Tsunami devastates Sri Lankan libraries

By Premila Gamage

On Sunday, December 26, 2004, the northeastern and southern coastal areas of Sri Lanka were devastated by tsunami tidal waves which swept across the Indian Ocean, following a major earthquake with a magnitude of 9 on the Richter scale, west off the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Everything in the way of the tsunami was reduced to mere rubble. This was the worst natural disaster ever to hit Sri Lanka. The tidal waves unexpectedly smashed into the coastal areas from Kankasanturai to Negombo, killing an estimated 50,000 people, leaving thousands missing, causing heavy destruction to property and rendering millions homeless.

As reported by the Centre for National Operations (CNO), Ministry of Education (MOE) and Sri Lanka National Library and Documentation Services Board (SLNLDSB), 55 public libraries, around 160 to 170 school libraries and 68 libraries attached to religious institutions were damaged by the tsunami. Although no assessments have been done yet on damage caused to private libraries, many also were badly affected by the tsunami. In addition, a few museums were severely damaged. This report is based on the critical situation of some of these damaged libraries as experienced by the author during her visits to the southern and eastern parts of the island. The situation of libraries on the northern coast is not included here, since at the time of writing it still was not possible to visit and survey them.

Southern Coast

About 54 school libraries on the southern coast of Sri Lanka were damaged. Of that number, 17 were fully destroyed with no sign left even of the buildings. Eighteen public libraries and many of their branches and community centres in five districts on the southern coast were considerably affected (Colombo, Kalutara, Galle, Matara and Hambantota).

The Vidyaloka Vidyalaya is a National School which is situated in the heart of Galle town in the district of Galle. The Science Library of the school was totally destroyed by the tsunami. At the time of the disaster, the library housed more than 1,000 books. Around 60 percent of the collection was destroyed. The building has to be repaired and furniture has to be replaced.

The Gintota Maha Vidyalaya comes under the World Bank’s General Education Project – 2 (GEP2) Programme. The collection and furniture...
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of the library has been badly damaged. The library building also requires extensive repairs.

The building, collection and furniture of the Hegalle Maha Vidyalaya was severely damaged as water swept onto the school premises.

Hikkaduwa Public Library (Hikkaduwa Urban Council) in the district of Galle housed around 8200 books at the time of the disaster. Water came into the library and destroyed more than 75 percent of the collection. While books on the upper shelves were spared, all the books on the lower shelves were damaged heavily. This library is used by nearly 1,500 members. Another 10 percent of the books have to be considered lost, because some users who had borrowed them were affected by the tsunami and displaced. Minor repairs to the building are needed, and library furniture also was damaged.

The collection and furniture of the Magalle Branch Public Library (Galle Municipal Council) was completely destroyed as water swept into the library. The collection consists of local newspapers, magazines and books.

The Lakshman Thabrew Memorial Public Library belongs to the Balapitiya Pradeshiya Sabha in the District of Galle. This public library housed nearly 2,100 books at the time of the disaster. Around 80 percent of the collection was severely damaged and cannot be used. In addition, another 10 to 15 percent of the books are considered lost. The library building was not severely damaged but needs some repairs, such as replacement of doors and windows, painting, and rewiring for electricity. Except for one or two pieces, all the library furniture has been completely destroyed. Nearly 460 members use this library.

The National Maritime Museum in Galle and the Martin Wickramasinghe Folk Museum, Koggala (near Galle), were also badly affected. The National Maritime Museum was established in 1992 and is housed in the Great Dutch-built Warehouse of 1671, near the Old Gate of Galle Fort. The museum displays a variety of exhibits connected with seafaring, maritime trade, fishing and sea life. A large number of artefacts which have been collected over the years were totally destroyed. Not only the artefacts but the technical equipment, computers, scanners and boats which belong to the museum also were destroyed.

