

## Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table

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**Editor-in-Chief:**

Sarah Smith

Web Development Librarian

San Joaquin Valley

Library System

2420 Mariposa St.

Fresno, CA 93721

Phone: (559) 488-3260

Fax: (559) 488-2965

Email: [sarah.smith@sjvls.org](mailto:sarah.smith@sjvls.org)

**Editorial Board:**

Vladimir Wertsman

Chair, Publishing

& Multicultural

Materials Committee

65-41 Booth St., Apt. 21

Rego Park, NY 11374

Phone: (718) 896-0212

Email: [vvladimirw@aol.com](mailto:vvladimirw@aol.com)

### From the Chair

As your newly elected chair for the 2005-2007 biennium, I would like to introduce myself to you. First and foremost, I am honored to serve the Ethnic and Multicultural Materials Round Table in this most challenging capacity. My full name is Plummer Alston Jones, Jr., but please call me "Al." I am chair of the Department of Library Science and Instructional Technology at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, where I do all I can to introduce diversity and multiculturalism into our curriculum for our librarians in the making.

My principal research interest is American public library services with minorities, particularly immigrants and New Americans. What many EMIE members do on a daily basis with multilingual and multicultural communities is what I enjoy writing about and publicizing to the general library community. For insight into my philosophy of library service with minorities, please read my two books, *Libraries, Immigrants, and the American Experience* (Greenwood, 1999) and *Still Struggling for Equality: American Public Library Services with Minorities* (Libraries Unlimited, 2004). I also wrote a series of articles on leaders in the library work with immigrants movement in the early decades of the twentieth century for the *EMIE Bulletin*, highlighting the significant contributions of Jane Maud Campbell of the Massachusetts Free Public Library Commission, John Foster Carr of the Immigrant Publication Society, Eleanor (Edwards) Ledbetter of the Broadway Branch of the Cleveland Public Library, and Edna Phillips of the Massachusetts Free Public Library Commission.

Myra Appel, our newly elected Vice Chair and experienced member of the EMIE Executive Board, and I had a long conversation during the ALA Conference in Chicago. We are working closely to get organized and ready for new projects and programs to revitalize EMIE. We need and welcome your support and advice.

—Plummer Alston "Al" Jones, Jr., Chair 2005-2007  
*Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table*

#### About Us

EMIERT, the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table, is an organization authorized by the Council of the American Library Association (ALA). Our purpose is to provide a forum for the exchange of information on library materials in English and other languages and to promote service for all ethnolinguistic and multicultural communities in general. For further information, including contact persons, visit our website, <http://www.ala.org/emiert>.

#### Membership

Any personal, institutional, or organizational member of the American Library Association may become a member of the Round Table upon payment of dues. EMIERT dues are \$20/individual, \$25/organization, and \$10/student.

## Serving Multilingual Populations: A Publication Idea

For several years now, I have thought about compiling a collection of articles on best practices in serving the needs of multilingual and multicultural communities and have had contact with Charles Harmon, acquisitions editor for Neal-Schuman Publishers. In Chicago at the ALA Annual Conference this June, I met with Harmon again to chat more about how my idea could be translated into a real publication. He was interested in what libraries and library systems are doing for communities where languages other than English are used in the home and in the workplace. He liked the idea about focusing on best practices and suggested that it would be helpful to include examples of forms, signs, policies, borrower's cards, etc. in languages other than English. These foreign-language forms and publications could be reproduced on a CD-ROM to aid libraries in adapting them to use in their own communities. Harmon suggested that a title such as "Serving Multilingual Communities: A How-to Manual" would fit the needs of Neal-Schuman for practical handbooks on providing library services to special groups.

Here again, as a researcher and not a practitioner, I would

depend on EMIE members to get the word out to librarians who are involved in programs serving multilingual and multicultural communities. I would be glad to write summaries of the programs or edit summaries that are provided to me. Either way I would like to give credit to those who are doing this good work while giving me the opportunity to explore and write out about innovative programs. I am certain that there are libraries who need this information and others who would be willing to share.

In connection with this idea, EMIE should also concentrate on getting copies of Vladimir Wertsman's *Directory of Ethnic and Multicultural Publishers, Distributors, and Resource Organizations* into the hands of librarians working with multilingual and multicultural communities. Wertsman's directory has become a standard in the field and should be in the reference collections of public, academic, and school libraries throughout the country. This directory continues to a publication for which EMIE can be proud.

