From Corvallis to Abeokuta: Visiting Our Sister Library in Nigeria

By Richard Sapon-White, Principal Cataloger
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Since 2015, Oregon State University Libraries and Press (OSULP) has had a sister library relationship with the Nimbe Adedipe Library at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria, (FUNAAB). Shared activities have included OSULP hosting Dr. Nike Onifade, currently the university librarian at FUNAAB, at our Corvallis, Oregon, campus; holding a virtual meeting with staff of both institutions, sharing information about our respective library operations; and surveying both staffs about the sister library experience.

Dr. Onifade was very interested in having OSULP staff visit FUNAAB in order to learn about Nigerian librarianship and culture. Planning for this visit took nearly two years, but the effort was well worth it. In November 2019, Michael Boock and I spent two weeks at FUNAAB giving presentations and providing training to library staff.

Richard Sapon-White and Michael Boock (center) with library staff at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

Inside this Issue

Following are highlights of that trip and some thoughts on continuing the relationship into the future.

The purpose of our visit was to assist with the implementation of an institutional repository for FUNAAB. While some academic libraries in Nigeria have institutional repositories, there are many that still have a need for them. In preparation for our trip, our OSULP colleague Josh Gum corresponded with FUNAAB staff to install software developed at OSULP on a FUNAAB server. By the time we arrived in November, we were ready to provide training on maintaining the repository and advising on metadata standards.

Before starting on the training, FUNAAB hosted two library conferences during our first week in Abeokuta. The annual conference of the Association of Women Librarians in Nigeria drew attendees from throughout the country. I presented a paper on subject headings and social

From Corvallis to Abeokuta, continued

change, describing my work creating subject heading proposals for Oregon's indigenous peoples. The audience was very interested when I showed how proposals could be created for Nigeria's many ethnic groups as well as for Nigerian topics that are not currently in Library of Congress Subject Headings. During the second week, FUNAAB library staff assisted me in creating a proposal for "fluted pumpkin," a regional crop. As this article goes to press, I am awaiting final approval of this subject heading from the Library of Congress.

Richard Sapon-White with members of the Cataloging Department, FUNAAB. From left: Chioma Chiemenem, Fauziyah Adenekan Richard, Sarah Adegbaye.

Michael presented on reorganizing library departments to support digitization projects and reviewed OSULP's experience creating an institutional repository. At the second conference, entitled "Libraries, Information Scientists, and Cybernautics in the Era of the Knowledge Economy," I provided the keynote address on recent changes to metadata standards, including the importance of linked data in integrated library systems, the implementation of RDA at OSULP, and the development of BIBFRAME as a replacement for MARC.

Our second week was devoted to learning about FUNAAB library operations and providing training to our hosts. Staff showed off their library during our initial tour, pointing with pride to the study room that was open 24/7 for students, the computer room where students could access numerous online resources, and the special collection of books and journals on Nigerian agriculture. The staff were uniformly dedicated and knowledgeable, in addition to welcoming us warmly with the friendliness that is characteristic of West Africa.

We were also made aware of the many challenges that the FUNAAB library faces. Not least amongst these is the sporadic nature of electricity supply. While being driven to campus one day, a commentator on the radio made the statement that 70% of Nigeria's economic development problems were directly related to the inconsistency of electric power. We certainly experienced this daily during our visits.

For the library, this has great consequences for student and faculty in the way of access to electronic resources such as journals and databases. Their technical services department maintains a card catalog in addition to the online catalog, a duplication of effort necessitated by the irregular power supply. I was impressed with the resilience and resourcefulness of our FUNAAB colleagues who cope with this and other issues on a daily basis.

I spent a chunk of my time with the cataloging department, discussing cataloging practices in the United States and the ways in which they, too, could participate in the various parts of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging. FUNAAB catalogers were very eager to contribute subject headings to the Library of Congress Subject Headings. Michael spent time with the automation department, going over procedures to upload files into their institutional repository and the maintenance needed to keep it going.

We also had leisure time where we were able to experience the life and culture of southwestern Nigeria. As a vegan, I was uncertain whether our hosts would be able to make accommodations for me, but I was delighted to find a wide variety of delicious traditional foods to eat. I especial-

Richard Sapon-White and Michael Boock with members of the Alake of Egbaland's court, Abeokuta.

From Corvallis to Abeokuta

ly enjoyed egusi with amala (ground kernels of watermelon seeds with corchorus leaves in a stew, served with a dumpling made from yam) and moin moin (bean pudding). We were also treated to a cultural night of traditional theater, music and dancing.

During the second conference, we went on a tour of Abeokuta, visiting the palace of the alake (king) of Egbaland, the childhood home of Fela Kuti (noted Afrobeat musician), and the first Anglican Church in Nigeria. The Kuti home is now a museum, situated in a neighborhood called Sapon (pronounced "shah-PONE"). Although the pronunciation is slightly different from the first part of my last name, I was told repeatedly about this nearby neighborhood. Conference attendees and library staff wondered if there was some connection between my family and the neighborhood (there is not). At the alake's palace, when I was introduced and my name pointed out, one of the court officials there shook my hand warmly and said we were brothers!

Michael and I came back to Oregon very excited about the trip, overflowing with ideas to keep our sister library relationship going. Aside from renewing our Memorandum of Understanding for another 5 years, we hope to bring some FUNAAB staff to Oregon for mutual educational activities and cultural understanding. By the time this article is published, the OSULP Sister Library Committee will have met to discuss our plans for the future.

Trip Funding

Funding for the trip was a collaborative effort. FUNAAB agreed to provide room and board as well as transportation to and from the airport in Lagos. OSULP provided us with release time for the trip. Airfare and other travel expenses were covered by a generous grant from the Engineering Information Foundation (EiF).

We discovered after receiving that grant that we needed additional funds to cover travel for a separate trip to Los Angeles in September in order to apply for our Nigerian visas. To cover those costs, we applied for and received a second grant, this time from OSULP, whose Lundeen Fund provides moneys for library faculty professional development. We would like to thank all three – EiF, OSULP, and FUNAA

Connect with IRRT

Email: ala.intl.leads@gmail.com

Web: http://www.ala.org/rt/irrt

Blog: http://www.alairrt.blogspot.com

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/International-Relations-Round-Table-244416388965473/

Message from the Editors

Welcome to the first issue of 2020!

