IRRT Mission Enhancement Grant report:
IRRT and the Croatian Libraries Association explore linked data

Raymond Pun
raypun101@gmail.com

In this report, I share my work as an IRRT Mission Enhancement Grant Recipient on how ALA/IRRT is collaborating with the Croatian Library Association (CLA).

On 9 October 2020, I organized a virtual session for the 45th Croatian Library Conference and General Assembly. The presenters included myself, Alexandra Houzouri Humphreys, Philip Schreur, Mark Mattson, and Margita Mirčeta Zakarija. The session focused on ALA collaborations with CLA with a focus on global projects.

This year’s theme of the CLA conference is “Libraries in Times of Crisis.” Our session was chaired by Dr. Dijana Machala, President of CLA. The session also used the Microsoft PowerPoint feature to translate our presentation from English to Croatian via live captioning. The session was listed in the ALA IRRT webinar page, where I am also a member of the webinar committee. The session drew over 55 attendees from Croatia and fellow ALA/IRRT members also joined.

IRRT Chair Alexandra Houzouri Humphreys from Arizona State University gave opening remarks and introduced IRRT to attendees. She welcomed everyone in Croatian. Alexandra introduced the history and working projects of IRRT, and emphasized the sister library projects and mentorship program under IRRT.

Afterwards, Dr. Philip Schreur of Stanford University presented on linked data projects and how European collaborations and programs are supporting linked data initiatives for global research and discovery. Philip highlighted upcoming linked data conferences globally and the work on LD4 Conferences held recently online.

My presentation focused on what the Mission Enhancement Grant would bring to foster linked data learning for an IRRT-CLA collaboration. The purpose is to support professional learning about linked data by hosting a 1-day symposium in Zagreb in Fall 2021, depending on COVID-19 status. Initially, it was meant to be Fall 2020, but this has been postponed in the hope that we will be able to meet in person in 2021. The symposium would invite participants from nearby regions. In addition, the project funded by the Mission Enhancement Grant aims

Continued on page 7
to collect recent learning resources on this topic and to share with CLA members. The webinars are being considered to support additional engagement with CLA members. All of this is dependent upon the status of the global pandemic.

Margita Mirčeta Zakarija from University of Split and IRRT Member at Large Mark Mattson from Penn State University spoke about their global sister library partnerships between the two institutions. Mark presented his perspective in English and Margita presented her perspective in Croatian. They highlighted the value of collaboration in supporting global librarianship during this period.

The presentations highlighted the value of global collaborations during challenging times. After our presentations, we had a brief time for Q&A. Questions centered on the future of MARC and the future of global partnerships during COVID-19. A recording of the session is available on the IRRT webinar page.

I am thankful to Dr. Dijana Machala for inviting us to present in this session and for CLA for organizing this virtual conference. By building these networks, it is my hope to expand such partnerships for more engagement between ALA/IRRT and CLA.

About the grant

The IRRT Mission Enhancement Grant was established in 2016 to provide support for international projects or partnerships; promote a global dialogue about librarianship; increase visibility of international opportunities for U.S. and international librarians, and encourage international collaboration in librarianship.

Do you have an idea for an international activity or initiative? You could be the next recipient of this grant. More information and the application form for the next Mission Enhancement Grant is available on the website.
As a member of the IRRT webinar committee (2021-2022) and the Mission Enhancement Grant recipient for 2020, I co-organized three webinars focusing on specialized topics in linked data. In collaboration with Dr. Dijana Machala from the Croatian Library Association (CLA) and Dr. Philip Schreur from LD4 and Stanford University Libraries, we hosted three webinars that aimed to support CLA members and librarians in Croatia interested in linked data discussions. In this report, I’ll provide brief updates on the webinars.

In June 2020, three webinars were launched as part of the Mission Enhancement Project. If you missed any of the webinars, the recordings and their slides are available in the IRRT Webinar page. The three webinars were the following: 1. Linked Data and Rare Materials; 2. Linked Data and Ethics; 3. Linked Data and Discovery. Each webinar had over 170 registered attendees, and over 70 attendees came to each webinar to hear our expert speakers on these important topics. Attendees came from Croatia, Sri Lanka, Senegal, Venezuela, Netherlands, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Sweden and across the United States. We were very happy to see such global participation and engagement. Each webinar started with an introduction, an acknowledgement of the ALA IRRT and Mission Enhancement Grant support, and opening remarks from Dr. Dijana Machala and Dr. Philip Schreur, followed by each speaker.

In the first webinar on Linked Data and Rare Materials, Paloma Graciani-Picardo, the Metadata Librarian from University of Texas at Austin and Tim Thompson, Librarian for Applied Metadata Research from Yale University Library shared examples on how linked data could improve patron access to rare materials. Tim Thompson stated, “linked data is promising to make the richness of rare materials more visible to users.” Both speakers offered important thoughts on how linked data can enhance discovery processes for special collections. The second webinar focused on Linked Data and Ethics: An Online Discussion. Bri Watson, a PhD student at the iSchool at the University of British Columbia and the Director of HistSex.com examined the process on how we describe people in the catalog and its ethical implications. Devon Murphy, the TARO Metadata Analyst at the University of Texas at Austin, spoke about the ethics of linked data and cultural heritage workflows and covered linked data ontologies, models, and issues with the use of multiple thesauri. The third webinar, Linked Data and Discovery featured Huda Khan, a software developer at Cornell University, and Astrid Usong, a University Experience Designer at Stanford Libraries. They demonstrated the benefits to patrons through the use of emerging discovery techniques such as knowledge panels, chronological sliders, and other unique research functions, all rooted in linked data. At the end of each webinar, there were many questions from our attendees.

We are very pleased with the attendance for each webinar and how participants engaged with the speakers with their thoughtful questions. This webinar series demonstrates how ALA International Relations Round Table can focus on innovative projects such as linked data which engages with the global library community. These technical discussions on linked data are often held in CORE or the Digital Library Federation (DLF) and ALA IRRT can also facilitate these important conversations with global partners such as the Croatian Library Association. I am thankful to Dr. Dijana Machala for sharing the webinar series with CLA members. By building these networks, it is our hope to strengthen such partnerships for more engagement between ALA IRRT and CLA.

Figure 1: Screenshot of a chronological slider demonstration by Huda Khan