The Martin Wickramasinghe Folk Museum, which was established on the wishes of a renowned Sri Lankan author, was opened in 1981. The artefacts depict the history of Sri Lankan folk culture, from ancient to modern times, in order to remind the people of Sri Lanka of their living roots. This is an interesting collection ranging from Buddhist artefacts to those which portray the development of rural technology in agriculture, agro-industry, fishing, pottery and metal craft, various artefacts from folk dances and religious ceremonies and many others. Fortunately, there was no damage to objects, but the furniture in the museum has been damaged. There was also considerable damage to the museum’s children’s library.

In addition to the two museums, the Maritime Archaeology Unit of the Central Cultural Fund was extensively damaged. A large number of artefacts from the 18th century Dutch shipwreck the Arondster, which were earmarked for a future museum, were lost along with much of the documentation and the inventories related to the project.

Eastern Coast

The tsunami caused heavy destruction on the eastern coast of the island. As a result, around 39 school libraries were totally damaged in the Ampara and Batticaloa districts, while 37 were partially damaged. Nearly 20 public libraries also were badly affected by the tsunami in the above two districts.

The Thambilivil Maha Vidyalaya in Thirukkotivil in Ampara District is a school that was damaged considerably.
Message from the IRRT Chair

By Nancy Bolt

It was cold—very cold—in Boston, but the IRRT Board managed to stay warm and discuss lots of topics to ensure that IRRT runs smoothly in providing programs to our international visitors at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. Here is a list of our key actions.

• The IRRT Nominating Committee presented a slate of candidates, which the board approved, for IRRT officers to be elected this spring. The candidates are:
  Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect
  Martin Kesselman
  Susan Schnuer

  Secretary/treasurer
  Rebecka Lindau
  Sha Li Zhang (incumbent)

  Member-at-large
  Mary Boone
  Kurt Cumiskey

• The Publications Committee presented recommendations for the positions of Web Editor and International Leads Editor, which the Board approved:

  Heath Martin is the new International Leads Editor, effective immediately.

  Joan Weeks is the new IRRT Web Editor, effective in July 2005.

• We heard from both candidates for ALA President, Christine Lind Hage and Leslie Burger, and subsequently received thank-you notes from both. We asked both if they would support a full-time Director of the International Relations Office (we now share Michael Dowling with Chapter Relations) and both said they would look at the budget and consider it.

• The IRRT Continuing Education Committee is planning to webcast the first part of its pre-conference at ALA annual to sites in Central America, Africa, Europe, and North America. The content focus during the webcast, which will last about 90 minutes, will be on advocacy. The second part of the pre-conference will deal with the state of American librarianship.

• The IRRT Chair’s Program will be called “Becoming a Global Librarian: Making Connections and Developing Travel Plans.” The program will introduce attendees to people who have worked overseas and to organizations that offer such opportunities.

• The theme of the International Papers Session this year will be “Shaping the future: library services for youth.” There will be four international librarians speaking on library services for children and young adults in their respective countries.

• The Humphrey/OCLC/Forest Press and Bogle Pratt International Library Travel Fund Awards will be presented at the IRRT Chair’s Program.

• The Board and Committee chairs discussed the ALA Strategic Plan for 2010 and decided to provide feedback that urges ALA to add more about international relations to the plan. We suggested several places where the strategic goals apply as much to international librarianship as to American librarianship. We discussed these with the International Relations Committee and will support each other in making these suggestions to ALA.

• The IRRT office will be doing Certificates of Appreciation for retiring IRRT Chairs. I suggest these be made at the IRRT Membership Meeting at the IRRT Chair’s Program.

• The Board looked at the IRRT Memberships brochure that will be issued. We want to make it clear that, based on the vote last year, membership in IRRT is free to international (non-U.S.) librarians.

• The Board was asked to establish the ability for student groups to form international relations chapters. Some student chapters can only form international relations chapters if there is a national organization with which they can affiliate. We will consider a formal recommendation from the membership committee at the annual conference in Chicago.

• Finally, we are working on an update of the Officer’s Manual. The new version will be on the IRRT website and not in print. This will make it easier to update.

• Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect Jeannette Pierce is beginning the appointment process for next year’s IRRT Committee chairs and members. If you are interested, please contact Jeannette at pierce@jhu.edu.
Sofia 2004 explores libraries and globalization

By Meredith Solomon and Sam Wallin

“Sofia 2004 – Libraries, Globalization and Cooperation” was the latest in an ongoing bi-annual conference series designed to explore issues involving the impact of globalization on libraries and other information agencies. The conference began on November 3 and concluded on November 5, in Sofia, Bulgaria. The hosts of the conference were Emporia State University in Kansas and The University of Sofia, Bulgaria. Presenters came from all over Western Europe, the Balkans, Thailand, and the United States to speak about a multitude of issues including education, information technology, cooperation, national and academic libraries, policy, and current issues.

Present at the conference were many exhibitors of database software and publishers specializing in materials for library professionals.

On November 2, before the main conference began, a pre-conference student session was held and attended by American and Bulgarian students, as well as faculty representatives from the main conference. Topics covered in the student conference included issues of the future of LIS, curriculum, terminology, community analysis in Romania, reading promotion in Bulgaria, and distance learning in Germany. Linda Ashcroft delivered a presentation on how to publish articles in scholarly journals.

After the educational part of the student conference ended, students were able to sample a bit of Bulgarian night life: dinner at a local restaurant and dancing at a club.

The main conference had 43 presentations in all, creating a comprehensive look at many of the issues and delivering new information and cunning insights regarding globalization, cooperation and libraries. What follows is a profile of several of the presentations, unique in themselves, but representative of the feeling of the conference as a whole.

Johan Koren of Murray State University, USA, delivered a presentation with the intriguing title “Worldwide Collaboration Among Libraries and Librarians: Are We Globalizing, Glocalizing - or even Grobalizing Librarianship?” Koren first gave a variety of definitions of globalization from different sources, and then explored the meaning of the two new terms – ‘glocalization’ and ‘grobalization.’ Koren presented the terms as they are explored in the book “The Globalization of Nothing,” by George Ritzer (Pine Forge Press, 2004). According to Ritzer, Glocalization occurs when standardized products become unique and are allowed to take on a local flavor. Grobalization is the polar opposite, where all things local and unique become standardized for the lowest common denominator. Koren’s presentation did a yeoman’s job of sifting through these unfamiliar terms and adding dimension to the issue of globalization. On a side note, it was mentioned later that many of the Bulgarians found added humor with the word “grobalization” because in Bulgarian, “grobe” means “grave.”

Vania Grashkina and Iskra Mahaylova of Bulgaria and Nancy Bolt from the USA delivered a presentation titled “Project ABLE: An Example for Successful Collaboration Between Libraries in Bulgaria and the USA.” Project ABLE, the American Bulgarian

The main conference had 43 presentations in all, creating a comprehensive look at many of the issues.

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IVC seeks volunteers for annual conference in Chicago

The IRRT IVC Committee is looking for volunteers to staff the International Visitors Center at the ALA conference in Chicago. IRRT sponsors the IVC for international librarians attending the conference. The IVC will be located near the exhibits and will be open Friday, June 24, through Monday, June 27.

IVC volunteers assist international visitors by answering questions and giving directions at the conference. (Don’t worry, we provide all the information you need to help the visitors!). In addition to information, the IVC offers international visitors computers for email/Internet and a place to meet with friends and relax.

Working at the IVC is fun and a great way to meet a variety of people from around the world. All you need to be a successful volunteer is a smile and a helpful attitude! Please consider volunteering for a 1 to 2 hour time slot (or more!).

To volunteer, please contact Liz Cooper at liz.cooper@emory.edu, 404-727-0115, or Emory University/Woodruff Library/540 Asbury Circle/Atlanta, GA 30329.
From ALA’s Information Desk

By Michael Dowling
Director, International Relations Office

Don’t Miss Chicago!