In this issue, our Chair, Richard Sapon-White, in addition to his usual column, shares about his experiences with a sister library in Nigeria.

ALA Midwinter was in January, and as usual a lot of important organizational business took place. The report from our Councilor, Sandy Hirsh, as well as reports from the committees provide important information about IRRT and ALA activities. This year's ALA Emerging Leaders Group E, the third group to work with IRRT, will continue the project started by last year's group - *International Librarians' Networking Program*. Librarians and information professionals from all parts of the world are invited to participate.

Orient yourself with libraries in Serbia, and read from an academic librarian from Switzerland about exciting initiatives she is undertaking.

Happy reading!

Do you have news about events, projects, activities, achievements, grants, conferences?

Contact us: ala.irrt.leads[at]gmail.com.

Meet the Editors

Rebecca Miller

Rebecca is an independent library consultant, focusing on libraries in developing countries. She specializes in research, strategic planning, outreach, administration/management for libraries. She offers tailored professional development trainings and presentations on these and other topics. Rebecca has over 20 years of experience with libraries, as a practitioner and professor.

Florence Mugambi

Florence is the African Studies Librarian at the Herskovits Library of African Studies, Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, USA. She has over 10 years of experience as a librarian. She has a strong interest in literacy & establishment of libraries in rural communities of developing countries. She is the chair-elect of the Africana Librarians Council, coordinate organization of the African Studies Association.

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Message from IRRT Chair

Richard Sapon-White
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Dear IRRT Members,

By the time you read this, spring will be just around the corner.

Just a few short months away is the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. The IRRT board and committees have been hard at work preparing for ALA, which promises to have excellent international programming. While looking ahead, I would also like to bring you up-to-date on the board's deliberations at this past Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia.

Following the recommendation of the IRRT Endowment Committee, this year's IRRT Mission Enhancement Grant recipient is Croatia Linked Data project that will organize an international symposium at the National Library of Croatia. Read more about the project on page 14 of this issue.

Revisions to the IRRT Officers Manual to update information about our 15 committees have been reviewed and approved by the board. The manual provides essential information about how the round table operates and details each committee's responsibilities and procedures. A final version will be posted to the IRRT web site this spring.

The board agreed to make the ad hoc Webinar Committee a standing committee. Now in its second year, the committee has planned and delivered a series of timely webinars on international librarianship topics over the past two years.

By making the committee permanent, IRRT has made a commitment to providing inspiring programming to our members and anyone who is interested in international library development.

All of the webinars are recorded and freely available to everyone anytime at http://www.ala.org/rt/irrt/initiatives.

While at Midwinter, I attended the Round Table Coordinating Assembly (RTCA) along with our vice-chair/chair-elect Alexandra Humphreys. The RTCA brings together representatives of all of the ALA round tables to discuss issues pertinent to them. Primary at this time is the proposed restructuring of ALA by the Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE), which will have a significant impact on round tables. While the report from SCOE has not yet been approved by ALA Council, its recommendations are likely to be implemented.

Of concern to many Round Tables, including IRRT, is the requirement that each Round Table's paid membership be equal to or greater than one percent of ALA membership. Currently, ALA has approximately 58,000 members, meaning that IRRT would need to have 580 paying members. While IRRT membership is currently just over 1,600, only about half are actually paying members. IRRT provides free membership to international ALA members – and rightly so, as we do want to encourage our colleagues abroad to participate in our round table.

I have asked the IRRT Membership Committee to strategize on how to increase our domestic membership. If you have read this far through the column and are not yet an IRRT member, please consider joining today! The one percent threshold for Round Tables will not be implemented for a while yet, but it makes sense for us to start planning to boost our membership now.

Lastly, I hope you enjoy reading the article about my trip to Nigeria last November. The visit to our sister library was exciting and deeply satisfying for both my hosts and for me.

Internationally yours,

Richard

Message from IRRT Chair Elect

Alexandra Houzouri Humphreys
Alexandra.Humphreys@asu.edu

Greetings IRRT members!

SCOE Project: Forward Together

The events that attracted the most attention at the 2020 ALA Midwinter Meeting were impassioned Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE) meetings where ALA members availed themselves of opportunities to voice their concerns and make suggestions. In one meeting, some members of the Round Tables complained that SCOE members do not listen to their suggestions and that nothing is being changed or discussed. However, in another meeting someone claimed that the original version of the report was very different from the version that was circulated during the Midwinter—that it reflected many previous suggestions.

The Executive Board of the IRRT closely follows the progress of the SCOE Project and continues to advocate for the best interests of the IRRT and its members. We hope that the final document will address our questions and reflect the best thinking of our Round Table. The SCOE plans to submit its recommendations for adoption in spring 2022.

IRRT Committees and Groups

We had very productive meetings at the conference, with Saturday's All Sub-Committee Meetings taking center stage. Most members of the Executive Board, many committee chairs, and various attending members and visitors had opportunities to work on committee matters, network, and get to know each other. With approximate-ly 1,500 members, IRRT has a large presence. Neverthe-less, there is always room for additional input from members. Consider getting involved in one or more of the IRRT committees or groups (IRRT volunteer form).

The Chair's Program Committee programming for the

Annual Conference is centered on IRRT Chair Richard Sapon-White's theme, entitled "Global Libraries Leading Social Change."

The Endowment Committee promotes donations to the IRRT Endowment Fund and selects project(s) to recommend to the IRRT Executive Board for approval, among other responsibilities. This year's recipient of the Mission Enhancement Fund is "Croatia Linked Data International Symposium" project.

The International Connections Committee submitted a call for speakers with the theme *Leaning International: stories from the field.*

The Pre-Conference and the International Poster Session committees will also have programs and a presence at the 2020 ALA Annual.

The International Visitors Center has been collaborating with the Orientation/Mentoring Committee on a project called "conference buddies program," which aims to pair international librarians who attend the ALA Annual Conference with a U.S. librarian.

