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Library Services in Kenya: A Process of Reinvention

By Eva Kaplan

If you were going to invent a library system from scratch, what would it look like? How would you introduce it to the communities you work in? How would you fund it, get political support, and train librarians? How would you redesign library services in the digital age?

In places like Kenya these are exactly the questions being asked. Developing library services where before there were none presents enormous challenges, since the intricate ecosystem that allow library systems to function in developed countries – from government institutions to private donors to library users— doesn't exist. Furthermore, many people don't have an intuitive understanding about the value of libraries, or even what a library is. Sound like a nightmare? Actually, environments like these can be amongst the most exciting places to work. Environments like these are where real innovation can happen.

The Kenya National Library Service (KNLS), community groups, and international



Teaching parents how to read to their children is an important function of library programming at the Kenya National Library Service.

aid organizations alike have been creatively experimenting. As a result, in Kenya one can witness the evolution of a library system that looks very different to the one we may be familiar with, one that integrates high tech and low tech to provide meaningful information access all over Kenya.

Starting from scratch: Building libraries

KNLS runs over 50 public libraries throughout Kenya, servicing a population of over 41 million. It is clear that

the number of libraries cannot hope to reach most Kenyans. In the late 1990s, realizing that the need for new libraries was far larger than KNLS's budget could support, KNLS instituted the community based library policy, inviting any community to self-organize to build a library on public land. KNLS will take over the library once it is built, providing resources and ensuring professional library staff and sustainability. Within 10 years of introducing

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Message from the Editor

I do hope the ALA Mid-winter conference in Seattle was as profitable for you as it was for me. It was a great opportunity to reunite with former colleagues and make new connections. As always, Saturday morning was set aside for the IRRT/IRC committees to meet to run the business of IRRT/IRC. Great programs are in the offering for the ALA annual conference in Chicago, June 27 to July 2, 2013. Look for announcements for these programs and more: Chair’s program, International Papers, International Sustainable Library Development Interest Group, and IRC regional programs. Don’t forget the International Librarian’s reception. Consider volunteering at the International Visitor’s Center.

Eva Kaplan introduces us to library services in Kenya in our opening article, emphasizing the importance of library networks in library development.

Our chair, Dr. Loriene Roy, announces the IRRT Chair’s program, “With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility,” featuring Asi Burak, co-president of Games for Change. Co-sponsored by ALA’s Games and Gaming Round Table, Burak describes how games can be used for peace.

Nancy Bolt, IRC Chair, reports on the many, many activities of the International Relations Committee.

To complete this issue, Steve Witt, University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, summarizes an international and area studies working conference sponsored by Duke, Columbia, and Yale University Libraries last November at Yale.

See you in Chicago!

~ Janet Lee

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the policy, community libraries out-numbered libraries built by KNLS directly.

Kenya remains a largely rural society, with several nomadic tribes and a poor system of roads. The importance of mobile services is clear—what’s less clear is the actual vehicle that is most appropriate for supporting such services. In Garissa, one of the largest towns in the Kenya’s remote desert area, the mobile unit is a camel. In Busia, a trading town on the border between Kenya and Uganda, my own organization, Maria’s Libraries, has developed mobile services around the most common mode of transport in that community: the bicycle. These vehicles are effective, culturally appropriate, and relatively inexpensive, meaning they can get the job done in a way that a more sophisticated vehicle might not. In the very near future, Maria’s Libraries will be experimenting with making the bicycle web-enabled, using wireless mesh technology to transform the bicycle into an internet hotspot.

Making it relevant: presenting a library to the community

At the Mutyambua Library, KNLS has a fish pond with a capacity to hold 8,000 fish. Located in a dry region that relies on government food support, the pond acts as a demonstration farm for the community, and people can learn the basics of fish farming at the library.

At the Busia Community Library, mothers reported that they were interested in supporting their children’s education, but, since they themselves had gotten very far in education, they didn’t know how. Our storytime programs thus do not involve children directly—rather, they involve mothers. Semi-literate mothers are invited to the library to learn how to read storybooks to their children.