If you are interested in international librarianship, you won’t want to miss the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago this year. In addition to all the wonderful programming organized by the IRRT, there is a slew of programs from other units of ALA, including “Crossing International Borders,” on the impact of new international communities on public libraries; “Going Digital: Experiences from East Asia”; “Europe Looks to Public Libraries in the Future”; “Collecting World Cultures”; and more.

Visit the IRO website for a complete listing http://www.ala.org/ala/iro/international.htm.

Get Involved and Let Us Know!

Looking for more ways to get involved internationally. If your library does not have a sister library, please consider becoming a sister library. ALA President Carol Brey-Casiano wants to increase the number of sister libraries. To provide information on your library and look for libraries in other countries to partner with, visit the sister library link on the IRO website.

Hey, if you are involved in any international activities, we’d like to hear about what you have done or what you are doing. Go to the “Global Reach” link on the website and create a profile to track your international activities. We need to showcase how many libraries, librarians, library workers and others are involved internationally. Thanks!

Ismail Abdullahi, incoming chair of the International Relations Committee, is looking for IRRT members to serve on IRC subcommittees. If you would like to be considered, send an email to me at mdowling@ala.org.

Book Fair Opportunities!

If you are involved in collecting Spanish-language or Chinese-language material, the Hong Kong Book Fair (July) and the Guadalajara Book Fair (November) are offering Free Pass Programs. Once again, see the website for details.

Going To IFLA in Oslo!

If you are planning to or thinking about going to the IFLA World Library Congress in Oslo in August, the early registration deadline is May 1. To get the IFLA member rate, use the ALA membership number of US-0002. Visit the IFLA site at http://www.ifla.org.

Internally International!

This year, we have been very fortunate to have Katarzyna “Kasia” Wierszy, from Poland, an exchange student at Northeastern Illinois University, as our intern.

Kasia is helping us with our South Caucasus project, international accreditation, sister libraries, and lots more.

IRRT Fast Facts

As of February 2005, there are 779 members of the ALA’s International Relations Round Table. These members came from 47 states in the U.S. and from 30 other countries around the world.

Graphic by Heath Martin
Welcome to a new year and volume of *International Leads*. I am happy to introduce myself as your new editor.

The run-up to this first issue of 2005 has been an exhilarating one. With work needing to begin immediately upon returning from the ALA Midwinter Meeting, the job went from being a possibility to a reality virtually overnight. This has been an exciting experience, and I look forward to the issues that follow.

One of the best things about this first production cycle has been the opportunity to make new acquaintances with many people, including past editors, veteran contributors, IRRT committee members, and the fine people at the International Relations Office. This issue of *International Leads* owes its completion to these new friends.

Of course, the most vital part of any issue is the writers and contributors themselves. This issue includes a report on the tragic consequences of the recent tsunami for libraries in Sri Lanka, coverage of the Sofia 2004 conference in Bulgaria, information from ALA Midwinter, and much more. Thanks go to all present contributors, and I hope many others will choose to become a part of *International Leads* in the future.

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**Sofia**

Continued from page 4

Library Exchange, is an ongoing collaboration between librarians in Colorado, Iowa, and Bulgaria. Though the goals of Project ABLE are relatively simple, the executions of its goals are quite complex, given the distance between the librarians both geographically and culturally. Project ABLE is designed to help Bulgarian librarians adapt to new technologies and discover methods of raising awareness of the value of libraries in the local government, as well as in their communities. The presenters repeatedly stressed that although their collaboration was going well, continuous communication between the librarians is key for this project.

Ivanka Yankova and Elena Koicheva of the University Library at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski,” in Bulgaria delivered a presentation entitled “Dissemination of Library Information Knowledge: Partnership Between University Library and Faculty of History at Sofia University ‘St. Kliment Ohridski.’’ This presentation stressed the importance of faculty and library staff working together to ensure that their information needs are being met.

