

EIFL's 2021 Public Library Innovation Awards: Responding to COVID-19

EIFL Staff

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Over the past decade, EIFL's (Electronic Information for Libraries) Public Library Innovation Programme has given 50 innovation awards to public and community libraries in developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The awards recognize creative use of digital technology to improve people's lives and highlight public library's impact on important community development areas. Winners receive a prize of US\$1,500, a trophy, a certificate, and publicity through EIFL's website and wide network of contacts.

EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) aims at sparking innovation by encouraging use of technology in public libraries in developing and transition economy countries. EIFL-PLIP uses a number of strategies for this work, including building the libraries' ICT capacities with extensive training programs, and developing the advocacy skills of library organizations and librarians to advance development. EIFL-PLIP also rewards innovative services that contribute to important



development issues, such as libraries' contribution to people's economic well-being, support to education, digital inclusion, and environmental protection.

According to Ramune Petuchovaite, EIFL-PLIP manager, "Working with public libraries from low income countries, we noticed that they do have limited opportunities to share their innovative ideas with professional networks. This is why the 'EIFL Public Library Innovation Award' was launched in 2012. Today it is high-profile award, which puts spotlight on public libraries running outstanding, technology-based programmes. Besides international visibility, the recognition makes a difference locally."

Geoffrey Tumwesigye, Hoima Public Library, Uganda, shared, "When we received the public library award in 2012, our library got publicity. The number of patrons increased by 45%, and both government departments and local organizations came in to partner with us."

In 2020, responding to the pandemic situation around

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the world, EIFL announced a new Innovation Award category for the public library services introduced to help communities struggling to cope with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Forty-seven public and community libraries from 25 countries submitted an application in four languages (English, French, Spanish, and Russian). With the help of volunteer international experts, EIFL-PLIP selected four libraries to receive awards in 2021.

'A. Gaidar' Central City Children's Library in Melitopol, Ukraine: "Children-teach-Children" online video art classes

The closure of major public institutions and many businesses in Ukraine's national lockdown that started on 12 March 2020 meant that families were stuck at home. Parents struggled to keep their children busy; children became fearful and confused, and suffered from anxiety and stress.

"We wanted to continue to be an integral part of the educational and cultural life of the city during lockdown. The only solution was for us to transfer our services online," said Yana Belan, a librarian.

"Children were especially missing the free School of Drawing, which we organized with our partner, the art studio 'Rainbow' of the Palace of Culture of Railway Workers, and which was very popular before the pandemic. And so this was the first service we transferred online - but with a difference. Instead of professional art teachers, the children became the main teachers in our new Video School of Drawing" she said.

By April 2020, the first masterclasses were launched on the library's Facebook page. And in May 2020, participants created their own Facebook group, the Video School of Drawing, Studio Rainbow, where young artists can watch lessons and also post their own artwork.

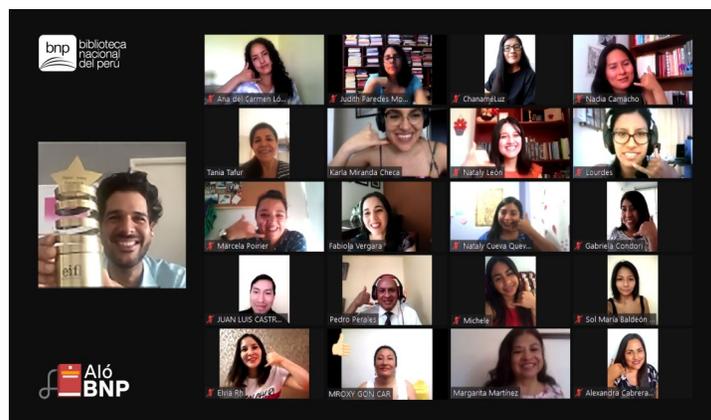


A painting technique demonstrated by Mark Zakharyan during a masterclass.

The idea worked: The Video School of Drawing, with the motto, 'children-teach-children', became the most popular library activity during the lockdown. Ten young 'teachers' have recorded a dozen masterclasses. Each class lasts up to 10 minutes, with the children teaching different painting styles and techniques: abstract, landscape, animation, 3D. The youngest teacher is seven years old, and the most experienced teacher is 14 years old.

"I love watercolor, I thought it was really difficult to work with, but Anastasia is such a clear teacher," wrote Polina, a student.

The Main Public Library of Lima in Peru: "Aló BNP," a telephone reading service for seniors



Ezio Neyra Magagna, BNP Library Director, and volunteers with the Aló BNP project.

When the Main Public Library of Lima, which is part of the public libraries network run by the National Library of Peru (Biblioteca Nacional del Perú - BNP), went into lockdown, it was able to migrate some of their services online. However, librarians were worried about the people who were at risk of extreme isolation because they do not have computers and the Internet at home. They needed a safe, non-virtual solution and came up with the idea of a telephone reading service, which they called "Aló BNP."

Each new client is assigned a reader. Once a week, the reader telephones the client for a 30-minute reading session at the specified time. "When assigned to a client, the reader must accompany the client for two months. This allows the pair to build a relationship, even though they are physically distant," said Ezio Neyra Magagna, head of the BNP.