The International Paper Session submitted a call for proposals on the topic *How Libraries Create Awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Inspire Change.*

The International Reception Committee will soon draft the program for the reception that will take place on Monday, June 29 during the ALA Annual Conference.

The Sister Libraries Committee launched a successful promotional campaign among U.S libraries.

The Membership Committee aims to increase the number of IRRT members through various engagements. For example, promoting IRRT at a library conference in China, during the IFLA conference in Dublin, and collaborating with relevant IRRT committees.

The Nominating Committee has done a great job creating a very strong slate of candidates for IRRT 2020 elections.

The Publications Committee is continuing its great work on International Leads and Social networks. There were 1,210 Facebooks followers as of January 2020.

The Webinar Committee organized two webinars in the fall 2019 entitled "Libraries as Social Change Engines: Working Together with NGOs in Asia and Africa."

I would like to take this opportunity to mention the productive work of the International Sustainable Library Development Group that supports community-based

Message from IRRT Chair Elect, continued

library projects in the developing world; the Serving Refugees, Immigrants, Displaced Persons Sub-Committee, on which an IRRT Representative serves, is planning to create a series of Webinars on the current state of refugees and immigrants in America; and the 2020 Emerging Leaders Group E, which will be implementing the International Librarians Mentorship Program.

It's Time to Volunteer!

Add your voice to the library and information profession globally. We are looking for volunteers who have the dedication and enthusiasm to assist us in supporting international librarianship. Serving on a committee is one of the best ways of increasing communication and information sharing among librarians and libraries throughout the world. With 14 committees to choose from, IRRT provides you with the opportunity to contribute your expertise and talent in numerous ways.

This spring we will fill dozens of committee vacancies. To be eligible for appointment, you must be an ALA and IRRT member; attend both ALA Midwinter and Annual Conferences for the duration of your appointment; and actively participate in the projects and programs, which may include monthly virtual meetings. Applications submitted by April 15 will get first consideration.

For more information about the work of our committees, visit http://www.ala.org/rt/irrt/irrtcommittees/committees.

To apply to serve on a committee, complete the form at http://www.ala.org/rt/irrt-committee-volunteer-form.

Thank you for your interest and commitment to helping libraries and librarians have a global impact!

Mexico, 28 Nov - 6 Dec, 2020

The **Guadalajara International Book Fair**, the largest gathering of the publishing industry in the Spanish speaking world, opens applications for the **ALA-FIL Free Pass Program.** This unique opportunity for Librarians involved with Spanish content acquisitions offers everything you need to make your visit and acquisition of Spanish language books a great experience. You can access one of the most diverse and complete catalogues you will find anywhere with more than 2,000 publishing houses in the exhibition area.

Register now and obtain the following benefits:

- Three nights of lodging for free, continental breakfasts included (six nights if you share with another ALA member)

- Free registration (a badge to enter the fair)

- $100 USD airfare reimbursement (courtesy of ALA)

- Publication of data in the Professionals catalog

- Access to services in the Business Center for professionals

- Additional $100 USD or $1800 Mexican Pesos of airfare support for the first 100 librarians that have been accepted in the ALA Free Pass Program and have purchased their ticket before 30 September, among a dozen other benefits.

REGISTRATION AVAILABLE HERE

Deadline to register: 4 September

Librarianship in the Republic of Serbia: An overview

By: Dr. Gina de Alwis, Independent LIS Researcher, Singapore
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I received an invitation to the Serbian Library Association Annual Conference, 2019 to present a paper and conduct a Workshop on user experience (UX). To maximise my time, I scheduled visits to key libraries in Belgrade, connected with Library & Information professionals, and did one-on-one interviews to gain some insights into the current state of Library & Information Services (LIS) in the country.

Serbia, part of Yugoslavia for most of the 20th century, is an open middle-income economy with a population of 7.2 million (2018) which has experienced many tumultuous decades and an evolving political and economic environment. According to the World Bank Group's (WBG) Country Partnership Framework for 2016 – 20 it aims to support the creation of a competitive and inclusive economy in Serbia to facilitate integration into the European Union.

The Serbian Library System

As of December 2017, a total of 2,686 libraries operate in Serbia, including the National Library of Serbia in Belgrade and the Library of Matica Srpska in Novi Sad; 27 district libraries and over 600 public libraries with branches; four public university libraries with over 100 affiliated departments/special libraries, and, two private university libraries. Foreign cultural centres maintain small libraries.

The National Library of Serbia (NLS), founded in 1832 and reputed as a good European library was completely destroyed when Belgrade was bombed in 1941. Due to economic crisis and neighbourhood wars in the 1990s, NLS faced a temporary cessation of free flow of information and acquisition of books from overseas. Today, it is a source of national pride.

The government mandate states that each municipality must have a public library. The district library networks consist of municipal and city libraries and smaller public libraries. Public libraries are required to hold Local History Collection (LHC) departments to ensure the preservation of the local cultural heritage. National and Public library membership is fee-based, but nominal.

Acquisition of textbooks in English is a major challenge for the university libraries due to budget constraints, and faculty are encouraged to write textbooks that can be adopted. Space too is a major concern - the Belgrade City Library and University library both deploy underground storage and offer only individual study spaces onsite. The NLS now offers group study spaces.
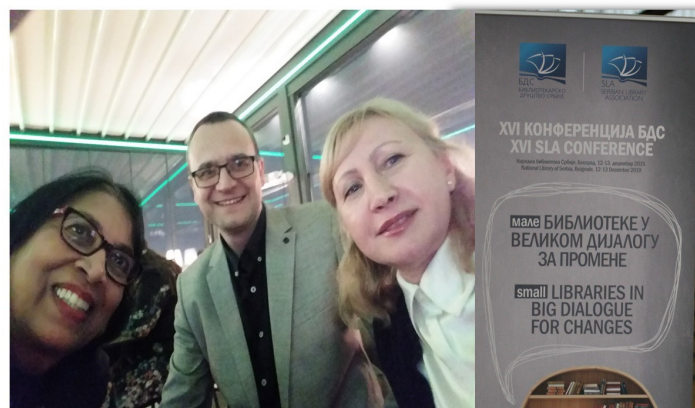
Serbian libraries use the Universal Decimal Classification Scheme (UDC) and the first Serbian UDC Online *"Srpski UDK Onlajn"* was released in December 2019.