These types of programs are critical to making the library relevant. The end-goals are not abstract, for example to “increase literacy” or “introduce computers.” These larger goals are things that happen along the way, by demonstrating how literacy, computers, and information more generally can make a meaningful difference in people’s lives.

Redefining information services in the digital age

The physical and socio-economic environment in which library services are being developed have thus required innovative approaches. Equally relevant are the new tools available to promoting information

services—this is, of course, all that is encompassed in the digital age.

All over Kenya, there is an emphasis on two-way information streams. Libraries are thus not only places to access information—they are places where citizens can make their voices heard.

For example, resource databases integrate real time citizen updates via text, for example on agriculture prices, or services offered at clinics.

In addition, our Citizen Archivist Project trains library users to document the happenings of their communities using video and voice recorders. We’re also looking at how to support citizen science, where community members are in direct contact with the global scientific community around issues that are important or interesting to them. This could be around new seed technologies, or documenting local wildlife.

Conclusion

There is a lot of work to be done in strengthening Kenya’s library network—so take note! While there’s a great deal that burgeoning library networks can learn from more developed ones, it is increasingly clear that the reverse is also true.

Eva Kaplan
Director
Maria’s Libraries

2013 International Relations Round Table (IRRT) Chair's Program: Asi Burak, "With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility"

By **Loriene Roy**

I am pleased, honored, and excited to announce that the speaker for the IRRT Chair's program at the ALA Annual conference will be Mr. Asi Burak, Co-President of Games for Change, who will be addressing the topic "With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility." Burak will speak about his experience developing and nurturing video games for social good. His program is co-sponsored by ALA's Games and Gaming Round Table.

After completing a BA in design from the Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem and service as a Captain in the Israeli Intelligence Corps, Burak relocated to Pittsburgh where he completed a Masters of Entertainment Technology from Carnegie Mellon University. When asked by his advisor, Dr. Randy Pausch, about his plans for his research, Burak replied that he wanted to create a video game that would enable Israelis and Palestinians to sit down and negotiate peace. Even though Pausch told Burak that he was 'nuts,' Burak led a work team that produced and launched "PeaceMaker" in 2005. In 2007, Burak co-founded the company, ImpactGames, through which they made PeaceMaker available for purchase. Available in English, Hebrew, and Arabic, PeaceMaker has sold over

100,000 copies in more than 60 countries and has received multiple awards including first place in the 2006 University of Southern California "Reinventing Public Diplomacy through Games" contest and the 2007 "Best Transformation Game" recognition from the Games for Change Annual Contest. Players may choose to act out the role of the Israeli Prime Minister or the Palestinian President. In these roles, they respond from one of three levels of difficulty (calm, tense, or violent) to events depicted through real images and news footage.

Established in 2004, the mission of Games for Change is "Catalyzing Social Impact Through Digital Games." The Games for Change website (<http://www.gamesforchange.org>) features a forum for sharing information about games, reviews of games, and ways to connect through over 50 Games for Change Meetups around the world. The resource center provides access to publications and tools, notices about funding opportunities and competitions, and two toolkits, one with details on how to start a Games for Change Meetup and the other, "Let the Games Begin," a toolkit for organizations that would like to launch their own games. The tenth anniversary Games for Change Festival takes place from 17-19 June 2013 in New York City and will provide a venue for 800 people

to listen to leaders, engage in programming, view demos of new games, and play the games themselves.

Burak has continued work on highly visible gaming initiatives, such as the creation of "Half the Sky Movement: The Game," a social charity game that will be available through Facebook March 2013. The game is based on and inspired by Kristof and WuDunn's book, "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide." The object of the game will be to help Radhika, a fictional Indian woman, meet every day challenges. Players can assist Radhika by unlocking donations provided by such companies as Johnson & Johnson. While the game is free, players will have the option to make actual monetary donations to up to seven nonprofits such as Heifer International, the Fistula Foundation, or Room to Read. Burak hopes that two to five million players will engage with "Half the Sky" with at least five percent of these players taking the extra step to donate to real charities whose needs are highlighted in the game.

Watch your ALA scheduler for updated news about the program date, time, and place. Please join us at the ALA Annual Conference.

Come. Learn. Play!