"Of the 239 people who we have read to since June, the youngest is aged five, and the oldest is 95. Over 60% of calls have been to people aged over 50, and 10% to chil-

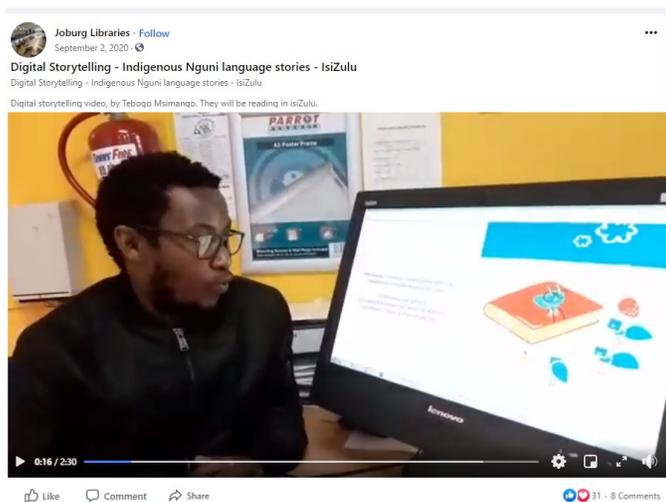
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EIFL's 2021 Public Library Innovation Awards, continued

dren needing help with their education; 61% of the clients are women and girls," said Ezio.

One librarian shared that "The lady who received the call told me that she lived alone... and that she felt lonely too. She was very moved and thanked me because it improved her day. This makes me reflect on how the pandemic has physically alienated us. Still, through a phone call we can recover human warmth, even if it is just a little, that helps us continue our daily activities, both for the giver and the recipient."

City of Johannesburg Libraries in South Africa: Video series on Facebook



Teboqo Msimango, a Joburg librarian, presents storytelling in the IsiZulu indigenous language of South Africa

Librarians were faced with a challenge when the City of Johannesburg (Joburg) went into lockdown. What services could they provide, and how? Going online was an option.

The eLibrarians' team came up with an innovative idea of video programmes on Facebook, the most popular social media platform in Joburg. "The librarians immediately went into production mode using their own equipment at home - smartphones, tablets, or laptops, and their own Wifi or data. We drafted a daily schedule for showing videos on different topics and we were able to launch the series soon after lockdown began," said Jeff Nyoka, who manages Joburg City Libraries' eLearning Programmes.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays there was storytelling for children, including special features on South Africa's different cultures and languages. Children were filmed reading from books or e-readers, and also wrote and read their own stories. eResources Wednesdays featured educational materials and useful open access resources. On

Fridays, 'Ask-A-Librarian-How-To' featured skills like how to compile a bibliography and how to use a dictionary. There were videos on computer coding, e-literacy skills, job seeking, mobile literacy tips for seniors, and much more.

The Facebook video series attracted tens of thousands of viewers. Videos focusing on the use of technology, e-literacy and e-resources were viewed over 65,000 times from April to December 2020. Digital storytelling videos were viewed almost 20,000 times. Joburg Libraries' Facebook fan-base grew by 75%.

"I gained extensive knowledge from the Joburg Libraries Facebook page... One website and many others from their page helped make lockdown a little more fun," said 17 year old Zanele Mndaweni.

Kaunas Municipal 'Vincas Kudirka' Public Library, Lithuania: Hands-free door openers

While Kaunas Municipal 'Vincas Kudirka' Public Library was closed to the public during Lithuania's first national lockdown, their 3D printer was working day and night.

The library's IT specialists, Tadas Žalionis and Šarūnas Ašmantas, designed the hands-free door opener by adapting a design developed by the Belgian agency, Materialise, which works to harness the power of 3D printing for industry. They were working in long shifts and installed door openers in essential buildings in Gričiupis, a sub-district of Kaunas Municipality.

"Gričiupis has a population of about 25,000 people, mostly living in high-rise apartment buildings. There are many seniors in the sub-district and statistics have shown



Tadas Zalionis, IT specialist (left), and Nomedas Domeikiene, Director (right), show the EIFL award to Kaunas Library.

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EIFL's 2021 Public Library Innovation Awards, continued

that seniors are especially at risk of contracting of Covid-19 and becoming seriously ill,” explained Monika Straupytė, Culture Manager at the Kaunas library.

In late March and early April, the library mounted the plastic handles on the doors of small shops and a pharmacy that are frequented by seniors, and also on the door of the police station. The door openers were warmly welcomed.

“The customers are using it eagerly. Young people immediately understand what it is for, seniors need more time, but when they do understand, they are using it with pleasure. I use it too, I think it is a great idea!” said Jūratė Kaslauskienė, owner of a small shop.

Inspiring others to innovate

Perhaps the impact of the awards is best captured by Ana Maria da Silva from Brazil, director of ‘Biblioteca Publica Estadual do Espirito Santo’ [that received the](#)

[innovation award in 2018](#): “Nowadays, we are a reference in our country for innovative public library practices and our actions are being successfully replicated in other libraries. We have already been invited to share our experience in many parts of the country.”

Meet other winners of EIFL's Innovation Awards at: <https://www.eifl.net/programme/public-library-innovation-programme/about-awards>

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To learn more about EIFL-PLIP, contact EIFL-PLIP manager Ramune Petuchovaite [via e-mail](#).

International Librarians Networking Program call for applications

A newly formed International Librarians Networking subcommittee of IRRT is happy to announce a second round of the International Librarians Networking Program (ILNP).