—Al Jones

## Being Jewish and Mexican: Bridging of Gaps Between Borders Occurs in In-between Spaces

By Juan Moran

On Sunday, June 26th, at the 2005 annual meeting of the American Library Association, the Jewish Information Committee of the Ethnic & Multicultural Information Exchange Roundtable (EMIERT) held a workshop titled "Between Two Worlds," cosponsored by REFORMA. The purpose of the workshop was to build bridges between the Jewish and Latino library community, as well as to provide an educational venue for all. At the workshop the program's focus was on the Jewish community of Mexico, which included a screening and discussion of the 1994 Mexican film "Novia Que Te Veo" (Like a Bride). The film, based on the autobiographical novel by Rosa Nissan, is a touching tale set within the Mexican Jewish community, beginning with a prologue in the 1920s and spanning through to the 1980s. The characters in the film address the issues of having two identities, one as defined as being born Mexican but lacking full ancestral "Mexican-ness" while at the same time, they being and expected to remain Jewish and carry on their parents' traditions.

The film focuses on the parallel lives of two young Jewish women of different heritages. Sensitive, Oshi Mataraso is Sephardic (a descendant from the Jewish communities of Spain, Portugal, and northern Africa.) The idealistic Rifke Gorman is Ashkenazic (a descendant from the Jewish communities of central or Eastern Europe). The two women can be viewed as metaphors for the search for Jewish identity in a world radically reshaped by World War II and the Holocaust. Oshi's Sephardic family immigrated to Mexico from Turkey in the 1920s, spared from the terrors of Nazism. Rifke's family members were not so lucky as many of her relatives perished in Hitler's death camps. Both women were born and raised in Mexico, unaware of each other's presence. Both of them share youthful experiences of anti-Semitism and alienation, rooted in Latin America's strong Catholic tradition.

By the time they enter university, they experience the standard tug-of-war that emerges when the conflict between traditions and an ever-changing modernized world erupts. Both women have embraced Zionism, trying to establish a Jewish

identity in an environment that grows more secular and revolutionary by the moment. Oshi's family is pushing her towards marriage, particularly with a promising young Jewish doctor, while she has aspirations to be an artist. Rifke, who enjoys anthropology, is attracted to a handsome young gentile revolutionary named Eduardo, and her attraction to him conflicts with her desire to maintain a Jewish identity. The film ends showing the two women as mature adults who have embraced different paths but both maintaining their Jewish identities.

The film and the book by Rose Nissan raises a series of questions. The literature produced by members of the Mexican Jewish community reflects the dilemma of cultural adaptation and assimilation derived from allegiances to their often conflicting Jewish identities. In the past 20 years there has been a noticeable increase in the literary activity of Mexican Jewish authors writing in Spanish. One central question is: Does literature written in Spanish by Jewish authors truly reflect the experience of the Jewish community and help transform that experience—with its negative and positive aspects—into a legitimate, accurate portrayal of the community? Or does this literature essentially express the Jewish identity problems of the authors? In other words: what do these Jewish writers contribute towards building a stable bridge between being Jewish and being Mexican?

The location where the exchange between two cultures takes place is in fragmented spaces. The national culture (in this case Mexican) is not a unified one in relation to itself, and the 'other culture' (i.e. Jewish) should not be seen simply in relation to what is outside of it. The interaction between the two cultures does not occur in completely defined and clearly marked areas; rather the bridging of gaps between borders occurs in in-between spaces. Rosa Nissan's novels show that she understands the problems of identity associated with belonging to two cultures and moves the cultural conversation to a place between them, fully aware that it refers to a space not yet clearly defined. Her narratives propose a shifting model for Jewish identity based on a more modern version that allows for diversity. For example in

the novel as well as the film she moves the definition of Jewish from the religious to the secular. Another example is she questions traditional gender roles. Rosa belongs to two worlds in which she operates as a "insider" or as an "outsider," depending on the space she occupies at a particular time. She writes in the paradoxical space navigated by people who simultaneously occupy the center and the margin.

