Ukrainian Libraries through the Eyes of an American Librarian

By Susan Benz

For the last 8 months, I have lived and worked in Ukraine as a lecturing Fulbright scholar traveling throughout the country visiting libraries in a variety of settings. As a guest lecturer at workshops, university classes, conferences and symposiums, I present on a variety of topics such as creating library web sites and digitization concepts. During my time here I have observed trends that should be understood within historical and cultural context.

Lenin, like George W. Bush, married a librarian. His wife, Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya was responsible for the foundation and many methods of Soviet librarianship. Under her guidance, libraries played the role of guardians of knowledge and thereby became a crucial part of the ideological infrastructure of Soviet society.

Today there appears to be mixed feelings among professional librarians in regards to Soviet library methods and philosophies. It is more complex than one might assume. Librarians speak of this time as a period during which libraries received government support and were highly regarded, but also describe it as a period of censorship and restricted access to information. In 1991 Ukraine achieved its desired independence and became a sovereign state. Finally uncensored access to information was feasible. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the political instability that followed caused great damage. In addition to a sudden cessation of acquisitions from other Soviet Republics, the financial situation was so bleak in the 1990s that librarians (among other professions) did not receive compensation for work for extended periods. These days, Ukrainian libraries are generally in a better situation, but also a state of great transition as they rethink their role in society and grapple with new information technologies.

Of course, technology has changed the goals and functions of libraries all over the world during the last 15 plus years. Keeping up with technology and providing ongoing staff training continues to pose challenges. For the most part, Ukraine’s librarians today are not properly trained to meet future demands, especially in the sphere of technology. Most currently practicing librarians were trained under the Soviet system and there are few opportunities for continuing educa-

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Message from the Editor

Are you headed to ALA Annual in a few weeks? I am, and I am looking forward very much to seeing familiar faces and meeting new ones from around the world. The International Relations Office and the IRRT have several programs planned that we hope will enrich your experience and understanding of librarianship around the world.

The IRRT Pre-conference session focuses on resource sharing in the digital age - reserve your spot now if you have not yet! The IRRT Chair’s session will discuss professional development opportunities, and a highlight will be the unveiling of the IRRT-sponsored project for the 2008 Emerging Leaders about online professional development.

An event not to be missed is the ever-popular International Librarians’ Reception; to be held Monday night. Be sure you get your ticket - this event was sold-out last year!

I am interested in hearing from you if you attend Annual - especially if you are an international librarian! The next issue will include conference reports and I would be very happy to include reports from our visiting librarians who made the journey. If you have any questions, you can reach me at intl.leads.irrt@gmail.com. You can also find me at the IRRT committee meetings scheduled for Saturday morning.

The articles in this issue focus on librarianship opportunities through the Fulbright Program, founded in 1946 and whose aim is “to increase mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and other countries, through the exchange of persons, knowledge and skills” (taken from the Fulbright website at http://www.iie.org/Template.cfm?section=Fulbright1). There are many opportunities for librarians to participate, as our article authors demonstrate. Susan Benz describes her experiences as a lecturing Fulbright Scholar in Ukraine, and Denice Adkins discusses her experiences from Honduras.

The upcoming issues will include a special issue on an ensemble of visits to Russian libraries, the creation of a library association in Bermuda, and of course, a summary of ALA Annual. If you see me at Anaheim, catch me and say hi!

~ Rebecca Miller Banner

Call for Submission

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.
In 2009 IRRT will reach a major milestone – 60 years as a round table! Back in 1949, it was called the Round Table on Library Service Abroad and had as its purpose:

“...to provide a means whereby the general membership of the American Library Association may inform itself regarding the international aspects of library work and may be given opportunities to participate in activities for the improvement of international relations and/or library services throughout the world.”

(source IRRT Officer’s Manual)

In 1956, as the name changed to IRRT, the mission was restated:

“...to develop the interests of librarians in activities and problems in the field of international library relations; to serve as a channel of communication and counsel between the International Relations Committee and the members of the Association, and to provide hospitality and information to visitors from abroad. The IRRT arranges programs and business meetings and appoints representatives to attend meetings of other professional groups.”

(source IRRT Officer’s Manual)

Does this mission still fit IRRT in 2008? We have a very different membership base now with many more international librarians in IRRT and global communication tools such as blogs, wikis and interactive web sites available to us now. The IRRT Executive Board set forth strategic goals and priorities at the midwinter 2007 meeting in Seattle and has tried to implement many of these initiatives. As one of the strategic goals, IRRT wants to increase advocacy efforts for international libraries and librarians and in this effort may want to request an official ALA position on a particular issue.