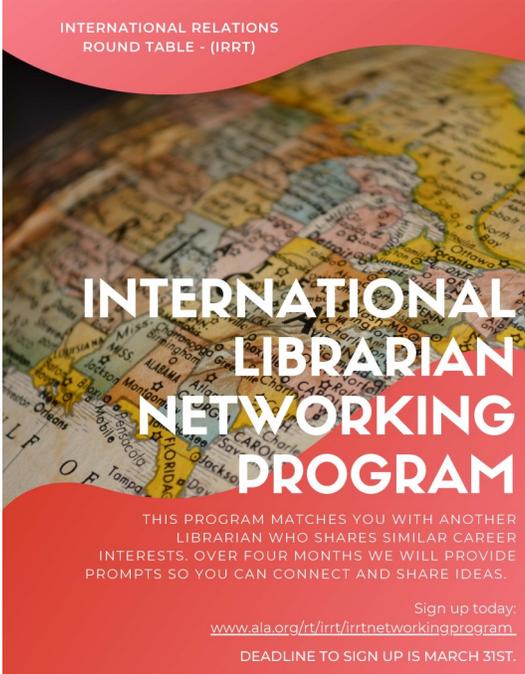
One of the goals of ILNP is to bring together librarians from around the world to network and expand their skills through collaboration. This four-month, self-guided program allows participants to form impactful relationships.

Additional information about the requirements and application process can be found on [ILNP website](#) including a [Call for applications](#). **This call for applications will run from 1-31 March.** The selection of participants will occur in April.

The program will start in early May and run through August 2021.

The information about last year's program run by ALA's Emerging Leaders 2020 Group E can be found in two articles published in International Leads [March 2020](#) and [September 2020](#) issues. Group E also prepared [Flyers](#) about the program in several languages.

Detailed information about the activities of Group E and successful completion of the program can be found in [Emerging Leaders 2020 Team Report](#).



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
ROUND TABLE - (IRRT)

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THIS PROGRAM MATCHES YOU WITH ANOTHER LIBRARIAN WHO SHARES SIMILAR CAREER INTERESTS. OVER FOUR MONTHS WE WILL PROVIDE PROMPTS SO YOU CAN CONNECT AND SHARE IDEAS.

Sign up today:
www.ala.org/rt/irrt/irrtnetworkingprogram
DEADLINE TO SIGN UP IS MARCH 31ST.

Message from the Editors

It has been one full year since COVID-19 swept around the world, bringing serious impact to how libraries continue to provide their much needed services to communities.

In this issue,

- through the EIFL-PLIP awards, we learn about how public libraries are innovating in response, and continue to respond to their communities' needs.
- the ALA Task Force on the UN SDGs brings a summary of a webinar with library associations from the Philippines.
- the ALA Councilor reports on important resolutions affecting how ALA business is conducted.

Be sure to read about volunteer opportunities and don't forget to vote for the next slate of the IRRT Executive Board.

Do you have news about events, projects, initiatives, activities, achievements, grants, conferences? Submit for publication in *IL* at: [ala.irrt.leads\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:ala.irrt.leads@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, 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 of the Africana Librarians Council (2020/21). Florence is also an ARL Leadership and Career Development Program fellow (2020/21).



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Message from IRRT Chair



Alexandra Houzouri Humphreys
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The 2021 ALA Midwinter Meeting lacked the snow and cold that usually accompanies it. Instead, we attended from the warmth and comfort of our own homes, albeit with our sometimes unreliable Internet connections. Despite some limitations of the online format, the Midwinter Meeting was very productive. At the Saturday, 23 January IRRT All-Committees' meeting, 16 IRRT representatives of committees, a subcommittee, and an interest group discussed their committee work, accomplishments, and future plans ([Zoom recording](#)).

The Chairs and Co-Chairs of these committee also submitted Mid-Year reports. Here are highlights from some of their work.

The main function of the [Chair's Program Committee](#) is to develop and host the Chair's Program at ALA Annual. This year the program is centered on my theme, "Libraries in a Rapidly Changing World."

The [Endowment Committee](#) issued a [call for proposals](#) for the 2021 IRRT Mission Enhancement Grant. Last year's recipient was the "Croatia Linked Data International Symposium" project submitted by IRRT member Raymond Pun. The project resulted in the Croatian Library Association's international training symposium in October 2020, with librarians from Croatia, neighboring countries, and U.S. IRRT members.

Members of the [International Connections Committee](#) have been working on the "[Best Practices from the World Libraries Photo Gallery](#)" project, which focused on the value of libraries in promoting social justice and inclusion.

The [International Poster Sessions Committee](#) issued a call for submissions of digital poster session proposals on international themes for the 2021 ALA Annual Virtual Conference.

The [Membership Committee](#) is working on strategies to

maintain and increase IRRT membership in the U.S. and abroad.

The [Nominating Committee](#) finalized a slate of great candidates for election to our Board in the upcoming ALA Election (8 March - 7 April 2021). You can find information about the candidates for four IRRT positions on page 13.

The [Publication Committee](#) released the following data: as of 19 January 2021, the IRRT Facebook page had 1,283 followers, up from 1,210 followers in January 2019. The IRRT blog had 79 posts shared in 2020, and several more posts since then.

Many thanks to Rebecca Miller and Florence Mugambi for their excellent work as editors of International Leads. Their two-year term is nearing the end and the Publication Committee is preparing to elect new editors.

Due to COVID, the [International Reception Committee](#) will not hold the international reception this year. The committee is working on nominations for the Presidential Citation Awards.

[Sister Libraries](#) continue with their promotional campaign. Due to active interest in different areas, committee members are piloting restructuring of the committee and establishing regional liaisons.

The [Webinar Committee](#) presented two webinars in November 2020 (read more on [page 8](#) of the December issue of International Leads) and is working on more presentations. It also supported several Pre-Conference Committee and International Sustainable Library Development Interest Group webinars (webinar [recordings](#)).

The [International Networking Subcommittee](#) will start a second round of their initiative this spring under the leadership of Muzhgan Nazarova and Erica Saito.