In answer to the above question, Rosa Nissan understands herself and her interactions with both Jewish and Mexican individuals, but she speaks first and foremost for herself and her Jewish heritage. In the later novel "Hisho que te nazca", she finds the perfect place between the two identities when she writes: "To be Jewish is a lot deeper; if you lived and studied a little, you would feel proud, like myself, which doesn't mean that I don't love Mexico with all my heart. A person's

religion doesn't determine his loyalty to his country. Enjoy and don't suffer about being Jewish-Mexican or Mexican-Jewish, however you like-that enriches you."

As a community, regardless of national origin, Mexican Jews share a sense of belonging to an adopted land. They have so integrated themselves into the social, economical, and political affairs of the country that their Jewish identity does not interfere with their Mexican identity. They do not exclude but, rather, complement each other. Jews hold public offices at the local and national levels and participate actively in the everyday business of the country. Mexican Jews and their children born in Mexico have managed to maintain their traditions while simultaneously developing a sense of national identity.

## Reflections on a Trip to Sarajevo

Last spring I was invited to attend the First International Convention of Slavists Librarians in Sarajevo, Bosnia, which took place from April 22-24, 2005. The theme of the conference was "How do others see us? How is South Eastern Europe, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular, represented in the collections of Western European and North American Libraries".

Sarajevo based organizers, Librarians' Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, INFOHOUSE, Association for the Advancement of Information Studies, and IKD UNIVERSITY PRESS d.o.o. aimed to start on-going international meetings of Slavist librarians and to provide an opportunity for representatives of foreign libraries to acquaint themselves with the publishing activities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the conference coincided with the Sarajevo Book Fair), to make direct contact with the publishers and distributors and, ultimately, to increase the distribution of books and periodicals from that area.

The invited foreign participants were: Robert, J. Doria, University of Ann Arbor, USA; Predrag Pajic, Library of Congress, Washington DC; Magda Szkuta, The British Library, London, Great Britain; Zoltan Boda, Library for Foreign Languages, Budapest, Hungary; Nermina Loncarevic, Bibliotheque nationale de France, Paris, France; Daniel Pennell, University of Pittsburg, USA; Bosiljka Stevanovic, The New York Public Library, USA; Jeffrey Spurr, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA; Janet Crayne, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA; Tatjana Lorkovic, Yale University, USA and Bea Klotz, CEEOL, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. There were representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia as well. Papers were presented, which will soon be published but for the moment are available online at [www.openbook.ba/icsl/](http://www.openbook.ba/icsl/).

Our hosts were extremely friendly. I was impressed by their hospitality and generosity. Professor Kemal Bakarsic, who opened the conference, had his students of Library Science be

available to us to facilitate the details of our stay. I was equally impressed by the dedication and eagerness to see and hear new things these young men and women demonstrated every day. Their libraries are impoverished at this point; their National Library remains in question as to where it is going to be located—in Sarajevo, Tuzla or Banja Luka, the new cantons. The University Library has been relocated from one building, which was turned into the Iranian Embassy, to another building, which the USA wants for its embassy, but no one seems to know where they might relocate or if there are any financial means for it. The funds are unavailable to sustain a reasonable level of currency of materials and the librarians despair. Mrs. Lorkovic (from Yale University) and I went to see the Cultural Attaché at the American Embassy to ask if they could help financially. We were received very nicely but no help was available. Americans, we were told, maintain a business library at the Embassy and "corner" libraries in six different public libraries around Bosnia. Those are literally corners filled with American literature available to the readers of these areas, and because of this commitment no other funds are available for additional projects.

Last but not least, if not the very reason for writing this piece, is the following story, which I want to share with the readers of *EMIE Bulletin*. Sasa Madacki, the Director of the Human Rights Centre Library, University of Sarajevo, spoke to me about being the most devout reader of the *Bulletin*. He had been to an ALA conference as an international participant and got to see EMIE's publication to which he subscribed. I was very impressed by the fact that the *Bulletin* reached that far and was very appreciated, and thought there might be other stories like this one out there that we do not know about. I think it should encourage us to strive to make this publication the best we can.

—Bosiljka Stevanovic

## Seeking Award Nominees

Deadline for nominations: December 31 of each year.

For nomination forms and other information, contact:  
Francesca Hary, Awards Committee Chair, [haryfr@oplin.org](mailto:haryfr@oplin.org).

### The GALE/EMIERT Multicultural Award

Standards for this award are any significant accomplishments in library services that are national or international in scope and that include improving, spreading, and promoting multicultural librarianship. The winner of this award will receive \$1,000.

Persons in the library world are eligible to be considered for the award based on outstanding achievement and leadership in serving the community by significant collection building and outreach services, and developing creative multicultural materials and programs. Emphasis here is multicultural/multiethnic as distinguished from multilingual.

Screening of candidates is based on submitted application forms that contain a detailed curriculum vitae with specific information and evidence of the candidate's outstanding achievement and leadership.

The award ceremony takes place at the scheduled EMIERT membership meeting during the ALA Annual Conference. The award, a citation on parchment and a check for \$1,000 from the representative of the Gale Research Company, will be presented at that time.

### David Cohen/EMIERT Multicultural Award

To encourage as well as recognize articles of significant new

research and publication that increases understanding and promotes multiculturalism in libraries in North America. Works published within the last two years preceding the award application deadline shall be eligible to receive the award. The publication shall demonstrate advances in understanding multicultural issues in libraries. The Award consists of a certificate and \$300. Donor: Routledge, Sylvia K. Miller, Publishing Director.

The Award recipients will be selected based on the following specific criteria:

- \* Relationship of publication to the purpose of the Award
- \* Validity of cultural representation
- \* Extent to which publication bridges cultures
- \* Demonstrated significance of publication and its impact
- \* Accuracy of text
- \* Originality

Nominated published articles will be evaluated based on submitted applications received by the deadline set by the EMIERT Awards Committee. Complete applications shall include 5 copies of submitted materials (complete application form, 250-word statement of significance, and copy of article).

The Award winner will be selected at the ALA Midwinter Meeting and presented at the ALA Annual Conference during the EMIERT membership meeting.

## Multicultural Video Reviews Online

Looking for reviews of educational media programs? Educational Media Reviews Online (EMRO) is a free database of reviews written by librarians, for librarians. With close to 2,000 reviews in the database, EMRO contains a substantial number of reviews of multicultural titles from film distributors both large and small.

A selection of reviews that may help with multicultural programming and collection development include *El Chogui: A Mexican Immigrant Story* from Filmmakers Library. Post 9/11 issues are examined in *Brothers and Others* from Arab Film Distribution. The critically acclaimed *Afghanistan Unveiled* and *Afghanistan, The Lost Truth*, both from Women Make Movies, as well as *Daughters of Afghanistan* from Choices, Inc. explore the role of women in Afghani society after the Taliban.

Gay and lesbian treatment within ethnic groups in the U.S. is covered in *Exist: Voices* from the Middle Eastern Lesbian & Gay Community in the United States, and *All God's Children* from Cinema Guild. Explaining gay lifestyles to children is tackled in *Sticks and Stones*.

The powerful PBS series *Race: The Power of an Illusion* is reviewed, and several other titles covering Black history include *Black America and the Education Crisis* from Films for the Humanities and Sciences and *The Road to Brown* from California Newsreel.

A comparative review of *Boys of Buchenwald* from National Film Board of Canada and *The Holocaust Experience* from First Run/Icarus Films takes a look at the lives of Jewish people after the Holocaust.

Another National Film Board of Canada series looks at Native American history with *Chiefs: Sitting Bull*.

The Black community in Argentina is the focus of *Afroargentines* from Latin American Video Archives, and *The Promised Ship* from the same distributor takes a look at Marcus Garvey's dream of creating a shipping line to transport the Black community between the Caribbean and Africa.

Many of the programs reviewed in EMRO are suitable not only for higher education, but junior high and high school levels, as well as the general public and would be appropriate for a variety of library collections. When selecting media, remember to be aware of public performance rights, and purchase accordingly.

To search for multicultural titles in EMRO, choose from various subject headings on the main search page, or enter a keyword, title or distributor. There are several subject headings dealing with different ethnic, anthropological, and multicultural areas. If you have trouble finding what you need, contact me via e-mail and perhaps I can get the titles you are interested in seeing into the database or even talk you into joining our group of over 100 esteemed reviewers.

EMRO has existed as a stand alone database since 2000, and prior to that was part of the online journal *MC Journal: The Journal of Academic Media Librarianship*.

—Lori Widzinski, Editor, Educational Media Reviews Online  
<http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/emro/search.html>