After a draft of the Protocol for Responding to Requests for an Official ALA Position Statement was circulated, the IRRT Executive Board was concerned that there was no mechanism for Round Tables to have a voice and did provide input about the need to be consulted and have the ability to put forth a request for a position. This input is reflected in the Protocol for Responding to Requests for an Official ALA Position Statement that was approved by ALA Executive Board on April 7, 2008. It says that Round Tables should be consulted on issues that are relevant to them and they may provide information on issues to Council for consideration, but only divisions, certain committees and Council can take a position on matters that concern them. Please see this Protocol at: http://www.ala.org/ala/ourassociation/governanceofficeb/executiveboard/ebboardmeetingagendas/spring2008/EBD12_39.doc. Within the confines of this One Voice policy, IRRT will need to be very proactive in monitoring issues and bringing those of concern to the attention of the International Relations Committee and/or ALA Council.

Another strategic priority involves fundraising to provide outreach programs, more international speakers, sponsorship of emerging leaders and possibly an endowment fund. IRRT needs your input on these issues. At annual in Anaheim next month, we will have a dedicated time on Sunday morning June 29th from 10:00-11:00 a.m. in the Hilton Anaheim-Ventura Room after the Executive Board meeting to brainstorm about the direction we want to take IRRT. We also want to celebrate IRRT’s 60 years of achievements at Annual 2009 in Chicago and need your ideas.

If you can join IRRT in Anaheim, I hope you will find a way to make your ideas known at this brainstorming session, enjoy the IRRT programs and activities listed here in Leads, and help plan our IRRT 60th anniversary celebration. If you cannot come, please email your recommendations to the Executive Board at: irrteb@ala.org.

Volunteer at Annual

Be a mentor: The IRRT Orientation/Mentoring Committee seeks mentors to help out international colleagues during the ALA Annual Conference. If you are interested in being a mentor in Anaheim, it’s not too late. Please fill out a form at http://www.ala.org/ala/iro/iroactivities/intlmentor.cfm or contact the International Relations Office at intl@ala.org

Staff the IVC: The International Visitors Center (IVC) Committee is looking for volunteers to staff the International Visitors Center, located near the exhibits and open Friday, June 27 through Monday, June 30. 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. To volunteer, please contact Jaclyn Bedoya at jaclynbedoya@gmail.com

Message from the IRRT Chair

By Joan Weeks

In 2009 IRRT will reach a major milestone – 60 years as a round table! Back in 1949, it was called the Round Table on Library Service Abroad and had as its purpose:

“...to provide a means whereby the general membership of the American Library Association may inform itself regarding the international aspects of library work and may be given opportunities to participate in activities for the improvement of international relations and/or library services throughout the world.”

(source IRRT Officer’s Manual)
Schedule for IRC/IRRT Sessions

FRIDAY, June 27
9:00 am - 1:00 pm  
IRRT Pre-conference: “Collaboration and Resource Sharing in the Digital Age”
Marriott Anaheim-Room Platinum 9

2:00 pm - 4:00 pm  
International Relations Committee I
Hilton Anaheim Hotel - Conference Room 12

4:30 pm - 6:30 pm  
International Librarians Orientation
Marriott Anaheim - Marquis South

SATURDAY, June 28
8:00 am - 9:00 am  
IRRT Chairs Meeting
Marriott Anaheim-Room Platinum 5

8:00 am - 10:00 am  
IRRT Subcommittee Meetings
Marriott Anaheim-Room Platinum 5

9:00 am - 11:00 am  
IRC Subcommittee Meetings
Marriott Anaheim-Room Platinum 5

11:00 – 12:00pm  
IFLA Update Meeting
Marriott Anaheim-Room Platinum 5

1:30 pm - 3:30 pm  
IRRT International Papers: Re-Assess, Reassign, and Reinvent: Collection Building Without Global Borders
Anaheim Convention Center-Room 211 B

4:00 pm - 5:30 pm  
Home Delivery Information Services in Asia Countries: What and How They Are Doing
Anaheim Convention Center- Room 203
Challenges of Library Development in Africa
Anaheim Convention Center-Room 201 D

SUNDAY, June 29
8:00 am – 11:00 am  
IRRT Executive Committee Meeting
Hilton Anaheim-Ventura Room

11:00 am - 12:30 pm  
International Poster Session
Anaheim Convention Center - Exhibit Floor

1:30 pm - 3:30 pm  
How to find an International Partner - Sister Libraries Program
Anaheim Convention Center-Room 208 A

