



International Leads

A Publication of the International Relations Round Table of the American Library Association

Volume 16

September 2002

Number 3

Kabul University Library in Afghanistan: Postwar Emergence

By Rosemary Talab



Interior of Kabul University Library
(Photo: Rosemary Talab, June 2002)

In May 2002, I visited Kabul, Afghanistan, as a team member of my husband's reconstruction project. This is the first of several visits that I hope to make in the coming years. My husband is in weekly contact with those in Kabul and travels there regularly. The recent death of the Vice Minister in June 2002 has further de-stabilized the country.

Recent estimates of Kabul's size were placed at fifteen million, though with refugees returning daily that number grows. Life is difficult in Kabul because the central bank does not function, most of the telephone wires are gone, and electricity is not available to the average person. Many people use oil lamps. There is no place in the city that is untouched by war. It is rare to see a wall that does not have bullet holes. Mortar holes pockmark the streets to such a degree that driving is slow. Blown-up buildings and vehicles line the streets and land mines are such a threat that everyone considers walking on side streets dangerous. The only untouched building in Kabul is the

Communications Ministry. Children laughed and appeared happy during our visit simply, it would seem, because they were alive and there was no war. Both children and adults show landmine limb loss.

Military and police personnel routinely carry machine guns. United States peacekeeping forces patrol the streets and take pictures of people. Kabul is the only relatively safe city because of these forces. Even so, food and basic services are provided largely by international relief agencies and international funding is barely a "trickle." As recently as July 2002, we were told that unpaid workers now extort money, called "baj" ("money by force") from people to get to the government compounds, for example.

Kabul University: from 1978 to 2002

Kabul University is the flagship institution of Afghanistan and was once one of Asia's finest, with the elite of the country passing through its doors. It had transfer agreements with several countries—France, Germany, U. S., and Russia. The students came from Iraq, India, Russia, and Iran. In 1978 the Soviets began an occupation, which lasted until 1989. The Taliban took over Kabul in 1992 but fighting in 1994 reduced Kabul to rubble. Bombing and fighting for Kabul continued through 1995. During this time of destruction and occupation, there was extensive looting. Books in Dari and Pashtu were carried off; others of other languages were left on the shelves or were burnt to keep fighters warm through the winter. Laboratory equipment was smashed and sold for scrap. Landmines were strewn in the campus gardens. Dead bodies were stuffed down wells.

When the Taliban took over in 1996, women were not only barred from university faculties but were barred from attending formal school of any kind. Until 2002 there

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Library in Afghanistan

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had been no water nor electricity on campus for over ten years. There were no computers, phones, or faculty pay during that time. During this period the university was virtually or officially closed intermittently, except for the few people who stayed to guard it the best that they could. Many handwritten books, manuscripts, and other examples of Afghanistan's cultural heritage were lost, either through looting or destruction by the Taliban if the illustrations and writings did not conform to their unusual and revisionist version of the Islamic code.

The American bombing of Afghanistan began on October 7th of 2001. The capital city of Kabul fell to the U.S. and its allies by mid-November and by December 2001 the Taliban left. In January 2002, Hamid Karzai was elected interim president and the clean up and rehabilitation of Kabul began.

The University Library Collections

The university library was built in 1963. It is a large, open, light-filled structure that was badly looted and damaged by bullets, mortar, and neglect. It had a collection of 80,000 reference books. During the five-year time period of

the fighting and Taliban control, there were only three people working in the library. When the fighting stopped and the reconstruction began, Mr. Sadiq Wadid was hired as the fourth person and library director in January 2002. Mr. Wadid is also Assistant Professor at Faculty of Literature as well.

When Mr. Wadid began work, he was faced with an enormous task. All of the University Library windows had bullet or mortar damage. There were twelve mortar holes in the ceiling. He found that over 1,000 rare books and manuscripts between 300 to 600 years old, virtually the entire rare books and manuscripts collection, had been looted or destroyed. The few that he did find he placed in glass displays after renovation. What was left of the book collection was covered in debris. Shattered glass lay everywhere. The books that were left were at least twenty years old and were covered with so much dust that the only thing they could do was to take all the books outside the building, shake them individually, and bring them back in.