[The International Librarians' Pre-Conference Committee](#) received 12 submissions after their call for proposals and the [International Papers and Projects Committee's](#) proposal for ALA Annual has been accepted.

IRRT has the largest membership of all roundtables, but there is always room for [involvement](#). As the world is becoming more connected and global, IRRT plays an important role in ALA and international librarianship. We will continue our work to benefit our profession and communities.

Message from IRRT Chair Elect



Jim Neal
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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/>.

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!



The American Library Association's Executive Board announced that the [2021 ALA Annual Conference & Exhibition](#) scheduled for June 23-29 in Chicago will take place virtually.

"We hoped that by this summer, it would be safe to meet again in person. However, that is clearly not the case. Despite the promise of vaccines, the pandemic continues to devastate our country. For the safety of everyone involved, we will be moving our Annual Conference to a virtual format," said Julius C. Jefferson, Jr., ALA president.

Jefferson continued: "Given the success of our just-wrapped virtual Midwinter meeting, I am confident that Annual will be just as dynamic, engaging and inspiring. As always, we will have big name speakers, a full online exhibit floor, and more events and opportunities to network, learn and grow that I know participants will love." ALA Annual attracts some of today's most highly regarded keynoters and authors, and speakers will be announced early this spring along with additional information on programs, sessions, meetings, and exhibits.

Registration will open 1 March 2021, and advance rates end 16 April.

"COVID-19 has profoundly changed the library world – and, of course, the wider world around us. But I'm buoyed by the incredible determination, resilience and community-building I've seen in the past year," ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall said. "As a body, ALA has proven nimble and unflappable in the face of adversity and we will continue to prioritize safety, even as we strive to innovate the digital conference experience to widen attendance and deepen engagement well after this period. Based on the incredible response that Virtual Midwinter 2021 received, we look forward to a dynamic Annual Conference program guaranteed to illuminate, inform and inspire."

ALA's UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Task Force collaboration with Philippines' library associations

Loida Garcia-Febo

Chair, ALA U.N. 2030 SDGs Task Force

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Members of the ALA's United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Task Force are actively sharing news about their efforts and the role of libraries to help communities achieve the SDGs. Recently, library associations from the Philippines and the National Library of the Philippines invited the Task Force to collaborate on a joint event to celebrate the 30th LIS Month in the Philippines under the umbrella theme "LibREAL," a portmanteau for the word "libraries" and the acronym for Relate, Engage, Advocate, and Lead. Six members of the Task Force spoke at the event.

The three-hour webinar entitled, "Philippine Libraries and Their Roles in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals" was attended by 800+ Filipino and international librarians from different regions of the world.

Role of Libraries

Loida Garcia-Febo, Chair of the Task Force, opened the webinar with a presentation about IFLA's successful advocacy at the United Nations in the areas of access to information, culture, education, and ICTs (Information and Communications Technologies).

As we know, IFLA partnered with other organizations and secured support from countries to successfully secure inclusion of access to information on Goal 16 (Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions) under Target 16.10 (Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms), in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

Garcia-Febo also introduced the work of the Task Force, including various charts created to show how libraries are helping communities to achieve development. The charts, including one featuring libraries' efforts in COVID-19 times and another one showing efforts from a public library, are available at the Task Force [webpage](#).

The event was enriched by the presentation of Dr. B. Shadrach, an expert in South Asian communities, the region where The Philippines is located. He highlighted the various ongoing projects in South Asia and Africa led by public libraries towards equipping the citizens to contribute to the achievement of SDGs in their respective communities. He also presented numerous ideas for

The poster is for a webinar titled "Philippine Libraries and Their Roles in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)". It features the logos of the American Library Association (ALA), the National Library of the Philippines (NLP), and the American Library Association (ALA) in cooperation with the NLP. The poster includes a grid of 17 SDG icons, a map of the Philippines, and the text "Free Webinar on 'Philippine Libraries and Their Roles in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'". The webinar is scheduled for November 20, 2020, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 NN via Webinar Jam. The registration link is <https://bit.ly/2TSDOHU>. The moderator is RHEA ROWENA U. APOLINARIO. The poster also mentions "in collaboration with" and lists several partner organizations: NCCA, PAAST, and COOHLIS.

consideration by the library fraternity. These included: Sanitization and Hygiene campaign (Goal 3); turning libraries into access points for doing online courses and making the citizens and the library members lifelong learners (Goal 4); providing information services to the Small and Medium Enterprises (Goal 8); and support services for migrant populations (Goal 10), among others.

IFLA Past President, Donna Scheeder, began her presentation about libraries as social change agents by stating that social change agents are people who see a problem in their community and do something /take action. The emphasis is on the library workers and not the buildings they work in or the collections they work with.

The SDGs offer a catalog of community problems. By providing access to information, all types of libraries have a role in improving SDG outcomes. The presentation then outlined the skills and competencies needed for social change agents and provided some real-life examples, some of which were contained in the IFLA Library Map of the World. <https://librarymap.ifla.org/>

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ALA's UN 2030 SDG Task Force collaboration with Philippines' library associations, continued

Scheeder's presentation concluded by emphasizing the importance of advocacy skills. Library workers as change agents must be strong advocates in order to influence the decision makers in their communities to provide the resources needed for success.

Academic, Public, School Libraries

The event included academic, public, and school librarians members of the Task Force sharing library programs and services helping communities achieve the SDGs.

Academic librarians can help communities meet SDG goals in three main ways: Access to Research and Data, Support Campus Sustainability Efforts, and cultivate an SDG related Teaching and Research Agenda. Robin Kear, from the University of Pittsburgh libraries, affirmed that university librarians can assist with all the UN SDGs by providing access to research and data. This relates strongly to SDG goal 4, Quality Education and SDG goal 16, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies.