4:00 pm - 5:30 pm  
Alphabet Soup? Librarians in the European Union
Anaheim Convention Center-Room 203 A

MONDAY, June 30
8:00 am - 10:00 am  
Mexican Libraries: Socially Shaped Institutions
Anaheim Convention Center-Room 203 A

10:30 am - 12:00 pm  
Connecting with an International Project
Anaheim Convention Center-Room 209 B

1:30 pm - 3:30 pm  
IRRT-Chair’s Program Professional Development Around the World: Meeting the Challenge of Rapid Change in the Digital Environment
Anaheim Convention Center-Room 203 B

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
International Librarians’ Reception
MUZEO, 241 S. Anaheim Blvd.

TUESDAY, July 1
1:30 pm – 03:30 pm  
International Relations Committee II
Marriott Anaheim-Room 312

More details can be found at...
http://www.ala.org/ala/iro/iroactivities/alaannualconference.cfm
http://www.ala.org/ala/iro/iroactivities/meetingsprograms.cfm
Honduras joins Nicaragua and Belize as three Central American countries without a formal LIS program. The desire for a formal LIS program had been brewing for some time, and a consultant from the United States, William Vernon Jackson of Dominican University, was brought to Honduras to advise on the establishment of a program. He recommended that the Fulbright Commission sponsor a Scholar to help initiate and plan coursework. Working with Nítida Carranza, the UPNFM Director of Educational Technology, the role of the Fulbright Scholar is to help set up and deliver Maestría courses.

Unfortunately, the wheels of academia grind exceedingly slow, and to date, the Maestría program is still awaiting administrative approval. In the absence of an established LIS education program, the Asociación de Bibliotecarios y Documentalistas Hondureños (the Association of Honduran Librarians and Archivists, or ABIDH) provides an annual conference with a strong educational component. ABIDH has also offered several diplomado courses, which are roughly equivalent to certificate programs. I was pleased to be able to teach for the most recent diplomado. Over twenty students enrolled in the diplomado, which was taught six days a week over an intensive six-week period. The previous Fulbright Scholar, Paul Christensen of San Diego State University, played a very strong role in offering last year’s ABIDH conference. This year’s conference is scheduled for July 14-16, 2008.

Library service in Honduras varies in quality across the country. Traditional library services are strongest in Honduras’ public and private universities. The largest collections are found at the two public universities, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH) and the Pedagógica. Closed stacks are the norm here; the Pedagógica is one of only two academic libraries in the Tegucigalpa area with open stacks. Because collection development funding is severely limited, at least two librarians are on each floor during all library open hours to protect the collection.

Technology is pushing library advancement, though. Most of the academic libraries have converted from card catalogs to automated systems. Several universities are making databases and catalogs available to users both inside and outside the library. UNAH makes wireless service available in the commons area outside the library, while the Pedagógica has wireless Internet on the second floor.

Public libraries are less common here. There are 106 public libraries in 16 of Honduras’ 18 states. All but 23 of these libraries share their buildings with regional cultural centers, and the average collection size is 650 titles. Most of these libraries provide only a reading room, with fewer than 25% allowing books to circulate. Again, this is due to very limited collection development budgets. One librarian told me that Hondurans were not raised with the public library tradition and needed to become accustomed to bringing books back. The Biblioteca Nacional de Honduras (National Library of Honduras) serves as the head of this network of public libraries and provides training to the librarians who staff these branches. The majority of these librarians have no post-secondary schooling.

In addition, the Riecken Foundation has opened 52 public libraries in mostly rural areas in Honduras, and another nine libraries in Guatemala. The foundation was established by former Peace Corps volunteer Allen Andersson and his wife Susan Riecken, with the idea that access to information and technology would aid communities in meeting their own needs. Generally, representatives

A Fulbright Scholar’s Experience in Honduras

By Denice Adkins

Honduras was one of the poorest countries in Latin America, even before the devastation of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. The country has largely recovered 10 years later, but much of the funding that would have been spent to improve the infrastructure has gone to restoring it instead. Libraries have necessarily taken a back seat to survival-level needs. However, as the country develops, librarians are becoming more vocal about the need for libraries and how those libraries can support the country in its struggle to overcome poverty, protect patrimony, and improve life for all Honduran citizens.

The Fulbright Awards Catalog has listings for “Library Science” and “Information Sciences,” and the “All Disciplines” section often has several country listings that include Library Science as a desired area of specialization. Even better for me, the Honduras listing indicated that they wanted expertise in library science education, and all they required in return was Spanish language fluency. It seemed like a perfect match!

