

Liaison librarian makes overseas connection

By Robin Bergart

As a liaison librarian at a university library in Ontario, my normal liaison duties don't take me much farther than the edge of campus. But last winter, out of the blue, a professor in one of my departments asked if I would be interested in some library work at the University of Ghana in Accra. He is an agricultural economist and had a grant from the Canadian International

Library workers from the University of Ghana unload materials bound for recycling as part of a weeding project at the department library in Accra. The project was one of several accomplished during the author's time in Ghana.

advance how to spend our limited budget. We selected some textbooks and CD ROMS, purchased cataloging supplies, and spent the bulk of our budget on The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library, a hard drive loaded with 115 full text agricultural journals produced by Cornell University's Albert R. Mann Library. We also acquired UNESCO's CDS/ISIS database software so we could—if need be—create an automated catalog for the library.

The contradictory impressions we have formed about the situation numbers of subscriptions online

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IRRT in New Orleans!

I would like to personally thank everyone who conducted the work of the IRRT at the Annual Meeting in New Orleans. As Chair, I have been the fortunate recipient of many compliments about the high quality of IRRT programs and events. More importantly, IRRT members are doing more than ever to create opportunities for librarians from around the world to network with each other and share our commitment to the future of libraries around the world. Highlights from the Annual Conference:

- “Thinking Outside the Borders” (Pre-Conference) - In past years, the pre-conference has only been open to non-U.S. librarians. This year we opened registration to all with great success!
- International Librarian’s Orientation - A big “Thank You” to Keith Fiels, ALA executive director, for welcoming librarians from abroad to the conference and to George Needham, OCLC vice president, Member Services, for speaking about trends in U.S. libraries.
- “National Libraries” (Paper Session) - Excellent papers from Denmark, Scotland, and Germany, as well as a paper on the Virtual International Authority File Project.

- International Poster Session - The poster sessions just keep growing in number and quality!

- “From Nepal to Nicaragua: Sustainability in International Projects” - Another outstanding program organized by the International Sustainable Library Development Interest Group.

- “Intellectual Freedom: Views through a Cross-Cultural Lens” – Another big “Thank You” to Robert Wedgeworth, president and CEO of ProLiteracy Worldwide, for providing the keynote address

- International Librarians’ Reception – As you know, this is a wonderful event at *every* conference. The reception could not be held without the support of our sponsors. Special thanks go to our friends at Blackwell’s Book Services, Elsevier, OCLC/WebJunction, and 3M Corporation!

ALA-World Listserv

For many years, ALA-World has functioned as an unmoderated listserv open to anyone interested in international librarianship. Last year the IRRT Executive Board tasked our Publications Committee with writing a purpose statement for the listserv and making recommendations regarding the

future management of the listserv. Thanks to the hard work of the committee, the IRRT Executive Board has approved a new purpose and guidelines for ALA-World and we will be seeking a volunteer listserv manager to begin this year. The purpose and guidelines will be distributed to our membership via e-mail and posted on the IRRT web site.

Leslie Burger’s Emerging Leaders Initiative

The IRRT Executive Board has approved a \$500 grant towards the

It caught my attention when I read on the IFLA website “that in Turkmenistan libraries were closed under presidential order, on the grounds that ‘no one reads.’” Censorship, restrictions of press freedom and governmental restriction and surveillance of Internet use are documented frequently in the world press. Intellectual freedom is a topic that is persistent in its importance and fascination.

The annual IRRT Chairperson’s program held June 25, 2006, during the 2006 ALA Conference in New Orleans brought together an articulate and well-informed group of speakers to examine in some depth how intellectual freedom is viewed and supported around the world and, specifically, how the concept of intellectual freedom is perceived and supported in China, the Middle East, and Africa.

The program, achieved by IRRT chair Jeannette Pierce, took as its starting point Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly over fifty years ago, the declaration states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

The speakers were asked to gauge progress in meeting this goal on a global and national level.

Robert Wedgeworth, former executive director of ALA and now the president and CEO of Pro-Literacy Worldwide, keynoted the program. Wedgeworth pointed out that the understanding of intellectual freedom will vary from country to country and it cannot be assumed that the concept of intellectual freedom is an important part of a library’s philosophy. Wedgeworth reminded the audience that historically all governments have practiced censorship.

Wedgeworth defined four global forces—economics, technology, and demography, culture—that in his view impact and create an environment to support intellectual freedom. Wedgeworth also drew on his deep experience in the library and information arena to explore each

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LIS educators seminar held in Copenhagen

By Ismail Abdullahi

Historical Background

Beginning 2004, informal discussions were held at IFLA Buenos Aires Conference between LIS

Attendees participate in the Africa, Asia, Latin America (AALA) Working Seminar of LIS Educators from Developing Countries, held in Copenhagen, Denmark, August 10-12, 2005.