All audiovisual collections were looted or destroyed, either totally or partially. The audiovisuals, maps, films, microfiche, and filmstrips collections were totally gone. Iran, Pakistan, Japan,

and the U.S. Embassy have donated materials and other countries are participating in these efforts. Current needs include library carts, computers, and library technical service materials. Some of the catalog drawers in the card catalog need replacing.

Since March 2002, all repairs to the ceiling, walls, and windows have been made. It is difficult to imagine the state that they found the library in because of the pristine condition of the physical plant today.

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Mr. Nadshah, cataloger at the Kabul University Library in his Technical Services Room.
(Photo: Rosemary Talab, June 2002)

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International Leads (ISSN 0892-4546) is published quarterly by the International Relations Round Table of the American Library Association in March, June, September, and December. The first issue was published in 1957. IL contains news about international library activities, the international work of ALA and other organizations, and people and publications in the field. IL is indexed by *Library Literature* and *Library and Information Science Abstracts* (LISA) and is sent free to all members of IRRT (dues \$10); non-ALA members can subscribe for \$12 per year by writing to International Relations Office, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611. Materials for IL should be sent to *International Leads* Editor, **Sha Li Zhang**, Wichita State University Libraries, 1845 Fairmont, Wichita, KS 67260, USA, e-mail:

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Message from the IRRT Chair

By Karen J. Starr

A year ago, all of us were at our desks conducting business as usual when the September 11 event occurred that changed lives and brought home the message that indeed this is a global world in which we live. What does all of this mean to us as librarians and, specifically, as Americans? How are Americans perceived by others in the world? What can we do as librarians to create an atmosphere of collaboration and understanding that changes perceptions and opens up healthy dialogue? The IRRT membership of nearly 1,000 American and international librarians provides us with opportunities to become involved in our global society as peers and colleagues.

At each ALA meeting, the IRRT Program Subcommittee sponsors an open program on international issues for the ALA membership. During this past year, the chair of the subcommittee, Aremis Kirk along with the subcommittee members, asked themselves just these questions about September 11, how do people view Americans and what are the experiences of American librarians working in areas of the world rift with conflict. At the ALA Annual in Atlanta, the subcommittee invited Ambassador Robert Gallucci of Georgetown University (read by Aremis Kirk), Fiona Hunt and Jane Birks from Zayed University of UAE, and Donna Switzer from State Department, to speak on international opportunities for librarians. They shared their observations and experience in the international arena.

A group of returned Peace Corps volunteers who are librarians are currently working together to create a sustainable library development interest group under the auspices of the IRRT. Gail Wadsworth (USAID Library Outreach Librarian) and Joan Weeks (Library of Congress) have taken the lead and will be finalizing the structure of the group during the ALA Midwinter meeting in Philadelphia in January 2003. The group will provide a forum for librarians with experience working internationally as well as pull together projects and activities for those who would like to gain international experience.

The Sister Libraries Subcommittee, chaired by Mary Sherman, continued their good work at ALA in Atlanta identifying and facilitating opportunities for libraries in the United States to partner with libraries in other countries. Included in their upcoming activities is sponsorship of a program to be offered at the ALA Annual Conference in Toronto about sister libraries.

Turning opportunities into action is a characteristic of librarians. The Colorado Library Project is one such example in which a partnership was forged between the

Colorado Library Association and the Bulgarian Library Association resulting in the sponsorship of sister libraries, among other activities, between Colorado and Bulgaria. An article about the project was featured in the June 2002 issue of *International Leads* at <http://www.ala.org/irrt/il/200206.pdf> The International Posters Session Subcommittee, chaired by Martin Kesselman of Rutgers University New Brunswick Libraries, featured a poster session by project members during ALA in Atlanta.

As an ALA Library Fellow at the Norwegian National Library School in 1989-90, I had the opportunity to watch changes occur in dialogue among European librarians as the Berlin Wall came down. An image that remains for me to this day occurred one afternoon as I walked through the school's library and observed a group of visiting Hungarian students clustered about a computer displaying CD-ROM indexes which were state of the art at the time. Everyone was intrigued by those shiny discs and what they could contain. Having worked with my Norwegian colleagues at the library school to obtain donations from CD-ROM vendors, it was nice to see what communication, understanding, collaboration and cooperation could do.