International Relations Committee Report

By Nancy Bolt, IRC Chair

International Librarians at the Midwinter Meeting

IRRT continued its support of international members and attendees at ALA with a reception at the beginning of conference. This year there were 125 international attendees. The IRC was especially pleased that IFLA President Ingrid Parent, Librarian at the University of British Columbia, was able to update the IRC on IFLA activities.

IFLA Nominations

IFLA nominations are taking place this year for President-elect, Governing Board, and Section Committees. The IRC would like to thank all the ALA units that have worked to solicit and review interested candidates, and for forwarding such well-qualified members to represent ALA at IFLA. The IRC has reviewed all the nominations and sent its recommendations to the ALA Executive Board.

Guadalajara Book Fair

President Maureen Sullivan led a contingent of over 100 ALA members for the 15th year of the ALA-FIL Free Pass Program to the Guadalajara Book Fair. President Sullivan provided a presentation at the University of Guadalajara's annual Coloquio. ALA's current collaborative agreement with the Fair runs through 2015.

ALA at Library Society of China Conference

The IRC would like to acknowledge Past-President Molly Raphael for her wonderful representation on behalf of ALA at the Library Society of China Conference in Dongguan at the end of November. She was joined by a delegation of ALA members organized by the Chinese American Library Association. The Library Society of China will be bringing a delegation of 40 Chinese librarians interested in children and youth services to the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago who will present a program during the conference.

International Library Relief

ALA continues to receive donations from members and others to help rebuild libraries in Haiti, Japan, and Chile. To date supporters have contributed over \$60,000 to help rebuild three adopted libraries in Haiti. A group of teen volunteers, the Friends of the Mill Valley Public Library and Ms. Katie MacBride held a book sale to raise money to rebuild libraries in Haiti. The group's third-year book sale raised \$705.59. The Carleton Washburne School in Winnetka, Illinois, held its 2nd Annual Washburne Read-a-Thon! Students raised \$2,368.28. Thanks to donations, ALA will be able to pay for the shipping of 1,000 Spanish-language books to Chile in February that were gathered

and cataloged by the Reforma International Relations Committee.

Campaign for the World's Libraries

Thirty-five library associations around the world have joined the ALA/IFLA Campaign for the World's Libraries based on ALA's @ your library campaign. Countries as diverse as Argentina and Taiwan have been able to use the Campaign to generate public awareness about the value of libraries. This December Slovakia became the Campaign's newest participant. The Guide to the Campaign has been translated into five languages (Spanish, French, Chinese, Polish, and Romanian) and there will soon be a version in Arabic thanks to Khadija Semlali from Morocco, who did an exchange at ALA Headquarters this fall.

International AL Direct

International AL Direct has been published three times since summer 2012. It is now distributed to about 2500 people, including all international members, all IRRT members, other interested parties, and 300 people who have requested this free online publication. ALA Council members are invited to subscribe. You can read an issue at <http://www.ala.org/offices/international-al-direct>.

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Destruction of Libraries and Manuscripts in Timbuktu, Mali

While at this conference, ALA members learned of the destruction of libraries and manuscripts in Timbuktu, Mali. All that was known at the time was that the destruction occurred during an attempt by the French and Malian army to recapture Timbuktu as part of the ongoing turmoil in this country and that Islamist rebels destroyed an unknown number of manuscripts. Estimates of the number of destroyed manuscripts at the Ahmed Baba Institute and one other site range from 3,000 to 20,000, as reported in the media. Also reported was that an unknown number of manuscripts had been previously removed to a remote site for safe-keeping. Some of the manuscripts in the libraries date back to the 13th century.

IRC and the US Committee of the Blue Shield are monitoring the situation and will report to Council as soon as more definitive information is known. At that point, some action on the part of ALA may be recommended.

IRC resolutions passed by Council

IRC worked with other ALA units to develop two resolutions for consideration and then approval of ALA council.

Resolution on improved access for people who are blind, visually impaired, and with other print disabilities

Since 2009, WIPO, the World Intellectual Property Organization, has made it a priority to formulate a treaty compelling all nations to have a disability exception for people who are print handicapped. In addition, the idea of cross-border sharing of accessible content is a focus so countries can share accessible content with other nations for the use by their disabled populations. This issue will be discussed at a conference in June, 2013. Opposition to this idea comes from publishers and licensing groups, particularly in the EU and the US. The resolution passed by Council asks the US Senate to endorse this treaty and ask WIPO to adopt it.