Overall, the presenters and participants stressed cooperation and collaboration as the most useful ways for librarians to build a solid future for each other in our global culture. Even as systems grow larger and larger, with multinational corporations and governments spreading themselves around the world, it is the personal connections among people that build truly solid bonds.

Building bonds between participants was aided by myriad activities available to conference participants. Before the conference, a weeklong tour of Central Bulgaria was enjoyed by several librarians and students. The tour consisted of visiting historical sights around the central part of the country, as well as public libraries in different regions of Bulgaria. This gave the librarians and students an idea of the role the Bulgarian libraries play within their communities, and how they are supported.

Sofia 2004 was the third such bi-annual conference to be held in Sofia, and a fourth conference is being planned for 2006. For more information on Sofia 2004, and to find out how you can be a part of Sofia 2006, visit the conference web site: http://slim.emporia.edu/globenet/sofia2004/.

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**Welcome New IRRT Members!**

Herbert Achleitne
Audra Adomena
Jane Barrer
James Bierman
Rebecca Brey
Stacia Burnham
Mary Cox
Craig Cruz
Cheryl Eberly
Sara Franks
Garett Gietzen
Laura Hale
Bryan Hoppe
Emily Inlow
Jason Jackson
Mauree Kelly
Sunnie Kim
Helena Loh
Wendy Lohman
Celma Luster
Gregory McClay
Patrick McGuire
Risa Mulligan
Melanie Reid
Maxine Schmidt
Pamela Sieving
Aiden Street
Mary A. Tricarico
Rhea Ubana
Jerome Walczak
Elizabeth Warrick
Amy Young
Report from the International Relations Committee

By John W. Berry, Chair

Tsunami Library Relief Efforts

In a meeting of representatives of the U.S. national association members of IFLA with Alex Byrne, IFLA President-elect, the associations agreed to pursue a timely ‘re-purposing’ of the 501c3 organization (The U. S. IFLA 2001 National Organizing Committee) to be used as a permanent library organization to deal with the December 2004 earthquake and tsunami in South Asia and future relief efforts resulting from natural disasters or acts of war.

The IRC unanimously passed the attached “Resolution on Rebuilding Libraries and Archives Damaged or Destroyed by the Earthquake and Tsunami in South Asia” for Council consideration. The Asian/Pacific American Librarian’s Association (APALA) endorsed the resolution at this Midwinter Meeting. ALA Council passed the resolution unanimously:

Resolved, The American Library Association express its deepest sympathy to library associations and national libraries and archives in the region; and

Resolved, That the American Library Association work in coordination with other U.S. Associations, IFLA and its members, and UNESCO on the international response to this disaster, and

Resolved, That ALA publicize and provide information to the library community and the public on the damage to libraries in the region and the importance of rebuilding affected libraries and their collections; and

Resolved, That ALA publicize and provide information on how and where the library community and the public can contribute to these rebuilding efforts.

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Working Group met on Thursday, January 13, for updates since its last meeting on September 15, 2004, at the ALA’s Washington Office.

Discussion centered on the continuing excellent work of Robert Martin, Marsha Semmel and Nancy Weiss (IMLS) who meet regularly with several other U.S. government agencies in planning for the November 2005 WSIS Phase 2 Summit in Tunis.

The working group has added a few additional players (besides representatives of the U.S. national library associations, IMLS and NCLIS) to include the U.S. State Department, CLIR and OCLC.

Another meeting will be held in April 2005 at the ALA’s Washington Office.

UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity

Nancy Weiss, IMLS legal counsel, is participating in drafting language for the UNESCO Convention which is an extension of the “Universal Declaration Resolution on Cultural Diversity” passed by UNESCO member states in 2001.

We recommend interested members see the following piece on the UNESCO website for background on this set of issues: Cultural Industries: A focal point for culture in the future. http://unesco.org/culture.