My experiences as an ALA Library Fellow led me to participate in IRRT and over the years I have come to appreciate how overwhelming ALA can be at times. Trying to navigate through the maze of the annual conference often leaves people confused. It is the volunteers who make the organization, and IRRT volunteers step up to the plate to help ensure that international guests at the conference have a good experience. At ALA in Atlanta, chairs and participants on the Continuing Education (Roman Kochan), Orientation (Inga Filippo), International Reception (Sharmima Amin), and International Visitor's Center (Bleue J. Benton) and other Subcommittees did just that. Our hats are off to them for making the conference a good experience for our international colleagues.

IRRT provides opportunities for all of us to become involved and to work with our colleagues in a global arena. On behalf of the Executive Committee, I would like to invite you to visit the IRRT website at <http://www.ala.org/irrt> There are eleven committees and some eighty-five actively involved committee members who are working together to create a collegial environment in which we can learn from and come to understand each other. ALA in Toronto in 2003 will give us a good opportunity to work with our Canadian Library Association colleagues to create a vibrant and exciting international experience for all of us. Please do consider participating in ALA's global activities.

Nancy John Was Presented the Award

At the International Librarians reception held at the ALA Annual Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, Nancy R. John, immediate past-chair of the International Relations Committee, was presented the John Ames Humphry/OCLC/Forest Press Award. OCLC/Forest Press donated the cash award of \$1,000 that is given to an individual for significant contribution to international librarianship.

John is now Acting University Librarian at the University Library of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). She received her MLS from UCLA and a B.A. in psychology from Stanford University. She became a faculty member at UIC in 1978. During her twenty-seven years as a member of ALA, John served as a chair of the International Relations Committee, past-president of the Association of Library Collection and Technical Services, chair of International Relations Round Table, and many other ALA committees. At the international arena, John served as a member, secretary, and chair on the IFLA Standing Committee on Cataloging, chair of Division of Bibliographic Control, the IFLA Professional Board, chair of the IFLA Committee on Copyright, member of the IFLA Executive Board, second vice-president in 1997-1999 and the first



Nancy John was congratulated by her colleagues at the award presentation, from left to right: Sha Li Zhang, Nancy John, Gary Strong, and Barbara Ford.

(Photo: Sha Li Zhang, June 2002)

vice-president in 1999-2001, and chair of the Conference Planning Committee. John is the first North American editor of the distinguished library and information science journal, *Libri*, published by K.G. Saur in Munich.

John has lectured widely throughout the U.S. as well as thirteen countries with more than sixty presentations/papers. "I am privileged to offer any of my abilities to help advance librarianship in the U. S. and abroad," John said.

U. S. Campus Library Celebrates its 10th Year in Nicaragua

Ave Maria College of the Americas (AMCA), a four-year U.S. accredited college, is located in the highlands of Nicaragua in the small town of San Marcos, "departamento" of Carazo. This campus has been in operation for ten years, first under the auspices of the University of Mobile of Mobile, Alabama from 1993 to 2000, and then under the auspices of Ave Maria College of Ypsilanti,



AMCM students are studying in the library.

Michigan, from 2000 to the present. There have been six graduating classes so far, starting in 1997. The library of the college is a modern facility with computer access to Internet and online databases for the research needs of the students. The library collection is also computerized and is searchable on the library website www.avemaria.edu.ni. One specialized collection within the library is the Latin American collection which includes literature, history and other subject areas referring to Latin America in general and Nicaragua in particular. Books and periodicals in this specialized collection are in both English and Spanish. Since 2000, a security system has been installed and an online database subscription started for full-text access to 800 journal subscriptions.