One of the main ways to provide this access is to advocate and create pathways to Open Access at the local level. Academic librarians can advocate for gold and green open access to university's research materials, promote the use of institutional repositories (or build one), and create or develop positions of scholarly communications librarians. See guide at <https://pitt.libguides.com/openaccess>. Academic librarians can also advocate and create pathways to Open Educational Resources (OER) by creating OER specialist positions. See guide at <https://pitt.libguides.com/openeducation>.

Similarly, Public libraries are in an ideal position to impact change into the communities they serve. John F. Szabo, City Librarian/CEO of the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL), spoke enthusiastically about how public libraries can identify current programs as well as plan new ones around the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Using the UN SDGs, his library staff created a chart that illustrates LAPL programs and activities that support each of the 17 goals. As examples, Szabo highlighted his library's work on immigration assistance and integration, reducing inequalities, hunger and food insecurity, climate action, and sustainable practices for library landscapes.

To assist libraries globally with their own support of the UN SDGs, LAPL staff created a template that can easily be used to identify and promote SDG-supporting



The slide features the logos of the National Library of the Philippines (NLP) and the American Library Association (ALA). The title is "Webinar on 'Philippine Libraries and Their Roles in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'" dated November 20, 2020, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 NN via Webinar Jam. The program includes: 9:00 AM Webinar Introduction by Asst. Prof. Rhea Rowena U. Apolinario; 9:05 AM Welcome and Opening Remarks/Roles of Libraries in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by Loida Garcia-Febo, ALA Chair ALA U.N. 2030 SDGs Task Force, ALA President 2018-2019; 9:25 AM Topic 1: SDGs: Best practices and recommendations for South Asia by Dr. B. Shadrach, Advisor: Skills, Commonwealth of Learning Canada; 9:45 AM Topic 2: Libraries as Social Change Agents by Donna Scheeder, IFLA President 2015-2017; 10:05 AM Topic 3: How libraries are helping communities to meet the SDGs and development. Keynotes include Academic Library: Robin Kear, Liaison Librarian, University of Pittsburgh; Public Library: John Szabo, Director, Los Angeles Public Library; School Library: Erika Long, School Librarian in Tennessee. Q & A by Rhea Rowena U. Apolinario; Closing Remarks by Cesar Gilbert O. Adriano, Director, National Library of the Philippines. Logos for NCCA, PAARI, and various educational institutions are at the bottom.

programs. The template will be available on the Task Force website soon. Szabo also noted how linking library services with the goals can be an effective advocacy tool locally.

School libraries are creatively developing efforts to engage students, parents, and teachers in understanding the SDGs. Erika Long, a school librarian in Nashville Public Schools, shared library programming examples to engage students. It is important to note that to date there are not many library schools creating events around SDGs. Some of the current efforts include story hour and book clubs about topics such as sustainability (Goal 11), climate change (Goal 13), and loving our planet (Goal 15). These could be expanded to host events involving parents and the school teachers as well.

This online event is an excellent example of collaboration between ALA and library associations from other countries. Everyone coordinating the event hopes librarians from around the globe watch the recording of the event and start developing their own initiatives to help communities achieve development. Libraries have an essential role in development!

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SDG Task Force collaboration, continued

This webinar was presented by ALA in collaboration with several library associations in the Philippines. Special thanks to the following:

- The National Library of the Philippines
- The Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. (PLAI)
- The Philippines Association of School Librarians, Inc. (PASLI)
- Association of Librarians in the Public Sector, Inc. (ALPS)
- Association of Special Libraries in the Philippines (ASLP)
- Council of Deans and Heads of LIS (CODHLIS)
- Philippine Association of Academic and Research Libraries (PAARL)
- Philippines Association of Teachers of Library and Information Science, Inc. (PATLS)

###

*Is your library integrating the SDGs into its work?
Please share your stories with us!*

Submit a Digital Poster to be presented at the 2021 ALA Annual Virtual Conference

The 2021 ALA IRRT International Poster Session Committee invites you to share your best ideas and work with the international library community by presenting a poster at the [2020 ALA Annual Conference Virtual Poster Session](#) during the 2021 ALA Annual Virtual Conference!

Submissions are invited from international librarians at all types of libraries on any topic relevant to librarianship. Submissions are also invited from librarians in the U.S. on any topic relevant to international populations, projects, and collaborations. Any presentation that would benefit the larger library community is encouraged, such as a description of an innovative library program, an analysis of a solution to a problem, or a report of a research study.

The deadline for submitting an application has been extended until 21 March 2021. Following a double-blind peer review process, applicants will be notified by late April if their submission has been accepted for presentation at the conference. [Start your application and view more information about the submission process now.](#)

International Knowledge Conference call for papers

The IRRT Member Participation in International Conferences working group hopes that you will consider participating in the virtual International Knowledge Conference 2021. The 2021 virtual conference will be 12-13 July. For more information, visit the conference [website](#). Deadline for abstracts submission is 31 March.

Jim Neal, IRRT Chair Elect, initiated the IRRT Member Participation in International Conferences working group, composed of members of the IRRT Executive Board, to promote and enable IRRT member participation and attendance at IFLA and other international conferences.

The initiative has three goals:

1. Identify and bring to the attention of IRRT members virtual library conferences with the expectation that remote attendance and participation will become an accepted norm
2. Encourage and support IRRT member participation in these conferences through submission of paper, panel and poster session proposals
3. Assist with the registration fees for attendance at these virtual conferences through a competitive application process, and with a plan to raise funds for this initiative.