Resolution on United States Funding and Participation in UNESCO

Until recently, the US has been a full dues-paying member of UNESCO. UNESCO offers and supports many important programs of value to libraries in the U.S. Congress stopped funding UNESCO in late 2011 after UNESCO admitted Palestine into full membership in UNESCO, pursuant to US laws from the 1990s that require the United States to cut off funds to any UN agency that recognizes Palestine as a full member. The US has a grace period of two years before they are no longer allowed to vote on the creation, operation, and support of UNESCO programs. A major US role in UNESCO has been to advocate for values of access to infor-

mation and empowerment of citizens, particularly in repressive countries. This resolution asks the US Congress to pass a "national interest waiver" that would allow Congress to pay UNESCO dues, notwithstanding the laws that currently prevent this payment. If Congress passes this "national interest waiver," it will allow the US to keep its vote in UNESCO and advocate for shared values globally through full participation in UNESCO projects.

submitted by
Nancy Bolt
IRC Chair

International & Area Studies Collections in 21st Century Libraries: Report of a Conference

By Steve Witt

Academic library leaders with responsibility for international and area studies collections and staff gathered in early November to discuss common challenges and identify strategies for joint action. The small working conference, International & Area Studies Collections in 21st Century Libraries, was sponsored by the Duke, Columbia, and Yale University Libraries and held November 2-3, 2012 at Yale. It represented the first time U.S. research library managers with oversight for these collections have met to create an ongoing forum for exchange.

The idea for a conference emerged as a result of the growing number of librarians with director-level responsibility for international and area studies collections. Discussion at the event reflected a sense of urgency about the need to better position these library units so they can continue to thrive in rapidly changing academic library organizations. The participants recognized that improving their ability to advocate for their units while effectively demonstrating their organizational impact is a key challenge going forward. Conference participants identified four additional issues of common concern:

- financial constraints, especially the de-funding of

government programs that support international and area studies (including relevant library activities) at the university level

- access to digital content, including affordable electronic resources, from their world areas
- recruitment, training, and retention of area studies specialists in libraries
- development of models for successful collaboration, including collection development (print and digital), digitization, and shared expertise

Participants agreed on a number of goals, resulting in the following conference outcomes:

First, since there is no national level organization that provides an institutional home for area collection directors, there was keen interest in creating a means for continuing discussion. It was agreed to establish a listserv and virtual space for document sharing. James Simon, Director of the Global Resources Network at the Center for Research Libraries and a conference participant, offered the use of the CRL server for these purposes. (See further details, below.)

Second, there was strong support for the development of strategies for advocacy and capacity-building. Action items

include:

- A. Development of a “toolkit” for those in area and international collections, to include:
- methods for assessment and documenting impact
 - talking points for highlighting the importance of global/international/area collection activities
 - strategies for development and fund-raising
 - repository for job descriptions, shared data, etc.

B. Communication about the conference themes and outcomes

- sharing of conference results locally with library colleagues and faculty
- diffusion of conference outcomes to relevant national library organizations, especially area studies librarian groups

C. Promotion of research and publication related to area and international collections and expertise

- cooperation with the editor of the Journal of Library Administration on a themed special issue related to this specialty

Third, there was agreement on the need to focus on the recruitment, training and mentorship of area studies librarians.

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- production of a white paper on the topic (or research article for the above special issue)
- creation of a checklist of competencies for area studies librarians
- collaboration on mentoring through visiting librarians' programs, both formal and informal
- partnerships with library associations, library schools, and scholarly associations to increase awareness of areas studies librarian careers

Fourth, specific areas for collaboration were proposed, including:

- coordination of acquisitions trips to relevant world areas

- pilot projects on themes such as human rights or the environment
- collaboration in areas such as collection development of data and web archiving
- create an inventory of existing collaborations and define best practices

Continuing discussion and action planning will take place through the listserv and shared virtual space established at CRL. Librarians who are interested in participating should contact one of the conference organizers:

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