The bilingual nature of the campus makes it an ideal meeting place for bilingual students from Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras, as well as students who have grown up in the United States, but have relatives living in Nicaragua. Also students who do not have any family ties in Nicaragua but are interested in the bicultural experience during college have studied in San Marcos. Students who enroll at AMCA and do not speak Spanish can learn the language while they are studying. If you cannot come for a real visit, you can enjoy a virtual visit at the web site. *(The text and photo are contributed by Beth Garcia, a librarian at AMCA)*

From ALA's International Desk By Michael Dowling

Changes at ALA

I wanted to let you know of some changes that have taken place here at ALA. In the beginning of April 2002, I became the Director of the Chapter Relations Office, in addition to my current role as the Director of the International Relations Office (IRO). Under the new structure, the two offices remain independent, maintaining their own budgets and functions, but are managed jointly at the director level. Previously the Chapter Relations Office was part of a Chapter Relations Office and Membership Marketing. There will now be a new position within ALA whose full-time job will be membership marketing, a first for ALA.

So what does this mean for support for International Relations Round Table (IRRT)? I will certainly be involved in supporting IRRT activities but not in most of the detailed work. Delin Guerra, IRO Administrative Assistant, will be assuming the lead role as staff liaison to the IRRT. Delin has done a great job during the last year learning the structure and activities of the IRRT, and she will be a valuable resource for the IRRT. Last year we were able to add a permanent part-time intern position to IRO and this student intern position will also assist in supporting the IRRT.

Aligning the International Relations Office with the Chapter Relations Office strengthens both offices, and provides an opportunity for IRO and the IRRT to tap into the ALA Chapters for expertise and assistance with international endeavors. Though I may not be able to attend as many IRRT functions at the ALA conferences as I have had in the past, I will try to get to as many as I can, and I encourage everyone going to the ALA conferences to support the international programs at the conferences.

Global Reach, Global Reach, Global Reach!

If you have not taken the time to visit the *Global Reach* site to input information on your international activities, please take a few minutes of your time this week to contribute your international activities. We want to make sure that all librarians engaged in international activities are listed in the database. So far only about fifty out of the 700 members of the IRRT have created their profile. To access the site and create your own profile please visit <http://www.ala.org/work/international> and click on the *Global Reach* link.

Guadalajara Book Fair

This year will be the sixth year of the ALA-FIL FREE PASS Program to the Guadalajara Book Fair, which will be held November 30 through December 8, 2002. If you are responsible for collecting Spanish language materials for your library, you will not want to miss out on this

opportunity. Though the deadline has passed there still may be slots available. Please visit the IRO website <http://www.ala.org/work/international/> to get an application.

Academic Libraries in the South Caucasus

ALA has received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to assist in the development of libraries in the South Caucasus. The grant will include a workshop on "The Role of Academic Libraries in Civil Society" which will be held on September 27 through 30, 2002, and a two-year project to improve access to information at Yerevan State University (Armenia), Baku State University (Azerbaijan), and Tbilisi State University (Georgia).

ALA Council Resolution

The ALA Council recently passed a resolution on the damage and destruction of materials and resources that have occurred during the recent conflict in the Middle East. Over the years, the ALA Council has passed resolutions concerning the destruction and rebuilding of libraries that have occurred as a result of natural disasters such as earthquakes and human conflict. The goal of these resolutions is to prevent further destruction of materials and to provide mechanisms to rebuild what has been lost. An earlier resolution on Yugoslavia and Kosovo called for ALA to work with IFLA. With funding from UNESCO, IFLA presented recommendations for initiatives to rebuild what had been destroyed in Kosovo. The Resolution on the Destruction of Palestinian Libraries, Archives, and Other Cultural Institutions, passed by the ALA Council on June 19, 2002, calls for ALA to again work with IFLA to determine if a similar program as the one in Kosovo can assist in the rebuilding of Palestinian libraries and other cultural resources. The website listing the Palestinian resolution and others can be found at <http://www.ala.org/work/international/resolutions.html>

Self-Nominations for IRRT Leadership

The IRRT Nominating Subcommittee is seeking volunteers to be considered for its slate of candidates for the Spring 2003 ballot. Three positions are available: vice-chair/chair-elect, secretary/treasurer and member-at-large. The member-at-large and secretary/treasurer serve two years and the vice-chair/chair-elect serve three years on the executive committee. Candidates and elected officers must be current members of ALA and IRRT. See <http://www.ala.org/irrt/> for description of duties. In order to be considered for the ballot, please send a brief statement of interest and qualifications to lea_wells@ncsu.edu by December 1, 2002.