Library & Information Science (LIS) Education and Continuing Professional Development

The Department of Library & Information Science (DLIS) in the University of Belgrade Faculty of Philology offers programs in LIS from undergraduate to doctoral levels. Initiatives undertaken to attract students to sustain the traditional undergraduate program include adding foreign languages to the curriculum and allowing students from other schools to take up LIS courses as electives. However, the government's hiring freeze enforced since 2013 has impacted the program and intake numbers. The University of Novi Sad offers a program for school librarians.

The NLS Section for Continuing Professional Education plays a key role in offering continuing professional development programs to librarians. 8-10 accredited courses are offered per year at various venues in Serbia and librarians are awarded certificates on completion of six hours professional development. The NLS also functions in an advisory capacity to school, public and city libraries on budget and collection management.

The Serbian Library Association (SLA), established in 1947, holds regular continuing professional development programs, an annual conference, and has been publishing the journal *"Bibliotekar" (The Librarian)* since 1948.

Dr. Gina de Alwis, left, Dr. Bogdan Trifunović (President, Serbian Librarian Assn), and Ms. Spaska Tarandova (Global Libraries Bulgaria Foundation)

Librarianship in Serbia, continued

Employment in the LIS Sector

The Serbian government has mandated that, individuals who are recruited to libraries without a qualification in LIS, sit a state examination after one year's employment. The examination conducted by NLS in collaboration with DLIS requires candidates to sit for seven subjects; LIS graduates need to sit only the cataloguing paper.

The Serbian public library sector is the biggest employer of LIS professionals in the country. However, the government's public sector hiring freeze has seen over 30 positions in special libraries remain vacant, especially in traditional one-person libraries—not attractive to young graduates entering the job market.

Consortia for Resource Acquisition and Management

Over the last two decades, Serbia has taken a few key strategic steps to enhance its information resource base: such as membership to eEIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) (1999). This partnership facilitated the creation of KoBSON (Serbian Library Consortium for Coordinated Acquisition).

KoBSON(2001) plays a key role as the national consortium for acquisition of e-resources exclusively funded by the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science & Technological Development. Four universities and their scientific institutes and research centres overseeing 100 libraries are members, with the NLS designated as the coordinator. KoBSON also maintains a database of articles published by Serbian authors (Naši u WoS). KoBSON is perceived to meet most of the research needs of academics and scientists and its success evidenced in the eIFL performance rankings and UNESCO's research.

Membership to EiFL has also facilitated the launch of open access portals for journals and PhD theses and dissertations; provision of training opportunities to the profession; and implementation of a project to improve Serbian scientific publishing. Association with the EIFL Public Library Innovation Program enabled two Serbian public libraries to introduce innovative services leveraging ICT to meet communities' pressing needs.

Open Access (OA)

Serbia has an active scientific publishing environment and an estimated 400 OA journals. However, researchers are not required to publish in OA, even if the articles are results of public-funded projects, and the Serbian government is yet to make provision to allocate funds for OA publication. The country has a national OA mandate only for PhD theses which are deposited in the central national repository, NaRDUS, launched in 2015 and managed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.

The concept of OA institutional repositories is still new and university academics are not receptive to depositing their research in the university library repositories. The concept of depositing datasets too is yet to be widely accepted.

Deployment of Information & Communications Technology (ICT) in Libraries

The NLS took the lead in implementing the online catalogue in 1990 and the government strategy for development of scientific and technological information in Serbia enabled the launch of a computerized library network in 1991. In 2001 the NLS initiated the virtual library project and today 223 libraries deploy the COBISS platform to connect the electronic catalogues. In 2003 Serbia was a signatory to COBISS.Net to facilitate the free flow of bibliographic data within the six East European countries.

Serbia's Digitization Program

Libraries lead the digitization efforts in Serbia with NLS launching Digital NBS in 2002. The key challenges for libraries while implementing digitization programs include lack of funding and staff with relevant skill sets; absence of national guidelines and standards to facilitate best practices; and how to deal with copyright and legal issues. Despite these challenges much has been achieved, for example, the Public Library Čačak digitization initiatives expanded to create a Digitization Centre in 2008, a first among public libraries in Serbia.

Key Insights

Serbian librarianship at a regional level has been gradually gaining ground through regional collaborations. However, at a local level, the LIS sector continues to face severe challenges: budget restrictions; space limitations; lack of job opportunities, trained professionals, and recognition of the profession.

Possible points for consideration to address gaps/challenges with minimal recourse to library budgets.

1. *Exploring Open Educational Resources (OER) to address paucity of textbooks in English*

KoBSON is a great success story. However, Serbian uni-

Librarianship in Serbia, continued

versity libraries are unable to provide access to text-books in English due to budget restrictions. Examples of OER sites: OER Commons, San Jose State University, and State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo Affordable & Open Educational Resources. The university librarians will need to lead the initiative.

2. *Public libraries as social change agents to offer skills programs*

According to the 2019 World Bank report one of the top priority areas for Serbia is skills upgrading. The World Bank funded Enabling Digital Governance Project report states that citizens and public sector workers lack necessary digital skills and part of the population is currently digitally excluded. Moving forward, the workforce will need to prepare to embrace technological changes.

The focus on upgrading skills and the 5-year *Digital Serbia* project offer public libraries opportunities to act as catalysts, to connect with stakeholder communities that can offer relevant skills and sponsorships, etc., to facilitate capacity building. These proactive measures would help enhance the image and visibility of the profession; enable public libraries to be perceived as social change agents; and support the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

3. *Branding and image building of the library profession*

The need for branding and image building of the profession is not unique to Serbia and might not be resolved with one round of marketing. The NLS and SLA need to get buy-in from related LIS stakeholders and as one uni-fied body give top priority to preparing a concerted plan at the national level to hold continuous dialogue with relevant stakeholder communities, remove negative perceptions, and develop high profile visibility for the profession.

