



International Leads

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Cuban Libraries Revisited: One Year Later

By Rhonda L. Neugebauer

Travel to Cuba carries a certain air of excitement and adventure, partly because travel there by U.S. citizens is restricted by the U. S. government and partly because of the mystery of a revolution in progress. The social and cultural priorities of the revolution in Cuba have influenced the development of the country as well as the expectations of the population. Among other things, the revolution placed a clear emphasis on literacy, libraries, education, culture and the arts. This emphasis has resulted in a society rich in educational, intellectual, and cultural opportunities, and a population that is highly literate, highly educated, and well read. Nevertheless, Cuba is still a poor country that struggles for stable economic growth. Foreign trade and investment are based on national dignity, political autonomy, and sustainable development for the country as a whole, not just for certain groups of people or businesses.

The country's commitment to culture and education has encouraged the development of libraries and the library profession in Cuba. Entrusted to promote culture, reading, and intellectual development for the population, libraries are considered treasure houses of history and national patrimony. Not surprisingly, librarians are determined to wisely and judiciously safeguard limited resources while remaining focused on the needs of the diverse constituencies they serve.

In March 2001, a delegation of librarians from the United States visited several Cuban libraries and held meetings with library and information professionals. These visits allowed us to observe a range of achievements of the profession as well as the problems caused by scarce resources and economic limitations. On the

positive side, it is worth noting that these limitations have compelled library professionals to be creative, patient, vigilant and resourceful. Librarians have placed public service and outreach high on their priorities and they have



Cuban librarians show their collections.
(Photo: Rhonda Neugebauer, March 2001)

accomplished a great deal by combining creative writing and publishing programs, and by embracing culture and the arts as paths to reaching children and youth, parents, working people, individuals with special needs, isolated rural communities, students, the aged, and the sick. For children, the public libraries host "game" days and contests about historical figures, the arts and culture. For parents, librarians teach classes on integrating reading into family activities and have established "bebetecas" (books for pre-schoolers). For working people, they take books to the workplace or

Entrusted to promote culture, reading, and intellectual development for the population, libraries in Cuba are considered treasure houses of history and national patrimony.

establish reading rooms to circulate books to employees. For the elderly and house-bound, they deliver books to homes on regular visits. In one library closed for repairs, the librarians traveled throughout

neighborhoods to meet patrons, give classes, talk in schools about library services, and continue outreach activities. During our visits, our Cuban hosts asked many questions about how we meet the

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demands of patrons and how new technologies, especially the Internet, have affected our work. This discussion led to an engaging dialogue about the transformations in our profession and our new work priorities that result from technology and the seemingly all encompassing "electronic imperative."



Receptions for librarians of the Colloquium
"From Papyrus to the Virtual Library"
(Photo: Rhonda Neugebauer, March 2001)

The Colloquium "Del Papiro a la Biblioteca Virtual"

A primary reason for our trip was our desire to understand how the Cubans approach the new technologies. In fact, our first official activity was attendance at the colloquium "From Papyrus to the Virtual Library" to discuss just that. The colloquium was organized by the Casa de las Americas, a Latin American literary publishing house and cultural center, with outstanding library and art collections and a museum. Over 150 librarians gathered, including representatives from Brazil, Colombia, Great Britain and the United States. We discussed the impact of technological change on library services and how to face the rising expectations of library patrons and staff while continuing to offer traditional products and services.

The five-day conference yielded plenty of time to consider the important topic of technology and change in libraries. Among the presentations were studies prepared by Cuban librarians to assist them in designing and delivering services to library users in their communities. Many of these studies were prepared by Cuban librarian-researchers (investigadores), whose

position responsibilities include conducting community needs assessment, establishing and evaluating desired outcomes, and designing improvements or developing new programs or services. Several librarians presented studies of projects that they had completed in the course of their work or had researched especially for this conference and wanted to discuss with their Cuban and international colleagues. The topics studied by Cuban librarians revealed an intense interest in preserving the historical record, such as the documents and publications of the various archives, libraries, and research centers. Presentations also were given on intellectual property, distance education, marketing of cultural products

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Message from the IRRT Chair

By H. Lea Wells

Congratulations to our newly elected officers — chair-elect Karen Starr, Secretary/Treasurer Jeannette Pierce, and Member-at-large Rebecka Lindau. Among librarians, interest in international relations has never been greater. At ALA's annual conference in San Francisco, Fred Lynden, 2000-2001 chair, presided over committees, a continuing education session for fifty-one international librarians, twenty-seven poster and four paper presentations, orientation for 150 international visitors, an enormously successful reception (more later), and an awards ceremony. He served his stint as host in the international lounge, and reported to ALA's International Relations Committee. We owe Fred our thanks for steering IRRT through a busy year.

The orientation subcommittee under Inga Filippo's leadership provided an introduction to the conference and San Francisco. She also added a reception to the program. Attendees and their mentors were feted with music, food, drink and dance courtesy of the Swedish Embassy and SIRS Mandarin Inc.