I applied for the Fulbright award in August 2006 and received my notice of acceptance in March 2007. On January 23, 2008, I flew into the Toncontin Airport in Tegucigalpa, Honduras’ capital city and began my work at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM, or “The Pedagógica” to locals).

Fulbright Scholars are chosen based on “academic merit and leadership potential,” and the host country also provides funds for Fulbright Scholars’ support and maintenance. Hondurans invest $40,000 to bring a Scholar to the country. In a country where the minimum daily wage can be as low as 68 Lempiras ($3.58), this suggests that Honduras strongly values Fulbright participation.
Honduras
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of a community will approach the Foundation with the idea of building a library. The community agrees to provide the building, utilities, and librarian’s salary, while the Riecken Foundation provides an opening-day collection, computers and Internet connectivity, and extensive support in maintaining the library. The Foundation provides intensive training for community leaders in how to form an effective management team, or junta directiva, for the library. The junta directiva then hires a librarian from the community, who receives more training from the Foundation about managing and running the library. The librarian does all the work of the library, from managing the computer lab and answering reference questions to shelving the books and cleaning the building at day’s end.

Many schools in Honduras do not have libraries, and those that do generally hold older titles and do not offer technology such as computers or online catalogs. One private school I visited did have a computer lab, and their librarian was creating an online inventory using the WinISIS system from UNESCO. Private schools are usually better funded than public schools, and this school was lucky in that the librarian had previously worked at the National Library and the Pedagógica.

The Pedagógica is working to supplement public schools’ few holdings by providing a Biblioteca Móvil. Three bookmobiles were donated by Rotary Clubs in Canada and the United States, and these bookmobiles make weekly visits to regional schools in order to encourage children to read. The bookmobiles are staffed by students from the Pedagógica who are completing their community service credits. The students bring traditional library story hours, programs, and traveling book baskets to children who might not otherwise have access to books.

However, there is a strong tradition of record-keeping in Honduras, as evidenced by the large number of Centros de Documentación. These Centros have some of the features of archives and some of the features of special libraries. For instance, besides maintaining a collection of economic information, the Centro for the Central Bank of Honduras features many documents relating to Honduras’ political history, as well as a numismatics museum. The Centro at the National Women’s Institute is funded by the government and collects institute, national, and international documents relating to women’s status and women’s rights in Honduras. In many instances, Centros are open to the general public; however, users tend to be those in the institution to which the Centro belongs because there is no registry of these Centros.

This year’s Fulbright Awards Catalog can be found at the website of the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, http://www.cies.org/us_scholars/us_awards/AwardsCatalog.htm. Opportunities are available not only for one- or two-semester Fulbright awards, but also for short-term Specialists. Other opportunities allow you to bring foreign scholars to your university. I would encourage anyone who is interested in working abroad to apply for a Fulbright Scholarship.

Sources:

Ms. Adkins is at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán, Tegucigalpa, Honduras. She is also an Associate Professor at the School of Information Science & Learning Technologies, University of Missouri-Columbia.

Emerging Leaders Application: 2009

ALA is now accepting applications for the 2009 class of Emerging Leaders. The program is designed to enable more than 100 new librarians to get on the fast track to ALA and professional leadership. Participants are given the opportunity to work on a variety of projects, network with peers and get an inside look into ALA structure and activities.

To be sponsored by IRRT, contact the current Chair, Joan Weeks, at weeks@cua.edu. Sponsored participants will receive $1000 towards expenses ($500 for each conference). Applications can be found at http://cs.al.org/hrdr/emergingleaders/

Sponsorship is not required for participation in the program. Participation eligibility includes these requirements:

* Be under 35 years of age or be a new librarian of any age with fewer than 5 years post-MLS experience
* Have a recent MLS degree from an ALA or NCATE accredited program or be in an MLS program currently.
* Be able to attend both ALA conferences and work online in between.
* Be prepared to commit to serve on an ALA, Division, Chapter or Round Table committee, taskforce or workgroup upon completion of program.
* Be an ALA member or join upon selection if not already a member.

Program information will be available and updated at: wikis.al.org/emergingleaders. For questions or more information regarding the program, contact Beatrice Calvin at bcalvin@ala.org.

The deadline to apply is July 31.