Library in Afghanistan

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Library Cataloging

The only university cataloger left is Mr. Nadshah. He has been at Kabul University since the time of the Soviet occupation. Before the Taliban, there was an Afghanistan Library Association of fifty-five members. Their goal was to have publishers supply a copy of the book before publication. Since the end of the occupation, the other universities do not have technical services of any kind to date. He had not had the opportunity to view the university libraries in other parts of the country and it is unlikely that he will be able to do so anytime soon, since appointments must be made to use the phone at "phone stores."



The author, husband, and Kabul University Chancellor, a graduate of Nebraska. (Photo: Rosemary Talab, June 2002)

Kabul University now receives two copies of every book. This was a decision made by the university. There is a university-wide committee, which oversees the purchase of library materials. The committee examines student checkout statistics to see which areas of interest and groups need materials. There are fourteen chairs, one for each college. Students may make suggestions but are not allowed on the committee. Mr. Nadshah has some personal goals for technical services: 1. update the collection and library services; 2. fill library staffing needs, and 3. increase collection holdings according to the political, cultural, and language needs of the student body to better reflect the diversity of both the student body and the ideals of the university community as a meeting ground for open discussion and scientific endeavors. His greatest need is for catalogers and technical services to help him in getting materials cataloged and processed to go out to both the main library and satellite libraries.

Kabul University Fall 2002 Enrollment

In spring 2002, students across the country, including women, took the "Concour." For women, it was the first such Concour that they were allowed to participate in



Kabul street scene
(Photo: Rosemary Talab,
June 2002)

"Mr. Nadshah's greatest need is for catalogers to help him in getting materials cataloged and processed to go out to both the main library and satellite libraries."

since the Taliban took control. No extra points were given to girls who had not been allowed to study or go to school for the last several years. The Concour is a state-sponsored test of many sections that takes roughly one week, similar to that in Iran. All students must take it if they wish to begin university work. According to the University Chancellor who is a graduate of the University of Nebraska, among the fall 2002 class, 165 will be male, 841 will be female and 151 will attend medical school.

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View of the library's card catalog with missing drawers.
(Photo: Rosemary Talab, June 2002)

Welcome New IRRT Members!

Ahmad Abdulla
Terry Allison
Carmen Blankinship
Marcia Cannon
Beth Evans
Katheryn Gallant
Linda Gens
Tea Grujic
Barbara Hall
Gloria Hinojosa
Eric Johnson
Karen Lemmons
Candace Lewis
Bonita McZorn
Henry Mendelsohn
Minna Popkin
Martha Scanlon
Raghini Suresh
Alycia Tulloch
Lorie Vik
Erika Williams
Jibril Yahaya

Report from the International Relations Committee

By Nancy John, Chair

Campaign for the World's Libraries: ALA's generous "gift" of the Campaign for America's Libraries to IFLA as the Campaign for the World's Libraries has resulted in fourteen countries (United States, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Canada, Georgia, Mexico, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kazakhstan, and Turkey) now using the Campaign. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, and Georgia joined this summer. Check out the AMBAC campaign site at <http://www.ambac.org.mx/entubiblioteca/>

Mexico: The ALA-AMBAC Agreement to Cooperate was signed at the AMBAC Jornadas XXXIII in Monterrey on June 6, 2002, by the ALA President-elect Maurice Freedman and IRC Chair Nancy John and by AMBAC President Filiberto Martinez and AMBAC IRC Chair Jesus Lau. At the International Librarians reception held on June 17, 2002 at the ALA Annual, ALA President John W. Berry and AMBAC President Filiberto Felipe Martinez Arellano signed the following agreement:

American Library Association/Asociacion Mexicana de Bibliotecarios, A. C. (ALA/AMBAC) Agreement to Cooperate

Because of the proximity of the library communities of Mexico and the U.S. from a geographical, linguistic and professional standpoint, it has made sense for the major library associations of the two countries to cooperate and collaborate from time to time as initiatives of either association would dictate. Recently not only has there been an increasingly close relationship between our two countries but there has also been a greater convergence of the interests of the two associations. The time has come to formalize this informal cooperation, and to make routine our collaboration on professional issues.