Campaign for the World’s Libraries

The Salvadoran Librarians Association, Library Association of Ireland, Norwegian Library Association, Nova Scotia Library Association and Library Boards of Nova Scotia (representing public library trustees in the province) have signed on to The Campaign for World’s Libraries. With these new participants, the campaign now represents 28 countries and the Caribbean Islands.

Co-sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the campaign is designed to showcase the unique and vital roles of public, school, academic, government and special libraries around the globe. It is based on The Campaign for America’s Libraries and utilizes the @ your library® brand.

To highlight the world campaign, a webcast will be held during the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago in June 2005. For more information on The Campaign for the World’s Libraries, go to www.ifla.org/@yourlibrary/index.htm.

Principles for WIPO International Development Agenda

The IRC endorsed the library-related principles developed in December 2004 by the American Association of Law Libraries, ALA, Association of Research Libraries, Medical Library Association and Special Library Association.

These principles were prepared for use in discussions at WIPO concerning the impact of intellectual property protection on economic development and the significance of copyright exceptions for libraries, educational institutions, and the disabled. These principle are not intended to serve as statutory language and thus do not reflect limitations and qualifications that would appear in such language.

The IRC thanks Miriam Nisbet, ALA Washington Office Legislative Counsel, for her leadership in this initiative.
Tsunami

Continued from page 2

This school comes under the World Bank’s General Education Project – 2 (GEP2) Programme. It has 1,453 students and conducts classes from years 6 to 13. The main library of the school was not affected much, but the collection and the furniture of the English Library were totally damaged. The building has to be repaired.

Several public and community libraries were severely affected by the tsunami. The Children’s Library of the Batticaloa Public Library was also badly damaged. This heavily used children’s library has around 2,000 members. The library housed approximately 5,000 books and magazines at the time of the disaster. Around 60 percent of the collection was severely damaged and cannot be used. In addition, water entered the room where books for the mobile library were kept, and those books also were damaged.

As a nearby hospital was washed away, the Sainthamaruthu Public Library had to be converted into a temporary hospital. The collection was severely damaged during transportation necessary to accommodate this transformation. The buildings, collections and furniture of the public libraries of Kaluthavalai and Kalavanchikudi (Batticaloa) and their four community libraries were completely destroyed. Another two community libraries that belong to the Onthachchi Madam Public Library (Batticaloa) were totally destroyed.

Palanimadu Youth Centre Library, the Branch Library of the Kalkudha Public Library, Kurukkal Madam Public Library and the Navalady Community Centre Library were among some of the public libraries that were destroyed.

Not only the libraries but several librarians and LIS students on the island were badly affected by the tsunami. Many of them are displaced, while some have lost their family members and relatives. Fortunately, there are no deaths of librarians or library students reported yet.

Immediately after the disaster, top priority was given to providing basic needs such as housing, food, healthcare and restoring the livelihoods of affected people. Not unreasonably, the losses suffered by libraries have received less attention. Nevertheless, enabling readers to return to their libraries can help them, both psychologically and practically, to cope with uncertainty and get back to normalcy.

The Sri Lanka National Library and Documentation Services Board (NLDSB) made an appeal on December 28 to the international library community. This appeal received an instant response from all over the world, and Dr. Susanne Ornager, an advisor with UNESCO’s Information and Communication Division for Asia, visited Colombo to assess the situation. As a result of the UNESCO intervention, the Sri Lanka Disaster Management Committee for Library, Information Services and Archives was created and attached to the NLDSB.

The Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA), the only professional association in the field of LIS in Sri Lanka, also has taken initiative to rehabilitate affected libraries. The SLLA has proposed an action plan to develop a few model libraries in the areas affected, providing them with modern information tools in addition to the conventional sources until now held by these libraries.

More libraries may be included in the project, depending on the support received by the SLLA. The detailed action plan is available at http://www.naresa.ac.lk/slla/.

The writer acknowledges the support and assistance given by Major Rohan Jayasinghe, chief instructor of the Combat Training School, Sri Lanka Army, in Ampara, during her visits to the eastern coast of the island.