IRRT can also suggest projects for the Emerging Leaders. If you have ideas for a project for the 2009 class, please send your ideas to the current Chair at weeks@cua.edu.
Ukraine
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tion at this time. With the exception of the prestigious National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy library, the first thing I noticed when entering Ukrainian libraries is the reliance of users and staff on card catalogs. Of those libraries with online catalogs that I visited, most said that they started entering electronic records into an online catalog in the late 1990s. Some are in the process of retrospective conversion of older records and many libraries which I visited such as the Vernadsky National Scientific Library in Kyiv, continue to create catalog cards in addition to machine readable catalog records. Under the Soviets, Ukrainian language was stifled. As a result processing Ukrainian language materials poses new issues. For example, there is no Ukrainian language equivalent to Library of Congress Subject Headings. Therefore, libraries processing materials in Ukrainian language often do not include subject headings.

Almost without exception, each time I give a lecture someone in the audience asks me about US librarian pay scales and whether or not librarianship is considered a prestigious career. This curiosity comes from low salaries and the perception that the profession is stagnating. Librarians are not well paid and the profession is not held in high regard, especially by younger generations who are looking for lucrative career options. There is an urgent problem in recruiting young talented professionals. This may sound familiar to American librarians, but it is much more extreme in Ukraine.

In Kyiv, I coordinate monthly meetings for a group of English speaking librarians. One evening we discussed the challenges facing Ukrainian libraries today. Among the chief concerns discussed were the following:

- The ever increasing price of materials, especially foreign language materials
- Lack of budget/funding for materials, for library operations
- Poor facilities (buildings and surrounding areas)
- Unclear and restrictive copyright laws
- Few opportunities and budget for training for librarians especially in the area of technology
- Low numbers of students entering this discipline
- Lack of government support

However during my time here, I have experienced many high points and have been impressed by my Ukrainian colleagues’ enthusiasm. Recently I traveled out to a small public library, outside of the city of Donetsk near the Russian border, for a conference. I arrived in a bus with approximately 40 regional librarians. We were greeted with a traditional cake and smiles. The fact that the library had no running water at the time did not deter the librarians from hosting this conference. They were extremely interested in sharing knowledge and learning from their colleagues. If this had been an American library, I think they would have canceled the entire event. Not this lively group! They were eager to pose questions and examine librarianship topics in great detail. Their energy was so positive and open that I immediately felt at home.

Ukraine has two professional associations: the Association of Ukrainian Libraries and the Ukrainian Library Association. Both organizations were founded shortly after independence and are a positive force in advocating for Ukrainian libraries and promoting intellectual freedom. Unfortunately both organizations have very small staffs, some of whom are working as volunteers in addition to full-time employment elsewhere. There seems to be an overlap of mission and I question whether perhaps these two institutions would be stronger if they were merged.

Over the last six years, over 130 Internet centers have been opened in public libraries throughout Ukraine as part of the Library Electronic Access Project (LEAP) of the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy. This project has had an enormous impact on Ukrainian libraries not only in large metropolitan areas, but has reached rural areas as well. It has provided public libraries with free access to the Internet and valuable technology training. This type of valuable work continues with a project underway now called Global Libraries, which is being executed by International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) with financial support by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Currently IREX is conducting a needs assessment in regards to providing public access to computers and Internet in Ukraine’s public libraries on a larger scale.

In conclusion, libraries have always played an important role in society; albeit this role has changed drastically since independence. Ukrainian libraries face many of the same challenges and opportunities as their American counterparts, but unfortunately do not have the same level of governmental support and access to resources. Sharing professional information and forging international partnerships are vital actions necessary for the positive growth of Ukrainian libraries.

Sources:


Ms. Benz is a Lecturing Fulbright Scholar in Kyiv, Ukraine, at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy’s American Library More about her experience in Ukraine can be found at her blog: http://brooklyn2kyiv.blogspot.com
IRRT International Librarians Reception

Monday, June 30, 2008
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Location: MUZEO, 241 S. Anaheim Blvd.

Please join the IRRT in welcoming and celebrating with librarians from more than 80 countries at the ALA Annual Conference. Open to all conference attendees, this reception offers a unique opportunity to network with hundreds of information professionals from around the world. Join us for a mixing of culture and ideas, regional cuisine, hors d’oeuvres and open bar (this event is free for international librarians).

Advance registration is required. Last day to purchase tickets is Saturday, June 28. Tickets cost $35. Buses will depart from Anaheim Convention Center - don’t forget your ticket!

The MUZEO is Southern California’s newest museum, a center for arts, knowledge, entertainment and culture to engage people of all ages with showcase world-class travelling exhibits. The 25,000 square foot complex encompasses Anaheim’s original Carnegie Library built in 1908 and a new state-of-the art gallery space.

Thank you to the sponsors for this year’s International Librarians Reception

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