/young adult literature, will be added to the depository, selected from more than 400 titles that were considered in the awards year. Those books, their authors and hometowns are as follows:

The Fifth Annual Massachusetts Book Awards

Fiction Award to:

Project X by Jim Shepard (Alfred A. Knopf), a Williamstown resident

Fiction Honors to:

Love in the Asylum by Lisa Carey (William Morrow), formerly of Brookline

Inheritance by Lan Samantha Chang (W. W. Norton), Cambridge – will assume the directorship of the Iowa Writers’ Workshop in January

Nonfiction Award to *Outwitting History* by Aaron Lansky (Algonquin Books), Amherst resident and founder of the National Yiddish Book Center

Nonfiction Honors to :

Spirit and Flesh by James M. Ault, Jr. (Alfred A. Knopf), Florence

Washington’s Crossing by David Hackett Fischer (Oxford University Press), Wayland

Poetry Award to *Trouble in Mind* by Lucie Brock-Broido (Alfred A. Knopf), Cambridge

Poetry Honors to :

Goodbye to the Orchard by Steven Cramer (Sarabande Books), Lexington

The Unsubscriber by Bill Knott (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), Somerville, on sabbatical Fall 2005

Children’s Literature Award to *My Light* by Molly Bang (Blue Sky Press), Falmouth

Children’s Honors to :

Blow Out the Moon by Libby Koponen (Little, Brown), Boston

Fine Feathered Friends by Jane Yolen (Boyd’s Mills Press), Hatfield

The awards will be celebrated on November 17, 2005, in Lowell, when the Center will launch its year-long reading promotion initiative for the titles.

“We consider the awards announcement as the beginning rather than the culmination of our program,” says Sharon Shaloo, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Center for the Book. Ms. Shaloo explains that the MassBooks are intended to bring writers and readers together for meaningful discussion about books that matter to our shared lives in the Commonwealth.

To facilitate this conversation, the Center hosts at its web site (www.massbook.org) reading and discussion guides for each of the twelve titles. These guides are developed by librarians from across the commonwealth who are experienced book discussion group leaders. The Center also facilitates communication between libraries and MassBook authors to encourage author visits to every region of Massachusetts, and it takes the award books on the road, featuring them at the Massachusetts table in the Pavilion of the States at the National Book Festival in Washington, DC. (Read about NBF at www.loc.gov/bookfest.)

“The MassBooks are always very promotable books,” says Rebecca Frank, program coordinator for the Massachusetts Book Awards, “and for that we give full credit to the extraordinary judges who volunteer their time and expertise to the selection.”

This year’s judges are Anne Bernays, novelist and founder of PEN New England; Russ Barker, Brookline Booksmith; Ellen Wendruff, Robbins Library, Arlington; Diana Muir, historian, author of *Reflections in Bullough’s Pond*; John Morse, president and publisher, Merriam-Webster, Inc.; Linda Knaack, Forbes Library, Northampton; Nick Flynn, poet, author of *Blind Huber*; Peter Thornell, Hingham Public Library; Pat Purdy, Banbury Cross Children’s Bookshop, Wenham; Wendy Garland, Greenlodge School, Dedham; Amy Pattee, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Simmons College.

The Massachusetts Book Awards dinner will take place at the DoubleTree Hotel in Lowell, Massachusetts on Thursday, November 17. It is being held in conjunction with an innovative conference sponsored by the Massachusetts Library Association on the subject of *Twenty-first Century Literacies*.

In addition to the presentation of awards, the MassBook ceremony will feature the announcement of the 2005 Massachusetts Book Medalist, given to a person or organization that has contributed to the ongoing vitality of the community of the book in Massachusetts. Previous medalists have included Stanley Kunitz, poet and founder of the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown; Eric Carle, children’s book author/illustrator and founder of the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art in Amherst; and PEN New England, a community of writers enriching a commonwealth of readers in Massachusetts.

For more information about the awards, about the many other literary events that will take place in Lowell during the awards week, and to purchase tickets, contact the Amherst office of the Massachusetts Center for the Book at 413.559.5678 or massbook@hampshire.edu.

The Massachusetts Center for the Book (MCB) is the Commonwealth affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. It works within a network of state-center affiliates around the country to promote books, reading, literacy, and libraries. MCB sponsors programming that will expand the circle of readers in Massachusetts and that will promote the vitality of the community of the book in our commonwealth. MCB is supported by a partnership among the Boston Athenaeum, Boston Public Library, Hampshire College, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, and Simmons College. The Massachusetts Library Association is a programming partner for the annual book awards.

You can read more about the Book Awards and about the other programs of the Center – most particularly the new Literary Map of Massachusetts, a road map to more than 240 visitable literary heritage sites in the commonwealth, *Letters about Literature*, and the Mother Goose Asks, “Why?” family literacy project -- at www.massbook.org.