This series offers annual publications that act as a permanent cumulative record of the two principal awards for children’s literature in the US. The entries begin at 2012 and weave back to 1922 in the case of the Newbery Medal titles and back to 1938 in the case of the Caldecott Medal titles. The brief annotations for each winning and honour book are engaging and useful in collection development decisions even far from the US. One special element of the annotations for the Caldecott entries is the inclusion of the media details.

The established layout has been continued. The book begins with an outline of the history of the awards, the criteria, terminology and definitions. This is seminal information for any librarian handling children’s and YA literature, and it is fascinating in its detail. Following this is a regular feature essay, this year contributed by Deborah Stevenson, editor of the Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books and Director of the Center for Children’s Books at University of Illinois. This is titled ‘The Newbery in the Press: The First Fifty Years’. The remainder of the book contains the annotated entries, finishing with an author/illustrator index and title index.

Stevenson’s essay is both scholarly and entertaining. She has scoured US newspapers from 1922 to analyse the Newbery press coverage over the following 50 years. The launch of the Newbery Medal was orchestrated to create maximum impact and reports and photographs appeared in five influential newspapers. Coverage built up from this start, and it gradually became an annual, reliable feature following the announcement of the winners. Gradually other events became attached to the coattails of the Newbery announcement – Children’s Book Week, author visits and special displays. Publishers quickly embraced the Newbery’s value for sales, and by 1925 there were special Newbery editions of the winning title, and libraries frequently had dedicated shelving for the winning and honour Newbery titles. Newspapers from other parts of the world began reporting the Newbery and Caldecott winning titles with reviews.

The nature of reporting gradually changed. Independent columnists and critics were for a long time complimentary and respectful of the lauded titles, but by the 1960s there was a higher degree of analysis and criticism. Gradually the changes in process and procedure for the award led to more formalised announcements with press releases and photographs, and press coverage came to embrace a stable of people and events – authors (forever known as Newbery-winning authors), literary editors in newspapers, libraries where events and displays featured the awarded titles, Newbery Medal presentation ceremonies
and profiles of John Newbery himself and tributes to Frederic Melcher, who instigated the award and was consistently involved for 40 years.

This annual publication is, as expected, a gem. It is recommended as a stimulating, contemporary account of one important segment of quality children’s literature.

Heather Fisher
New England Girls’ School