Serbian librarianship's identity needs reigniting and it is for the LIS profession to make it happen.

###

Dr. Gina de Alwis, second from left, with Serbian Library Association conference participants.

2020 ALA Emerging Leaders group for IRRT

By Muzhgan Nazarova, IRRT Past Chair

It is my great pleasure to announce and welcome the 2020 ALA Emerging Leaders Group E. They will work with IRRT for the next six months.

Group E of the 2020 class of ALA Emerging Leaders

Pictured above from left to right are:

- Damiana Fortenberry, Library Associate, Gwinnett County Public Library

- Lauren Frazier, Children's Services Librarian, Monterey Park Bruggemeyer Library

- Erica Saito, Library and Information Specialist, International Food Policy Research Institute

- Jesse Caldwell, Teen Librarian, Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County

- Zoë McLaughlin, South and Southeast Asia Librarian, Michigan State University Libraries

- Shayla Boyce, Branch Manager, Cleveland Public Library

Before describing the project of EL 2020 Group E and inviting all of you to participate, I would like to briefly reflect on the IRRT's recent history with ALA's Emerging Leaders program.

IRRT has been lucky to work with the Emerging Leaders (EL) teams for the last three years in a row, as well as sponsor one Emerging Leader every year. All three projects have been interconnected and build upon each other. IRRT has benefitted greatly from their participation.

2018—EL Group G

The EL 2018 Group G worked on the project "Towards Increasing Engagement of International New Professional Leaders in ALA Activities", to identify new emerging international leaders and to build a model for ongoing international engagement in ALA. Based on the analysis of the results of a survey of all IRRT members, the group was able to develop recommendations for policy that encourage participation of international librarians in ALA.

The results of the survey were reported in a white paper and poster presentation. More on the EL 2018 Group E project can be found in *International Leads,* June 2018 issue.

2019—EL Group G

The 2019 EL Group G worked with IRRT leadership to plan a peer mentoring program that is closely aligned with IRRT values. The goal of the International Librarians Mentorship Program (ILMP) is to assist librarians from around the world to network and expand their skills in librarianship through a cooperative and collaborative program. Members of 2019 Group G did an outstanding job at various stages of the project including launching a web site as a space where international librarians interested in collaborating with peers from different countries can come together, obtain information about the project, and submit an application.

The documentation related to the project put together by 2019 Group G can be found in the following downloadable documents:

- Emerging Leaders 2019 Team Report (1) (PPT file, 801 KB)

- Emerging Leaders 2019 Team Report (2) (PDF file, 559 KB)

- 2019 Emerging Leaders Final Report (Word document, 211 KB)

- Peer Mentoring Bookmark (PDF file, 11 MB)

2020—EL Group E

Building on the success of the 2019 EL Group G, the 2020 EL Group E is charged with developing a marketing campaign and launching of the program with a first cohort of 30-50 collaborating peers. They will depend on the groundwork, website and tools that Group G created last year, moving the program to the next step and witnessing a first partner group collaborating for mutual professional benefit.

2020 Emerging Leaders, continued

The current group has slightly changed the title of the project to International Librarians Networking Program (ILNP).

As part of their marketing campaign to reach out to broader geographic audiences, Group E has prepared a flyer in multiple languages including Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Russian, Japanese, Arabic, and Korean.

Additionally, they have released the official announcement calling for participants into the program. ILNP will help librarians from around the world to network and expand their skills through a collaborative program. This four-month, self-guided program allows participants to form impactful relationships. The ILNP is modeled after the now defunct International Librarians Network (ILN) Peer Program first established in Australia.

More information can be found on the ILNP website.

I would like to wish Group E success with their project. I invite International Leads readers and IRRT members to participate in the project to be enriched professionally, culturally and educationally. We live in a global world! This is a great opportunity to learn from each other and also change someone's life.

Spread the word and submit your application to participate by **March 31, 2020**.

Join the National Peace Corps Association affiliate for Libraries

If you are a returned Peace Corps volunteer (RPCV) who has worked in libraries, museums, archives or in the information profession or has worked with library or literacy projects while serving in the Peace Corps, you are invited to join the new affiliate group, RPCVs in Libraries, Museums and Archives of the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA). Membership in both the NPCA and the affiliate group, RPCVs in Libraries, Museums and Archives, are free and information is available at http://peacecorpsconnect.org/pages/home. The affiliate will be planning programs or working with other affiliates to plan programs. For further information, contact Kay Cassell kcassell@nyc.rr.com. This new group has been sponsored by ISLD (International Sustainable Library Development Interest Group) in the International Relations Round Table.

International Visitors' Center volunteer opportunities at ALA Annual: Save the dates

The IRRT International Visitors' Center Committee is looking for volunteers to staff the center at ALA Annual. The center will be open 8:00-5:00, 26-28 June and 8:00-2:00 on 29 June. Volunteers can choose any number of one-hour shifts. Duties include enjoying treats while talking with visitors and manning the world photo booth - come join us if you'd like to make friends from around the world!
Sign-ups will open soon, so keep us in mind as you register and make plans to attend the conference.

If you have any questions, contact Katie Spires at mkspires@gmail.com.

IRRT Councilor Report from Midwinter 2020

This column reports on some of the major topics addressed at ALA Council meetings and how the IRRT Councilor represents IRRT interests. Included here are highlights from the meetings in Philadelphia.

By Sandy Hirsh, IRRT Councilor
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ALA Council began its first meeting with an introduction to our new ALA Executive Director, Tracie D. Hall, who started her new role in late February 2020. She was introduced as someone who is optimistic, energizing, and innovative. She started as a Spectrum Scholar in 1998, and served as Director of Office of Diversity from 2003-2006. She comes most recently from the Joyce Foundation.

Council heard an update on status of "Forward Together" (CD#35) from Lessa Pelayo-Lozada, Chair of Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE), and Jim Meffert of Tecker International. Lessa announced that SCOE is continuing to seek opportunities to hear more member voices. To provide more time for that and to accommodate the other streams of change happening within ALA, the timeline for voting on the recommended changes has been pushed back, with an expected vote on constitution and bylaws changes now expected in January 2021. For more information on the work of SCOE, visit the SCOE Discussion Forum.