The American Library Association (ALA) and the Asociacion Mexicana de Bibliotecarios, A. C. (AMBAC) re-affirm their commitment to cooperate, to collaborate, and to coordinate activities in furtherance of the library and information profession in the United States and in Mexico on this 6th and 17th day of June 2002. Cooperative activities will include exchange of professional information, joint continuing professional education, sharing of exhibits, attendance of delegations at each other's meetings, translation of professional materials to and from English and Spanish, sharing of information about our associations, and development of joint programs. Specific activities will be articulated in a series of Action Plans to be developed jointly by the two Associations.

Zimbabwe: ALA is not participating officially in the 2002 Zimbabwe Book Fair. The Subcommittee will explore how official ALA participation in the Zimbabwe Book Fair can be reinstated. The Subcommittee is also looking at additional opportunities for cooperation in other countries in Africa.

WTO: The IRC IFLA Subcommittee Chair and the IRC Chair kept regular contact with ALA Washington Office staff and the Committee on Legislation during the spring. The IRC Chair helped arrange a meeting between Robert Oakley, U.S. representative to the IFLA Copyright and Other Legal Matters Committee, and ALA Washington Office staff to assure that U.S. activities were well coordinated. In May 2002, ALA President John W. Berry wrote to the U.S. Trade Representative asking USTR to confirm its position that governmental support (local, state and federal) for core library services is not subject to the GATS, seeking assurance that the U.S. does not intend to enter into any international obligations that might undermine the ability of governmental bodies to support core library services, and urging consultation with ALA and the library community prior to taking any action that might negatively impact domestic policy supporting public libraries.

A more international ALA: ALA Publishing continues to consider a variety of international issues: Unesco coupons, bank transfers, special arrangements, marketing/reselling of IFLA publications, international read posters, pre-order for carry home at conference. Revenue stream issues are seemingly at odds with the goal of providing the same service to international members as national members receive.

The IRC Toolkit group: it has finished the work and presented a draft IRC Toolkit at the IRC meetings. The Toolkit will help the IRC to plan cooperative activities. The Toolkit will be finalized at the Midwinter meeting of the IRC.

Workshop in Yerevan: the Emerging Democracies subgroup of the Eurasia and Central Asia Subcommittee received Carnegie Endowment support for the 2002 workshop in Yerevan, Armenia. Also of great interest was the very successful first ever National Library Weeks in Armenia and Georgia and work on the national bibliography in Azerbaijan, a direct outgrowth of the 2001 workshop. Great job!

2001-2002 was a great year and I thank all my international relations colleagues for their support! Betty Turock, the new IRC Chair, will continue our achievements while using her strong experience to take us in new directions.

Library in Afghanistan

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The library has made about 1,600 identification cards for students for the incoming class of fall 2002. They will be free. Each student must have four identification cards: 1. the name of the student, first name only, since there are no family names; 2. one with the last name or if no last name, then 3. a "laghab" or title given when there is no family name, such as Ali of Hassan (father), and 4. a library card with the student's first name and father's name.

The periodicals housed in the current periodicals section are several years old. They were donated and there are not enough of any periodicals to even make one volume. As of May 2002, there were no new periodicals at that



Bombed building in Kabul
(Photo: Rosemary Talab, June 2002)

time. Even the few that they did receive in the past have not been received for the past two years, at least.

At present, there is no library school to train professional librarians. If someone wishes to work in the library,

then he or she applies to the library and begins an internship program. The library will be taking library students this fall, should they apply. They welcome librarians who wish to donate their time to Kabul University through a sabbatical or other endeavor.

Donations

Mr. Sadiq Wadid can be contacted through mail by simply writing to him at Kabul University, Library, Kabul, Afghanistan or by fax at 00873 7616 12515. While the university does not have a working fax at the time of this writing, he has given us his brother's fax. Otherwise you may contact the author at talab@ksu.edu for the latest address, for further information, or to provide assistance.

(Rosemary Talab is Professor at the College of Education, Kansas State University)

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