Deadline extended to nominate a library project for the 2021 ALA Presidential Citation for Innovative International Library Projects

The International Relations Round Table (IRRT) invites you to submit a nomination for the ALA Presidential Citation for Innovative International Library Projects.

The citation began as an ALA Presidential initiative of Dr. Lorie Roy, ALA president in 2007-2008 and Notable IRRT Member. Citations are awarded each year by the ALA president at the International Relations Round Table (IRRT) International Librarians Reception during the ALA Annual Conference. Deadline has been extended to 31 March. [Read more!](#)

IRRT Councilor Update

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 ALA Midwinter conference was held virtually. More than 7000 people participated. This column reports on some of the major topics addressed at the ALA Council meetings that I attended as your IRRT Councilor. To see Council documents, visit the [website](#).

In advance of the Midwinter Conference, there were six Council Information Sessions held in Fall 2020 which were led by the [Forward Together Working Group](#) (FTWG) to do deep dives around key aspects of the Forward Together proposal. Plus, Council participated in a survey to capture feedback on the Forward Together proposal prior to ALA Midwinter Conference. Significant discussions about the streams of change occurring within ALA took place during Council meetings at ALA Midwinter.

Specifically, the final report from the Forward Together Working Group was presented and discussed. Additionally, reports from Forward Together Fiscal Analysis Working Group, the Operating Agreement Working Group, the ALA 5-Year Pivot Strategy which is, among other things, focusing on how ALA can diversify its revenue streams, and ALA Financial Update were shared. Reports can be found on the [FTWG website](#).

Council also took action to approve several important and timely resolutions, namely:

- *Resolution to establish a Council Committee on Sustainability (ALA CD#27).*
- *Resolution in Support of Broadband as a Human Right (ALA CD#20.1).*
- *Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work (ALA CD#43).*
- *Resolution in Opposition to Facial Recognition Software in Libraries, as amended (CD # 19.2)*
- *Resolution on the Misuse of Behavioral Data Surveillance in Libraries (CD # 19.3)*
- *Resolution on replacing the Library of Congress Subject Heading "Illegal aliens" with "Undocumented immigrants", as amended (ALA CD#44)*
- *Budget Objectives/Programmatic Priorities - Concur with the Executive Board and approve the FY2022 Budget Objectives (ALA CD#13.1)*

Additionally, Council voted to discontinue the Exhibits

Round Table, which is now replaced by the Exhibits Advisory Group. Council discussed a *Resolution to Classify Library Workers as 1b Workers to be Listed as a Priority Workforce in Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine (ALA CD#45)* but deferred action until 2021 ALA Annual Conference; Council has requested feedback from [CORE](#) regarding this resolution.

More details related to Council discussions and actions is provided below:

ALA Council I

The Council I session focused on nominations for the Council Executive Board election (**ALA CD#11**), the Resolutions Committee Report (**ALA CD#10.1**), and presentation and discussion of the Forward Together Working Group (FTWG) Final Report (**ALA CD#35**) and Forward Together Fiscal Analysis (FTFA) Working Group Update (**ALA CD#37**).

FTWG shared findings from the six Council Information Sessions it held as well as the survey it conducted of Council members. The presentation focused on areas of consensus that were identified for Core Values; the Election/Appointment/Size of the Board of Directors; Election/Appointment to ALA Standing Committees; 1% Threshold for Roundtables; Roundtable Governance Documents/Policies/Procedures; and Redistribution of the Functions of Council. The report also emphasized the need to explain the role of Assemblies more clearly, and the finding that "Governance is only one path to engagement in ALA."

FTFA also presented its report. Since the new Forward Together structure has not yet been finalized, it was hard for this group to complete their analysis. However, they did explore the costs of in-person vs. virtual meetings/conferences, and not surprisingly found that virtual conferences are much less expensive than in-person ones. But they also noted that people may not get the same value out of both experiences.

Discussion focused around what the next steps are for the governance structure. A new Forward Together working group has been formed to carry on the work; this group is called the Forward Together Resolutions Working Group (see **ALA CD#35a** for the roster of members). James Neal, incoming IRRT Chair, has been appointed to the Forward Together Resolutions Working Group, so IRRT will have great representation.

While there are some areas of consensus that have been

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IRRT Councilor Update, continued

identified, there are still many aspects of the reorganization that have not been resolved. For example, there is continued concern about the size, composition, and method of selecting members for the Board of Directors (what is currently called the Executive Board), although there is general agreement that changing the name of this body to Board of Directors would be acceptable.

Regarding roundtables, the findings from the council sessions and survey found no support for the 1% membership threshold; there was broad agreement that there should be other ways to measure the success and vitality of roundtables that extend beyond membership numbers (e.g., a matrix of some sort). There was also general consensus that roundtables should have a unified governance document. The Roundtable Coordinating Assembly Taskforce was given kudos for self-organizing and taking a proactive stance on this.

The original plan had been to hold a Constitutional Convention to amend ALA's constitution and bylaws to align with the new structure, but this is on hold until there is clear agreement on the structure.

ALA Council II

The Council II session heard reports from ALA/Council Committees, specifically from Committee on Organization (ALA CD#27) and Committee on Legislation (ALA CD#20-20.2), and from Special Committees, specifically, Freedom to Read Foundation (ALA CD#22) and Philanthropy Advisory Group (ALA CD#34).

Council took three very significant actions in Council II.