ALA Executive Board nominations and elections took place at ALA Midwinter Council. As your IRRT Council Representative, I was extremely honored to be nominated to run for the ALA Executive Board. While I was not elected, three fantastic people were elected: Larry Neal, Library Director, Clinton-Macomb Public Library; Alexandra Rivera, Student Success and Community Engagement Librarian, University of Michigan Library; and Latrice Booker, Indiana University Northwest Campus Dean.

One of the biggest topics of discussion during ALA Council Midwinter meetings was the ALA budget and the operating shortfall, which surprised many councilors. Maggie Farrell, ALA Treasurer, discussed ALA's financial situation at Council II. Some of the questions from Councilors were whether it was true that ALA had swept Division reserve funds to cover ALA operations, whether ALA could provide more detailed financial reports to Council, why $5 million dollars from the sale of the ALA building was put into the endowment fund if ALA was in a cash crisis, and what caused the significant $2 million IT overspend. The overriding feeling was there needed to be better transparency and financial reporting with regard to ALA's budget going forward. In Council III, the financial discussion continued with ALA Executive Director Mary Ghikas addressing additional questions raised by Council about the financial situation.

There were many other resolutions, actions, and updates that took place during Council. Here are a few of particular interest.

Melvil Dewey Medal will be renamed the ALA Medal of Excellence. The first award with this new name will be in 2021.

Council reviewed a detailed report from the Taskforce on Online Deliberation and Voting for ALA Council, which may pave the way for expanded virtual participation in Council voting and Council meetings (CD#37).

Polish-American Librarians Association will be granted affiliate status with ALA (CD#39).

The resolution in Opposition to Charging Prisoners to Read passed (CD#41).

Council III opened with everyone standing up in silence to honor people who received memorial resolutions: Ellen Greenblatt, Willis Bernard "Bill" Lukenbill, Dr. Hilda L. Jay, Bill Ptacek, Carolyn A. Markuson, Learned T. (Dag) Bulman, and Jennifer Ford Paustenbaugh. There were also two tribute resolutions: Recognizing the Florida Library Association's 100th Anniversary and Honoring Dita Kraus, "The Librarian of Auschwitz."

International Relations Committee (IRC) Chair Emily Drabinski gave an update (CD#18). IRRT got a shout out for hosting international colleagues at ALA Midwinter at a welcome reception. The resolution to congratulate the American Library in Paris and its staff on the 100th anniversary of its founding passed (CD#18.1).

Julia Warga, chair of the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), provided an update on IFC's activities (CD#19). The 10th edition of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual*, edited by Martin Garnar and Trina Magi will be published before the end of 2020 by ALA Editions.

Council approved the 2021 Programmatic Priorities: Diversity; Equitable Access to Information and Library Services; Education and Lifelong Learning; Intellectual

IRRT Councilor Report, continued

Freedom; Advocacy for Libraries and the Profession; Literacy; Organizational Excellence; and Transforming Libraries (CD#13.1).

A joint report from COL, IRC, and IFC on the resolution in defense of the free speech of supporters of the movement for Palestinian rights (CD#49), which was originally discussed at 2019 ALA Annual, was debated and defeated.

You can read more about what happened at ALA Annual (including other Council actions) here:

https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/council-introduces-new-executive-director/

https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/committee-reports-resolutions-council-ii/
https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/council-iii-tributes-memorials-ala-finances/

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If you have any questions, please reach out to Sandy through the IRRT Executive Committee (See page 4).

Croatia Linked Data project wins 2020 IRRT Mission Enhancement Grant

The "Croatia Linked Data International Symposium" project is this year's recipient of the American Library Association's International Relations Round Table (IRRT) Mission Enhancement Grant.

This project assists the Croatian Library Association's (CLA) efforts in fostering the transition from current technologies rooted in Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC) to linked open data both for traditional technical services workflows and discovery.

The project will organize an international training symposium in October 2020 at the National Library of Croatia, with librarians from Croatia, neighboring countries, and United States participating. The symposium will feature presentations, panels, and demonstrations on developing linked data programs and the creation and curation of metadata for discovery and access.

The project will also include online complements to the symposium. A website of resources and activities will be created (hosted on Google Sites), and three free webinars - during the months prior to the October Symposium - will be broadcast. Webinar speakers will include US (IRRT) librarians, and international librarians. Website content will be in both Croatian and English.

Funds from the IRRT Mission Enhancement Grant will support the cost for organizing the symposium, as well as three in-country travel grants to Croatian librarians who may otherwise not afford to attend the symposium in Zagreb. Grant applications will be judged on statements and financial need by a subcommittee of the Croatian Library Association.

This year's project was submitted by IRRT member Raymond Pun.

About the IRRT Mission Enhancement Grant

The International Relations Round Table Endowment fund was established in 2016. Interest from the Endowment is used to fund member-initiated proposals for international activities and initiatives which contribute to ALA's role in international librarianship.

The funding is intended to provide support for international projects or partnerships; promote a global dialogue about librarianship; increase visibility of international opportunities for U.S. and international librarians, and encourage international collaboration in librarianship.

For additional information about the grant, please visit the IRRT Mission Enhancement Grant.

IRRT Committees Reports

IRRT Membership Committee by Katherina Lee

The chair will prepare a table based on the Officer's Manual of Membership Committee Role & Responsibilities and submit to all members to seek individual member input on role and responsibilities. The committee will work on participation in several international conferences to promote membership in IRRT. Further, they will prepare a report about IRRT membership initiatives to submit to the IRRT Executive Board at Annual 2020 for discussion.

IRRT Publications Committee by Lindsay Inge Carpenter

Our primary focus this year has been the revision of the Publications Committee section of the IRRT Officers Manual. We have also dedicated time to evaluating our social media presence and determining the best channels for sharing IRRT information. As a result, more committee members have created accounts to post content to the IRRT blog. The Publications Committee maintained an active social media presence throughout 2019. As of 16 January 2020, our Facebook page had 1,210 followers, up from 1,158 followers in June 2019. The IRRT blog has also continued to be active, with 40 posts shared in 2019. Joan Weeks continues her excellent work managing the IRRT website. *International Leads* continues to produce excellent content, under the capable leadership of Rebecca Miller & Florence Mugambi.

