

## **Background to the First Children's Book Week in Australia**

In the USA the first Children's Book Week was inaugurated in 1919 by the Children's Book Council of America.

In 1945, with the belief that books and libraries would contribute to world peace, the Children's Book Council of America sponsored the International Children's Book Week in several countries. The theme "United Through Books" and the month November was chosen. The U.S. Information Library, established in Australia during WW2, was enlisted to support for the project.

Although Australian children's books flourished in the early days of colonisation, by the 1930's there was a major slump and WW2 saw imports were restricted and paper shortages curtailed local production which increased the problem. Despite this, organisations and individuals were waging their own battle to provide more and better locally produced books for children.

At that time, Mary Townes Nyland employed by the U.S. Information Library was part of a dinner party which was held to encourage participation in this International Children's Book Week. Other participants included teachers, publishers, authors, librarians and representatives from the ABC.

The idea was seized upon and a committee formed and the first meeting was held in the ABC office of Charles Bull. Enthusiasm spread and the first Book Week was held November 12 – 18, 1945. Events, book displays, lectures etc were held throughout Australia.

### **The Poster**

The Children's Book Council of America 1944 poster with the theme "United Through Books" showing children of various nationalities was chosen to be the poster for the International Children's Book Week. It was displayed at various libraries, schools and events.

The poster's illustrator was Nedda Walker.

"This Canadian born artist grew up and around Boston and attended the Massachusetts School of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. She later specialized in portraiture and children's book illustration.

The slogan "united Through Books" expressed the cooperative spirit among librarians, booksellers, and publishers that had come to be associated with the annual Book Week observances. It also heralded the Allied Powers' plan to found a postwar United Nations. For the first time Book Week was being celebrated

internationally – in England and on a small scale, in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Nicaragua, and the Soviet Union.”

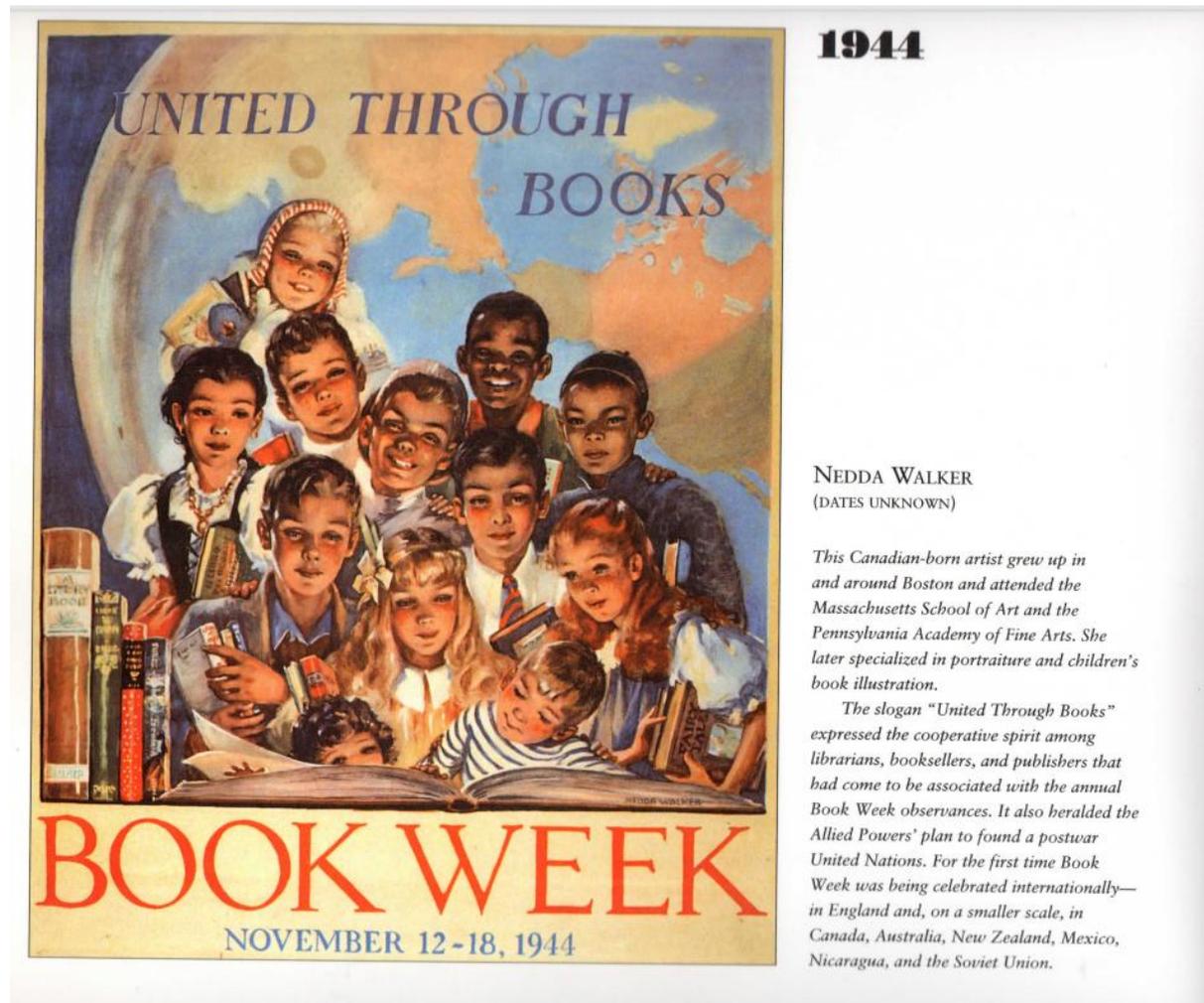
From

*75 years of Children's Book Week posters : celebrating great illustrators of American children's books;*  
with introduction and text by Leonard S Marcus.

Children's Book Council (New York, N.Y.)

Leonard S Marcus

New York : A.A. Knopf, c1994



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