- 1) Council voted to approve the establishment of a Council Committee on Sustainability (ALA CD#27).
- 2) Council voted unanimously to approve the *Resolution in Support of Broadband as a Human Right* (ALA CD#20.1).
- 3) Council voted to approve *Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work* (ALA CD#43).

Council also discontinued the Library Education Assembly and the Exhibits Round Table, which is now replaced by the Exhibits Advisory Group. Further, Council changed the charge of the ALA Election Committee to remove the requirement for committee members to travel at their own expense to ALA HQ and instead allow them to meet virtually.

Plus, there was Council discussion around the ALA 5-Year Pivot Strategy (ALA CD#36) and ALA Financial Update.

ALA Council III

The Council III session began with memorial and tribute resolutions.

The results of the ALA Executive Board Council Election (ALA CD#11.2) were presented. The three newly elected Executive Board members are: Sam Helmick, Ana Elisa de Campos Salles, and Christina Rodrigues.

Council passed several resolutions:

- Resolution in Opposition to Facial Recognition Software in Libraries, *as amended* (CD # 19.2)
- Resolution on the Misuse of Behavioral Data Surveillance in Libraries (CD # 19.3)
- Resolution on replacing the Library of Congress Subject Heading "Illegal aliens" with "Undocumented immigrants", *as amended* (ALA CD#44)
- Budget Objectives/Programmatic Priorities - Concur with the Executive Board and approve the FY2022 Budget Objectives (ALA CD#13.1)

Council decided to remove the *Resolution to Classify Library Workers as 1b Workers to be Listed as a Priority Workforce in Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine* (ALA CD#45) from consideration at this time and instead re-evaluate it at the 2021 ALA Annual Conference after getting feedback from CORE. This plan was passed by unanimous consent.

Council received reports from the International Relations Committee (ALA CD#18); which reported that international attendance at ALA Midwinter was double what it normally is due to the virtual format, and from the Intellectual Freedom Committee (ALA CD#19, ALA CD#19.1-19.3). The team working on the IRC & IFC Joint Report (ALA CD #46 referral) asked for and was granted more time.

Council also received an update from the Operating Agreement Work Group (ALA CD#40). The Operating Agreement Work Group would like to modernize the policy not only due to its dated language but to reflect how we would ideally like to work across ALA. They are watching the Pivot Strategy and Forward Together plans to make sure the new operating agreement is aligned with these changes. They may need an extension to their work.

Council moved into closed session to discuss an ALA Honorary Membership Nomination (ALA CD#39).

Read more about what happened at ALA Midwinter (including other Council actions) [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)

If you have any questions, please reach out to Sandy through the IRRT Executive Committee.

Vote for your 2021 IRRT Board Candidates!

The IRRT Nominating Committee has prepared a slate of candidates for the upcoming Executive Board election. Responsibilities of the new elected Board Members will start at the ALA Annual 2021 convention and continue through 2023.

IRRT's Executive Board meets monthly through virtual meetings to discuss IRRT related issues, including those that arise through the various committees and the ones related to international aspects of ALA's work as a whole, and work on solutions to address these issues. Face-to-face meetings take place whenever ALA conference will be non-virtual.

Preference is given to candidates with prior committee experience within IRRT and a track record of contribution to the IRRT mission. Profiles of the nominees in alphabetical order follow the descriptions of the positions.

Position: Vice Chair/Chair Elect (2021-2024)

Chair-elect (2021-22), becomes Chair (2022-23) and serves as immediate Past-Chair (2023-2024)

According to IRRT bylaws, position of Chair-elect is a three-year commitment in which one serves as chair-elect, chair and past chair. In the first year, one learns about the work of the Executive Board under the tutelage of the Chair and the past-Chair.

Candidates: Mark Mattson, Safi S.M. Safiullah

Mark Mattson

Head of Global Engagement Initiatives and International Partnerships Librarian, Penn State University Libraries, 2016 - Present

- American Library Association (Aug 2010 - Present)
- International Relations Round Table (Sep 2016 - Present)
- IRRT Sister Libraries Committee (Co-Chair, July 2018 - Present; Committee Member, 2016 - Present)
- IRRT Webinar Committee (Chair, 2018-2019)
- Member-at-Large IRRT Executive Board (2019 - Present)
- Roundtable Bylaws Standardization Working Group (IRRT Representative, 2020 - Present)
- IRRT International Connections Committee (2017 - 2019)

Safi S. M. Safiullah

Manager, Marmalade Branch Library, Salt Lake City Public Library (2015-till present)

- ALA Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT) (Chair, 2018-2019; Vice-Chair, 2017-2018; Member-at-Large, 2020-2022)
- IRC Near East and South Asia Subcommittee (Member, 2014-2018)
- Multicultural Services Round Table, Utah Library Association (Chair, 2012-2013)
- Research and Travel Awards Committee, Asian Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA) (Co-Chair, 2010-2011)

Position: Member-at-large (2021-2023)

The Member-at-Large position lasts two years and serves to contribute information and wider perspectives from the field.

Candidates: Christina Riehman-Murphy, Allison Sharp

Christina Riehman-Murphy

Reference & Instruction Librarian; Assistant Librarian, Abington College Library, Penn State Abington (2015 - present)

- International Relations Round Table (2017 - Present)
- IRRT Publications Committee (Co-Chair, July 2020 - June 2022)
- IRRT Chair's Program Committee (Chair, July 2017 - June 2020)
- IRRT International Sister Libraries Committee & International Paper Session Subcommittee (July 2017 - June 2019)

Allison Sharp

Humanities Librarian, Associate Professor, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2014-present

- American Library Association (1999-present)
- IRRT International Visitors Committee (2019-2021)
- International Federations of Libraries and Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2017-present)

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IRRT Executive Board Nominees, continued

- Middle Eastern Librarian Association (2015-2019)
- Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (1999-present)
- Association of Christian Librarians (2000-2004)
- American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIST) (2010-2015)
- North American Serials Interest Group (2000-2005)
- Music OCLC Users Group (2000-2004)
- Tennessee Library Association (2000-2018)

Position: Secretary-treasurer (2021-2023)

The Secretary-treasurer position last two years and supports the Round Table with internal organization and financial reporting.