IRRT International Sister Libraries by Alexandra Humphreys

In 2019 spring semester, the committee completed an update of the Sister Libraries website and created plan of action for promoting the Sister Libraries partnerships to U.S libraries. In fall 2019, the Committee started its promotional campaign. As of December 2019, 24 libraries have been added to the Sister Libraries website; 16 U.S. and 3 foreign libraries submitted the form during the campaign, and 5 libraries before the campaign. The Committee will continue with the promotional campaign in spring 2020. Plans for spring 2020 include contacting all ALA and IRRT members via ALA Connect, and contacting libraries from regions that are not sufficiently (if at all) represented on the Sister Libraries website such as those from Europe and Australia.

IRRT Nominating Committee by Christina Riehman-Murphy

The IRRT Nominating Committee was modified in 2019, reducing membership to a chair and three regular members. A new Google account was created, where meetings minutes are stored, as well as other operating documents. The committee's section of the IRRT handbook has been updated to reflect the current practice. It is suggested that Midwinter be changed to

a virtual meeting as few members attend in person.

IRRT Endowment Committee by Robin Kear and John Hickok

In July 2019, the committee changed from an Ad-Hoc to standing committee. In September, the committee had its first videoconference meeting and discussed the timeline, procedures, and rating rubric for grant applications. Committee created a new graphic. The Endowment Call for Proposals was sent out in December 2019, and a meeting was held at Midwinter to finalize the timeline, procedures, rating rubric, and reviewed applications.

IRRT International Librarians' Pre-Conference by Barbara Marson and Gloria Creed-Dikeogu

The IRRT Preconference committee developed the program descriptions for annual, which will include three presentations and Q&A, followed by break out sessions to further explore various aspects of the presentations. The preconference will conclude with reports back from the break out sessions.

IRRT Chair's Program Committee by Christina Riehman-Murphy

This year's CFP for Annual is centered on IRRT Chair, Richard Sapon-White's theme and will be called: Global Libraries Leading Social Change.

IRRT International Papers and Projects Session by Miroslava Nezar and Felicia Chan.

The officer's manual was updated and posted on the International Papers session discussion group in ALA Connect. This also included the program proposal, scoring matrix, submitted proposals, and presenter handouts.

The agreed upon theme is "Expanding Worldviews: How libraries create awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and inspire change" for the 2020 Annual in Chicago.

IRRT International Poster Session by Michele Fenton and Richenda Hawkins

A revised poster session committee chapter was submitted in 2019 for inclusion in the new edition of the IRRT Officer's Manual.

IRRT International Visitors Center by Katie Spires

The IVC has updated its section of the IRRT officers' manual. Planning for annual has begun, including - calls for volunteers, scheduling, working with Orientation & Mentoring committee on a conference buddies program, and creating the city guide and other resources.

IRRT Committees Reports, continued

IRRT Orientation/Mentoring Committee by Xiaojie Duan

Two collaborative programs with the IRRT International Visitors Center were suggested: 1) conference buddy program, which aims to pair international librarians who will attend ALA Annual Conference with a U.S. librarian to help with various aspects of the conference 2) other sites of interest program, which aims to introduce sites of interest to international attendees, including restaurants, gift shops, entertainment, must sees, etc.

IRRT International Reception Committee by Farzaneh Razzaghi

Nominations for the ALA Innovative International Library Projects citations have been received. The committee is not directly involved with planning for the international reception venue at the Chicago Public Library during Annual. The committee is however responsible for drafting the evening program.

IRRT International Connections Committee by Meggan Houlihan

The IRRT Manual has been reviewed and updated; the call for participation for the photo gallery project has been distributed, and the Leaning International panel was accepted for ALA annual.

IRRT Webinar Committee by Richard Sapon-White

Two webinars were planned and presented. "Libraries as Social Change Engines: Working Together with NGOs in Asia and Africa - A Two-Part Series." On 13 November 2019, the webinar showcased the Asia Foundation & Myanmar Library Association. On 21 November 2019, the webinar focused on Lubuto Library Partners in Zambia. Both webinars were recorded and are available at http://www.ala.org/rt/irrt/initiatives.

International Sustainable Library Development Group by Connie Champlin & Carolyn Ziering

Organized a program at ALA 2019, "Libraries Advancing Peace with Local Initiatives: Learn Globally, Act Locally." The Friends of Colombia Board supported the attendance of Edna Rubio Molino, one of the speakers and a Colombia Project Coordinator; sponsored a networking lunch at ALA DC and Seattle Midwinter for ISLD members; returned Peace Corps Volunteers and Friends interested in international sustainable libraries created and support the National Peace Corps Association affiliate RCPVs in Libraries, Museums & Archives; reorganized ISLD webpage.

IRRT Representatives and Liaisons

Serving Immigrants, Refugees, and Displaced Persons (SRIDP) Sub-Committee by Anna Kozlowska (IRRT Liaison to SRIDP)

The Services for Refugees, Immigrants, and Displaced Persons (SRIDP) Sub-Committee of the ODLOS Advisory Committee is planning to create a series of webinars on current state of refugees and immigrants in America, and what librarians can do on a person-level to serve and support these communities.

SRIDP will have a poster presentation at ALA Annual in Chicago. SRIDP was able to establish new collaborations with Ethnic & Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT) and IFLA Library Services to People with Special Needs Working committee. The group provided feedback for the survey for international Guidelines for Library Services to Refugees, Immigrants and Migrants. EMIERT requested SRIDP's feedback on their Welcoming Spaces National Forum. SRIDP will be represented by Ana Ndumu on "Counted In: National Forum on Libraries Census 2020, & New Americans".

