

Dear member of IOB,

This year have started in a quite dramatic way. First we have all the wildfires in Australia. Every day I check the news and follow the fires around Clunes. At last the rain was falling and the fires calmed down. Right now we see the escalation of the conflict in Syria and once again there are thousand and thousands of refugees at the border of Europe. Horrible scenes are taking place again. And so we have this Corona virus exploding around the world. So we can say – it is a dramatic world.

This year is also special because it is our year for IOB. We will meet in Borrby in Sweden in May. I know from the team that there is about 30 persons coming. It will be very good spending some days together and I know that it is still possible to join.

Now some news from the work of booktowns. Last fall I visited some Booktowns to see the amazing work you are doing and I really enjoyed it. First I visited Chelopek, Vratsna in Bulgaria and had the opportunity to welcome them as member of IOB. They took really good care of me there and they let me see both their work, meet a lot of people and places. I had some very exciting days with the women who are building this new booktown together with good support from authority in the village and the region. You will meet the three leading women in Borrby!

I also took a trip in Denmark. I found no less than seven booktowns! Seven in Denmark. A country with 5,6 million people. It was a fantastic trip to see them all and meet the people working in all this places. All different but with the same love for books. We now have three of them as new members in IOB. You will meet them also in Borrby.

We had two far away visitors. I had a meeting with Mr Sanguo Cheng from China. Under a trip around Europe he wanted to see me and ask about the concept of booktowns. It was a very interesting hour to hear about the work with literature all over China. They asked us for help to develop their work and learn from us what they can do to build booktowns all over China. Maybe we soon have members also there! I have now an invitation to come and speak at a bookevent in China. It was planned this spring but because of the virus they moved the event to October. But my speech is still in the program! We also had a visitor from the Tohoku University in Japan, Ms Kuniko Sakata Watanabe. She came to Borrby and spent some hours with my daughter. She wanted to know all about booktowns. They are still in contact so maybe we can have a request from Japanese booktown as well.

I hope I can continue to visit more Booktowns, both new ones to welcome them to IOB and also old members. Until now I have visited 13 booktowns but still have a lot of visiting left!

Soon there will be both invoice for 2020 and the agenda for our assembly. Do you have something you want to discuss at the meeting, please let me know. You

can start thinking about the new board, who wants to invite us for 2022 and also if there is things to do for our website. I also know you soon will have more details from Borrby. If you don't have announced your plans to come you can send it to me and I will give it to the team in Borrby.

I think this will be all for now. Soon you will hear more from the board about the assembly. Until that - keep up your good work for books, reading and humanity!

4 of March 2020

Your president of IOB

Gunnel Ottersten