Candidate: Erica Saito

Erica Saito

Library and Information Specialist, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington D.C., (2019 – Present)

- American Library Association (2017-Present)
- ALA Student to Staff Program to participate in 2017 ALA Annual Conference
- ALA Emerging Leader (2020) Team Lead, Emerging Leaders Team 2020, International Librarians Networking Program (Jan 2019-Present)
- Rosemary Allen Little Award Recipient in 2018 by New Jersey Chapter of SLA
- SPIE Student Travel Stipend Award to participate in 2017 Special Library Association Annual Conference

Position: Round Table Councilor (2021-2024)

The IRRT ALA councilor is elected every third year to represent the voice of IRRT at policy-making and governing body of ALA.

Candidates: John C. Sandstrom, Barbara Marson

John Sandstrom

Acquisitions Librarian, Professor College Faculty, New Mexico State University Library, Las Cruces, New Mexico (January 2011- present)

- American Library Association (1987-1992; 2001-Present)

- International Relations Round Table (2017-Present)
- IRRT Chair's Program Committee (2018 – 2020)
- IRRT Nomination Committee (2018 – 2020)
- Rural, Native, and Tribal Libraries of All Kinds (RNTLOAK) (Chair, 2019-2021)
- ALA Awards Committee (2016-2019, 2020-2022)
- ALA Equity Award (Chair, 2019-2020)
- ALA EBSCO Conference Scholarship Award (Chair, 2018-2018)
- ALA Ken Haycock Award for Promoting Librarianship (Chair, 2017-2018)
- ALA Library of the Future Award Jury (2016-2017)

Barbara Marson

Program Director, Library Science, Dept. of Interdisciplinary Professions, East Carolina University (2020 – Present)

- American Library Association (ALA)
- IRRT Preconference (Co-Chair, 2018-2021)
- IRRT Publications Committee (2020) Coordinated three IRRT webinars during in July & August based on proposal submissions for the IRRT preconference.

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All ALA members who renewed before January 31, 2021 will receive an email of their ballots between March 8-10. The e-mail contains information about how to vote online including their log-in information. Members should watch for emails from: "ALA Governance Office" at noreply@directvote.net. The ALA annual election will close on **Wednesday, April 7, 2021**. Your voice counts!

Are you interested in participating in IRRT, but not ready for an Executive Board position yet?

There are many other opportunities to serve in IRRT Committees.

IRRT Committee Opportunities: <http://www.ala.org/rt/irrt/irrtcommittees/committees>

Committee volunteer form: http://www.ala.org/aboutala/committees/volunteer/frm_vol

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 Heba Ismail, Egypt's Society for Culture & Development, Egypt

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

Heba: Thank you so much Ray for interviewing me; it is really an honor. I work for Egypt's Society for Culture and Development (ESCD). ESCD is a nonprofit organization, and it is one of the leading networks of public and children's libraries in Egypt and provide library service to all age groups. I work as Libraries Technical Manager. I am responsible for leading the planning process within three sections, acquisition, cataloging and Integrated Library Systems; coordinating all aspects of the workflow between the sections and libraries; participating in conducting use studies, analyzing statistics, performing research to meet the needs of users in libraries and evaluating the effectiveness of services within ESCD; participating in grant proposals and administration; and conducting training workshops for my colleagues in ESCD and other public libraries.

Ray: How did you get into librarianship and (if any) formal education or training did you receive?

Heba: After obtaining my BA in librarianship in 1995, I started my career working as librarian at the Cultural Center at ESCD in 1996, I was then promoted until I became the Libraries Technical Manager. Within my daily work, I managed to obtain my MA and PhD. Fortunately, I also enrolled in many different exchange programs like the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) in 2008, funded by the U.S. Department of State, where I had the opportunity to visit many libraries in 4 states; I also was chosen to attend the Mortenson Center for International Library programs, which includes lectures and visiting libraries in the U.S. The Mortenson Center nominated me to attend INELI, the International Network of Emerging Library Innovators, a program funded by Global Libraries Initiatives (GL) at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and focus on training on leadership skills.

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

Heba: There are many topics, but I think currently with the COVID-19 impact on the world and libraries, we face budget cuts among our public libraries. Also, e-learning and e-training; this is a great benefit from this period as many institutions offered their services for free, which is an opportunity that all librarians should seize.



Heba Ismail of Egypt's Society for Culture and Development

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

Heba: I can say, "It's a whole new world" by engaging and being involved with different colleagues from all over the world; we can together shape the future of our profession. Through the different training programs or conferences I attended, I learned a lot and this affected my professional career. International librarianship opened the horizon for me and for librarians who are involved in it. It is worth mentioning that I am really glad that I am now part of it, being a member of the Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning committee in IFLA is great.

Ray: Thanks for speaking with us! We appreciate your responses! One last question: if you are working on research projects, can you tell us more about it?

Heba: We are looking to expand the training of INELI-MENA (International Network of Emerging Library Innovators - Middle East & North Africa) more on a country basis, especially after INELI-MENA was recognized as WSIS Champion 2020 in the e-learning category. Thank you, it was really a pleasure speaking to you!