Become a Sister Library

Learn more at http://www.ala.org/rt/irrt/irrtcommittees/irrtsisterlibrary/sisterlibrary

Or contact Co-Chairs:

Alexandra H. Humphreys, Arizona State University
Email: alexandra.humphreys[@]asu.edu

Mark Mattson, Penn State University
Email: mam1196[@]psu.edu

A check in with Librarians from around the world

Raymond Pun is an IRRT member and an instruction/research librarian at Alder Graduate School of Education, where he coordinates collection development and provides distance-learning services for graduate students in education. He is an active member of ALA, ACRL, SLA and IFLA. He coordinates interviews with international librarians for *International Leads*.

Interview with Aronne Watkins of University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Ray: Thanks for interviewing with us! Can you briefly tell us about your role in the library institute?

Aronne: Thank you for giving me this opportunity! I'm a co-head at the Library of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Neuchâtel in Switzerland. I serve several roles, but my biggest task is to support the goals of my university and my faculty by adapting the library to the constant evolution of higher education. This makes me rethink our services and spaces every minute. In my daily activities I welcome users and assist them in any way I can. I perform extensive searches for users, teach information literacy courses, perform literature watch, promote the library with booths and promotional material, and try to innovate anywhere I possibly can. In the last few years I had the chance to change things up a bit. I implemented a chat reference service and later on a WhatsApp reference service. Thanks to the university, I could install a small campus satellite shop in the library. I used Ikea tables ($7 each) stacked onto each other. This spared us the purchase of expensive display furniture. In the war against death by Power Point, I started presenting with gifs and also started hand drawing my own slides for teaching.

This year, I could eliminate print journals issues for which we have online subscriptions. This freed up a tremendous amount of space in the library that we could use to create group work spaces. I could also start funding a couple of faculty's open access publications by using some of the binding budget (since we don't keep any bound journal issues that are online anymore). More recently, we also added stationery supplies to each group work space. At first I was unsure if the supply would stay in the boxes, but it turns out that not only do students not take items away, they even started adding supply to the boxes themselves and leaving their own supplies for others to use! Sometimes little things like that bring the community together and that's what builds the library.
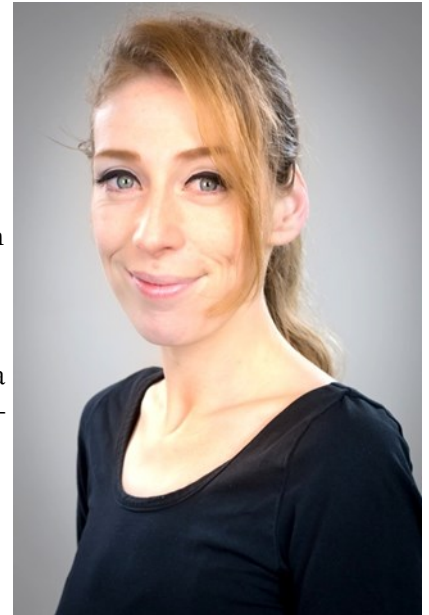
Ray: How did you get into librarianship and what (if any) formal education or training did you receive?

Aronne: I didn't study much, I learned by doing. By ob-

serving users and library workflows. I got into librarianship very much accidentally. I grew up in a rural part of Switzerland. There were no public libraries in my region and in our schools we had no libraries either. When I started my apprenticeship in town, as a library assistant in an academic library, I knew nothing about libraries. I had no clue what I was doing, but being in the library was amazing! I remember, early in my training, I answered a question from a patron at the desk and she gave me a red rose be-

Aronne Watkins

cause I had helped her. That was so unexpected (especially since I had only been working for about a couple of weeks, and the help I provided was undoubtedly quite limited). I think that was the very moment I realized, that I wanted to do my absolute best for patrons. That's when I fell in love with working in libraries.

Ray: What is a library trend/library hot topic in your country currently?

Aronne: From my perspective, users' experience of the library is a very hot topic right now. I see how much students value the library space and how much they want it enhanced. At our library, students openly ask for coffee machines, water fountains, big tables and whiteboards. They wish for a café-library ambiance, a relaxed place where they can study both alone and in groups, both quietly and noisily, preferably with couches, cushions, unique decorations, a cup of hot chocolate with marshmallows next to their laptop, something really cozy yet professional at the same time. I think right now students wish for way more relaxed spaces

than those we traditionally offer in academic libraries and we should embrace that trend that could also make us evolve into something else. We should also be adding everything we can to users' experience and think outside the box to stay relevant. Each visit to the library has to be exciting, interesting, inspiring.

Aside from our traditional roles and duties, we have to entertain, facilitate, empower, enrich, and be creative. Each user has to leave the library having experienced a positive interaction. On the Swiss level, there is a new network currently being built: The Swiss Library Service Platform. It is a very promising and ambitious project where a new network of major academic libraries is being created, jointly with a migration to Ex Libris' Alma. I am very excited about this tremendous project.

Ray: Why is international librarianship important in your work as a librarian?

Aronne: I think that in my country, we have been focusing on collections for too long, we've only recently started shifting the focus on users and it happens largely thanks to many librarians from other countries sharing their findings and ideas. That's why international librarianship and especially international exchanges in librarianship are vital to me. Librarians share so much on social media, listservs, libguides, blogs, vlogs, everywhere! It's too bad that there is currently no way of measuring the impact of these exchanges on a worldwide scale, but I bet it's huge. I'd like to say to all librarians out there, that every time you post an idea, a picture, a tweet, anything, and share something, it has way more impact and helps way more than you think! You allow creativity to happen! You allow others to learn and innovate! You bring librarianship forward!

Ray: Thanks for speaking with us! We appreciate your responses! One last question: if you're working on any projects, can you tell us more about them?

Aronne: Currently, I am digging into gaming in higher education. I would love to integrate much more play in my information literacy courses and find a way for my library to specialize in educational games, virtual reality and simulations. Playing is a powerful tool in teaching. It boosts students' motivation and, in many cases, allows them to retain the taught material much better. Serious play is definitely lighting a fire in me.

Now I have to find out how I can test and apply. At this stage I do not know exactly where I am going with this but it's definitely something I want to pursue. Thanks for this opportunity again! Please feel free to get in touch with me, I'd love to share ideas with anyone: aronne.watkins@unine.ch

Aronne Watkins is an Academic Librarian, co-head of the Library of the Faculty of Economics and Business.

Entrance to the Library of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland