

International Visitors' Center 2011

By Ruby Bell-Gam and Elizabeth Cramer

Praise and gratitude kept pouring in: "Great service!!" "It's really great to come here, (my) second time to attend and meet all the friends from all over the world here in a very nice place." "Love it! Very helpful." "Great resource- thank you!" These were just a few of the enthusiastic comments from visitors to the International Visitors' Center (IVC) at the 2011 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans last June. The IVC provides conference related advice and support for all international attendees at the ALA annual conference. Under the direction of the IRRT International Visitors' Center Committee and staffed entirely by volunteers, the IVC is an enclosed area situated near the main ALA Annual Conference registration. Open from 8 am to 5 pm on Friday through Monday of the conference, it offers casual seating, computers, a printer, and information that would enable the international attendee to successfully maneuver the sometimes overwhelming ALA Annual Conference.

Volunteers are essential to the success of the International Visitors' Center. This year thirty-six volunteers staffed the IVC,



Each visitor indicated his or her country of origin by placing a pin on the corresponding location on the world map.

pairing up to work two-hour shifts. Every year a call for volunteers is posted in the International Leads newsletter, via listservs and emails through the ALA International Relations Office. Prior to the conference, the IVC Committee briefs each volunteer on responsibilities that include keeping statistics, answering directional and transportation questions, offering information about international programs, and sharing general conference orientation tips to the international guests, many of whom are first-time attendees at the ALA conference.

The IVC was fortunate to have a number of Emerging Leaders working as volunteers this year. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement. "Our Emerging Leaders group had a great experience working with the IRRT to give away 25 tickets to the International Reception in exchange for a volunteer commitment from the ticket winners," says Connie Behe, one of the 2011 ALA Emerging Leaders. Behe notes that a post-reception survey confirmed the participants' memorable experience: "The volunteers loved meet-

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Message from the Editor

I am sure that you will agree that the 2011 annual conference in New Orleans was a rousing success, thanks greatly to devoted volunteers, knowledgeable presenters, guest speakers, and dedicated committee members. This issue of *International Leads* will highlight a few of these events.

The lead article by Ruby Bell-Gram and Elizabeth Cramer draws attention to an important but inconspicuous meeting and gathering place for International Librarians and colleagues, the International Visitors' Center. Over 600 visitors from 46 different countries availed themselves of the services and comfortable space to meet with colleagues and new friends.

In a comprehensive report,, Nancy Bolt, a tireless IRRT member, gives an update on the American Bulgarian Library Exchange. Her recent visit to Bulgaria allows her to showcase the many accomplishments and successes of the project and more importantly, the libraries and librarians in Bulgaria.

Sha Li Zhang, Chair of the International Relations Committee, submits a year-end report that outlines an impressive array of activities, including preconferences, news and updates, plans and initiatives, and the International Librarians Reception.

Speaking of the International Librarians Reception, the recipients of the 2011 International Innovative Library Projects Award were honored at the reception held at Generation Hall in New Orleans. Read on to learn more about these very worthy projects.

We would like to thank Rebecca L. Miller, past editor of *International Leads*, for her many years of service and commitment to producing a newsletter of which we can all be proud. I hope to follow her fine example of beating the bushes and finding stories of interest to all.

Finally, 2011 marks the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps and true to the Peace Corps ethos of service, many volunteers embark on library projects in their towns or villages because of the volunteers' sense of value for books, literacy, and the sense of community that a library instills. My first library was in a village in southern Ethiopia in the early 1970s while I served as a Volunteer. Did you know that the International Sustainable Library Development Group of IRRT began with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers? Congratulations to all current and returned volunteers for being part of history.

~ Janet Lee

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Do you have news about...

International library activities?

People in international librarianship?

Upcoming international conferences?

International partnerships between libraries?

Then why not submit it to *International Leads*?
Send your news to intl.leads.irrt@gmail.com
for consideration.

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Visitor Center

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ing international librarians in the visitor's center and being able to attend an ALA event they wouldn't have been able to otherwise. Several respondents said they would continue to attend the reception and volunteer in the future."

Thus, these aspiring ALA leaders received a first-hand introduction to the IRRT and international issues as they relate to ALA and the annual conference, while giving back in practical terms and having a good time of it. Already, one of them, Michele Paladines, is slated to chair the IRRT Membership and Marketing Committee, according to Behe.

Visitors to the IVC this year numbered over 600 from 46 countries and numerous linguistic backgrounds. Many visitors use the IVC as a central meeting place to make contact with conference mentors, fellow nationals, or

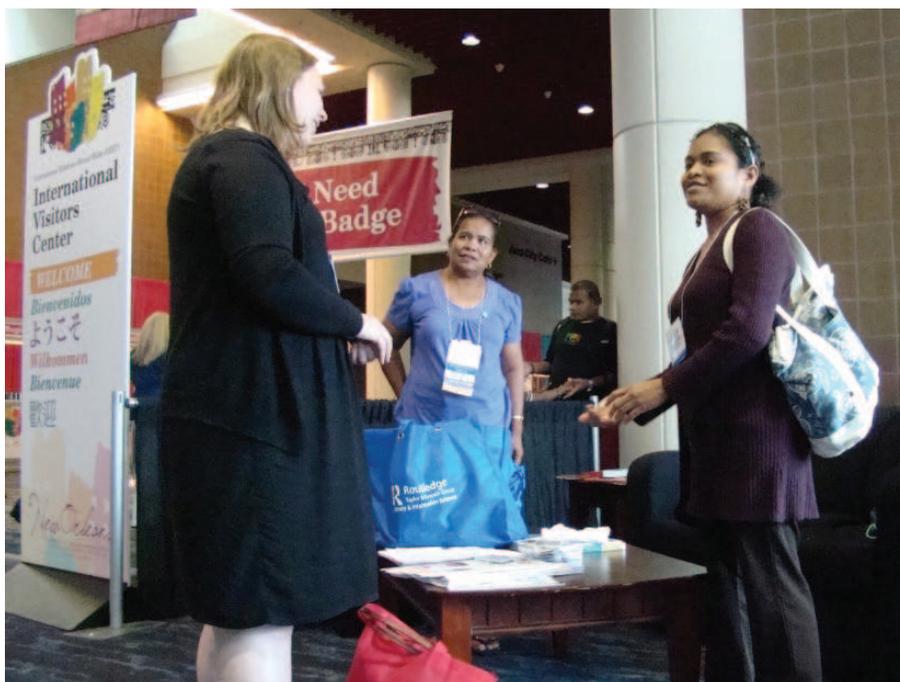
international colleagues. In one instance this year, two librarians met for the first time after working together virtually for more than a year. Recent graduate from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Katherine Hlousek, worked pro-bono on a web site for the Palau Public Library last year as part of her coursework. She finally met up with Mary Arius, librarian at the Palau Public Library, for the first time face-to-face at the International Visitors' Center where they discussed the success of the web site and got to know each other better on a personal basis as well.

Feedback from visitors demonstrates how much they appreciate the IVC's presence at the conference, with comments like: "Always glad you are here!" "Thanks for the space." "Amazing conference." The IVC helps to advance the ALA International Strategic Plan objectives of promoting world-wide library coop-

eration, expanding and promoting opportunities for ALA members' involvement in international library activities, and improving communications within ALA to international members—and guests, we might add.

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Katherine Hlousek, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign joins Grace Merong, Paulau Community College Library, and Mary Arius from the Palau Public Library at the International Visitors' Center at ALA Annual in New Orleans.

American Bulgarian Library Exchange (ABLE): an Update

By Nancy Bolt

In June 2011, Patti Bateman, Director of the Aurora Public Library (Colorado), Cher Czyzewski, a retired school librarian, and I had an opportunity to visit Bulgaria and meet with staff in nine libraries, including seven of our Partner Libraries.

Our arrival coincided with the May 24th celebration of Sts Cyril and Methodius, the inventors of the Cyrillic alphabet and the patron saints of education and libraries. During the celebration, Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov placed a wreath of flowers at the foot of the statues at the SS Cyril and Methodius National Library, an act akin to President Obama placing a wreath at the Library of Congress.

In respect to budget and support, Bulgarian libraries have both feast and famine. The feast is very good. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant is being fully implemented, the computers have been delivered and the staff trained. The Gates Foundation grant has or will transform Bulgarian libraries into true community network centers.

On the famine side, the Bulgarian economy is in no better shape than the American economy, facing budget cuts, staff furloughs for up to a month, or no funding for new books. The Regional Libraries that provide consulting services to local libraries in their region, however, were given one new position to help develop and implement a training program. Despite these obstacles, Bulgarian library staff persist in their efforts to serve their users and the com-



Placing wreaths at the Bulgarian National Library.

munity as best they can. Some examples:

- The Sofia Public Library, American Corners Library, has expanded from just serving children to serving adults as well, often with vibrant programming about American culture. In late June of this year they had a “Chicago Festival in Sofia.”

- The “P. Slaveikov” Public Library in Veliko Tarnovo is requesting a grant from the America for Bulgaria Foundation to plan a new building project. There have been no public library buildings constructed in Bulgaria in decades and only a few renovations. In Bulgaria, this is an extraordinary vision.

- The “Panitza” Library at the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) in Blagorevgrad moved into a new building on the new AUBG campus. It was funded by private grants including a large one from the America for Bulgaria Foundation. It is beautifully designed with a robust menu

of services.

- The “Ivan Vazov” Library in Plovdiv applied for and received a grant from the European Union to digitize resources. Stefka Ilieva, the training director is preparing a program on “Services of the Modern Library” for the libraries in her region.

- Radka Kalcheva from the “Pencho Slaveikov” Library in Varna says that budget cuts have been “uncomfortable” but they are managing. Their big project is to become a regional data aggregator for digitization by the libraries in their region. They are also heavily involved in life-long learning with a European Union grant to offer courses for senior citizens.

A highlight of the tour was visiting the “Biblioteka Partenii Pavlovich” in Silistra, the Partner Library of Aurora Public Library and meeting with former director Neli Stoilova, now an Assistant City Manager; Lidiya Dimitrova, the current library director; Krasi-mira Njaolova, deputy library



Library Director Anna Vasileva (second from left) and her staff at the Kazanluk Public Library.

director; and with Aleksander Sabanov, the Chairman of the City Council, a young man dedicated to revitalizing Silistra. Patti describes our visit in this way:

“In general, all Bulgarian libraries visited in 2011 show the same changes as observed in Silistra. The librarians are working much more closely with the community to bring people into the facility, to make citizens more aware of services the libraries can provide, to reach out and identify needs the library can address, provide regular programming, and make the libraries more of an integral part of the community. Their enthusiasm and dedication is inspirational and awe-inspiring, as they do so much with so very little support.”

During a lengthy visit with our newest library, the “Iskra” Municipal Library in Kazanluk Anna Vasileva, the library director, and her staff updated us on events of the past year. To counter severe budget cuts, the director sought other methods to raise money including convincing the local Rotary Club to organize an annual ball in support of the library. She said “it wasn’t easy but we told them how important the library was to the children in town.” She

held an art auction where local artists sold their works and shared the profits. She also distributed a list of needed books to local area businesses requesting that they sponsor the cost of one. Last year, the “Iskra” library sponsored 245 cultural events to bring people into the library. There were 22 literature evenings with local authors making presentations on their books and a summer reading program for the children.

After our visit with our partner libraries, I presented a two-day workshop on grant writing for the Bulgarian Library and Information Association (BLIA). BLIA has received a large grant from the America for Bulgaria Foundation to conduct training for Bulgarian librarians. This was a pre-conference to the BLIA annual national library conference. I had



Sofia Public Librarians Kamelia Koneva and Diana Stefanova at the grant writing workshop.

25 librarians from school, public, academic, and special libraries. I had asked them to come in teams prepared with an idea for funding. The eight teams learned all the elements of a successful grant application and possible sources of funding in Bulgaria and the European Union. They left with a detailed outline of a grant proposal.

Our work in Bulgaria continues to be appreciated by Bulgarian librarians. Our ABLE project spurred much new thinking and activities in Bulgarian libraries. They are pleased that we continue our work with them.

*Nancy Bolt
Nancy Bolt & Associates
Golden, CO*



Participants at the grant writing workshop.

Report from the International Relations Committee

By Sha Li Zhang, Chair of IRC

International librarians at the Conference

ALA was pleased to welcome 400 international librarians from over 60 countries to the ALA 2011 Annual Conference in New Orleans. ALA was honored that IFLA President Ms. Ellen Tise from South Africa was in attendance. Ms. Tise gave the IFLA updates at the Conference.

IRC would like to thank the leadership and members of the IRRT for all of their effort to make this conference a great experience for our international colleagues. IRRT hosted a preconference for 70 international librarians, staffed the International Visitors Center, provided mentorships and an orientation session. The conference experience culminated with the International Librarians Reception on Monday June 27, 2011 to relax, network, and solidify friendships with more than 300 U.S. librarians.

Haiti Library Rebuilding Initiative

Since January 2010, the ALA relief funds of over \$40,000 were raised to support three libraries in Haiti: the Petit Goave Public Library, the Centre Cultural Pyepoudre Community Library, and the Bibliothèque haïtienne des Pères du Saint-Esprit. At the Annual Conference, a Haiti Library Rebuilding Update was hosted by International Relations Office (IRO) to provide a progress report with the ALA members. Francoise Beaulieu-Thybulle, Directeur General, Bibliotheque Nationale d'Haiti, and Elizabeth Pierre-Louis, Library Program Coordinator (FOKAL), described their efforts in rebuild the libraries in Haiti. Deborah Lazar, Librarian at New Trier High School, also presented to the audience on her efforts to take up changes to help and offered ideas on how librarians could engage their communities to assist in rebuilding Haitian libraries.

2015 International Strategic Plan

In following up with the ALA 2015 Strategic Plan, IRC Chair ap-

pointed an Ad Hoc Task Force to develop 2015 International Strategic Plan. The taskforce was chaired by Nancy Bolt, an IRC member and former Colorado State Librarian. The representatives from IRC, IRRT, divisions, one international member are with the taskforce. Prior to the ALA Annual Conference in June 2011, the final drafted version was widely distributed to the ALA units for comments. The feedback and suggestions were incorporated in the final version. During the Annual Conference, IRC and IRRT Executive Committee adopted the 2015 International Strategic Plan, with five international goals and 30 international objectives. The document was included in the IRC Chair's report to the Council at the Annual Conference. IRC, IRRT, and other ALA Units will continue their work on implementations of this Plan. A special thank-you note goes to Nancy Bolt and the taskforce members for their hard work in accomplishing this project in a short timeline.

Earthquakes-affected libraries in Japan and New Zealand

In February 2011, the city of Christchurch in New Zealand was hit by a major earthquake of 6.3 magnitudes. In March 2011, the Tohoku region in Japan was also hit by an earthquake of 9.0 magnitude and subsequent tsunami that took the lives of tens of thousands and damaged or destroyed buildings. Libraries and library staff were affected by the natural disasters in these regions. Roberta Steven, ALA President and Keith Fiels, ALA Executive Director, sent out letters in a timely manner to the library associations in both countries and offered condolences and support to our colleagues in Japan and New Zealand on behalf of ALA.

New publication by IRO

A new International Supplement of American Libraries will debut at the IFLA Conference in August 2011 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and will be distributed at other international

events in the coming year. The publication highlights the international activities and initiatives by all ALA units. ALA had again an exhibit booth at the conference. The United States engaged in IFLA through the 125 representatives on IFLA committees, including Ms. Donna Scheeder who was re-elected to a second at-large term on the IFLA Governing Board.

ALA Representative to American Library in Paris

IRC issued an open call for the ALA Representative to the American Library in Paris this spring. At the Annual Conference, IRC provided a recommendation to the ALA Executive Board on its selection of an individual on this post.

ALA President's International Engagements

IRC would like to recognize and thank President Stevens' continued international outreach efforts. Since Midwinter Meeting in January 2011, President Stevens gave presentations at the library conferences in Canada, Slovakia, Hungary, China, and Finland. Through these international events, President Stevens presented ALA's core values and strategic priorities to our international colleagues.

Campaign for World's Libraries

IRO has continued efforts to support the development of the Campaign for World's Libraries. IRO is pleased to report that the Library Association of Barbados just finished its first Campaign project, a very successful poster contest for children across the island. The Latvian Library Association is gearing up for its second activity in partnership with the Latvian National Commission of UNESCO. IRO organized a program at the IFLA 2011 Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico that featured presentations from Argentina, Barbados, and Taiwan.

ALA Presidential Citation for Innovative Library Projects Award Recipients for 2011



*Roberta Stevens, Michelle Toombs, and Steven Pattison
--Rise Videoconferencing Network.*



*Roberta Stevens and Zulkifi Bin Amin--Quest Library
Reading Program.*



*Roberta Stevens and Pei-Lei Tsai--E-Publication System
Platform Project.*



*Roberta Stevens, Bac Nguyen, and Matthijs Balfoort--Expanding
Information Access for Visually Impaired People.*

Congratulations to the 2011 Recipients

The ALA Presidential Citation for Innovative International Library Projects began as an ALA Presidential initiative of Dr. Loriene Roy, ALA President in 2007-2008 and a notable IRRT member. The Citations recognize innovative contributions to international librarianship and are evaluated on visibility, originality, service impact, potential to create positive change, and sustainability.

The recipients of the 2011 awards were honored at the International Librarians Reception held Monday, June 27th at Generation Hall in New Orleans, LA. ALA President, Roberta

Stevens, presented representatives of each project with the Presidential Citation.

The **Rise Videoconferencing Network** project in Alberta, Canada provided continuing education and information services to more than 500,000 people living in 89 municipalities and a geographic area of 35,500 square miles. The **“Quest” Library Reading Program** project in Singapore involved more than 13,000 children in a reading program that included collectible cards and an online portal.

The **E-Publication System Platform** project of the National Central Library in Taiwan launched an innovative e-publication platform that integrates legal deposit, digital rights management, full-text transferring and circulation of e-books providing users with better access to e-publications. The **Expanding Information Access for Visually Impaired People** project in Vietnam served as a model for implementing and sustaining library services to the visually impaired through its use of strategic collaborations, public education, and training. The project's Mobile Library has reached nearly 8,000 people in disadvantaged areas.

ALA Honorary Member 2011: Yohannes Gebregeorgis



ALA President Roberta Stevens presents Yohannes Gebregeorgis Honorary Membership to the American Library Association, the highest award that ALA bestows on an individual. The award was presented during the opening session of the ALA annual conference in New Orleans. See complete story in International Leads, June 2011, pg. 7.

International Conference on Digital Collections, Bulgaria

On November 17 and 18, 2011, the Public Library “P.R. Slaveykov” in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, will host the Tenth National Science Conference “Libraries-Reading-Communications” with international attendance invited. The theme is “Digital Collections and Means of Access to Users.”

The conference is dedicated to the 60th anniversary of Prof. Albert Benbassat, literary critic and historian and professor at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications at “St. Kliment Ohridski” Sofia University in Sofia, Bulgaria, and professor of literary art and publishing in the “Library and Mass Communications Department at the Veliko Tarnovo University, “St. Cyril and St. Methodius.”

Please send an application containing your personal data and the topic of your paper to Kalina Ivanova at kdemireva@mail.bg

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