IRRT's annual program was well attended by an audience filled with questions for our speakers — Pat Oyler, John Dean, Heleni Marques Pedersoli, and Stephanie Rawlins Gerding. The program focused on Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America and addressed issues of accessibility of information in those areas and various programs for international and American librarians. The reception that followed was a sellout with over 500 people attending. Two hundred international guests joined Americans eager to get acquainted, compare librarianship in their respective countries, and party together high over beautiful San Francisco Bay. Thanks to the reception committee and chair Monica Ertel and sponsors, ALA Conference Services, Elsevier Science, Gale Group, Swets Blackwell, and VTLS Inc. for a wonderful opportunity to socialize.

Normal Horrocks received the 2001 Humphry/OCLC/Forest Press International Librarianship Award and Harriet Lightman was awarded the Bogle-Pratt International Travel Fund Award. Congratulations to these worthy members!

Committee meetings were well attended by members as well as guests. Volunteers stepped forward to take leadership roles for next year. IRRT is in fine shape. Our budget shows a positive balance, membership is increasing, leadership is strong, and ALA staff support from Michael Dowling and his assistant Delin Guerra, in the International Relations Office, is excellent.

Last year International Leads, edited by Sha Li Zhang, provided wonderful articles including those on the

international experiences of members. She will continue as editor, so look for more fascinating articles. You can access past issues of International Leads on the IRRT website at www.ala.org/int May Chang and Mary McCarthy are updating our public face — the IRRT website. The membership and publication committees, under the leadership of Karen Starr and Barbara Kile, are updating our brochure with a newly designed logo, orchestrated by Lucinda Covert-Vail. I welcome this fresh image.

Of great interest to me is the opportunity IRRT has to expand its membership at IFLA in Boston. By the time you read this, our members will have participated in many ways to welcome our colleagues from around the world. The Continuing Education Subcommittee, chaired by Roman Kochan, will have offered a half-day's orientation to American libraries of all types. The information world is being knit together by the Internet as we communicate and share information across national boundaries. More and more librarians are interested in experiences abroad and international librarians continue to come to the United States for education, training, and to visit and intern in libraries around the country. We have an unparalleled opportunity to learn from each other.

Plans for the future include:

- Annual program in Atlanta that highlights international opportunities for American librarians and possibly activities in Eastern Europe and Russia.

- Coordination of programs with an international theme offered by divisions of ALA. The IRRT Program Subcommittee is developing a mechanism to coordinate such programs in order to create greater impact.

- Creation of a new interest group of returned Peace Corps volunteers who are librarians. They will meet during the IRRT subcommittee time at midwinter and develop agenda. Their interests are in sustainable library development abroad.

- Nancy John, chair of the International Relations Committee, and an active IRRT member, will press forward with the objectives set forth in the IRC planning paper. Nancy and I will be working together to further the ALA international agenda.

So to recap, join us in Atlanta in 2002 for the very best in conference receptions and programming. Invite a friend to join IRRT. Consider an international experience during your library career. Volunteer to serve on an IRRT committee. Host an international librarian in your library; become a Sister Library to a library abroad. Open up your world and ***Go International!***

ALA President Leads Delegation to Strengthen Library Associations in the South Caucasus

By Nancy Kranich

ALA President Nancy Kranich led a seven-member American delegation to Tbilisi, Georgia, in early May 2001 to help strengthen library associations in the South Caucasus. The regional workshop, organized in cooperation with the library associations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, was designed to assist the organizations in these emerging democracies to fulfill their critical roles in developing an informed citizenry. The initiative was part of Kranich's presidential theme "Libraries: The Cornerstone of Democracy."

Conducted in English and Russian, the sessions encouraged and facilitated continued cooperative efforts among the newly formed library associations in the South Caucasus region at this critical early stage of development. Attendees identified common concerns and applied newly learned methods of problem solving to create a consensus about future directions. The workshop heightened their awareness of the importance of speaking out to increase support for libraries and to promote the free flow of ideas in their countries.

Thirty librarians and library policy makers (ten each from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) participated in the workshop with Kranich, past ALA president Ann Symons, Michael Dowling, Director of ALA's International Relations Office, Nancy Davenport, Sylva Manoogian, Nancy Bolt, and Jordan Scepanski. The ALA delegation trained local facilitators, identified opportunities to strengthen library associations, and stressed the importance of working with stakeholders, building partnerships, and influencing policy makers. The key role of the media in advocacy was underscored by the radio, television and print reporters who covered the workshop with great interest.

Three case studies of successful ALA advocacy efforts were presented to promote libraries: National Library Week, Legislative Day, and Freedom of Information Day. Attendees used these models as springboards to develop similar initiatives. Each delegation then developed and reported on a national project and advocacy effort that would promote a free and open society. All three countries will work jointly on planning a National Library Week with the @ your library theme, coinciding with ALA's celebration. Each will also focus on addressing national

American Council for International Education, the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Embassy-Tbilisi through the Democracy Commission. The U.S. Ambassador to Georgia opened the workshop and the Embassy's Public Affairs Officer and Information Specialists worked closely with the American delegation. Thanks also go to Demco, Ebsco, Highsmith, netLibrary, and VTLS for providing souvenirs for the participants.

The hospitality of our Georgian hosts and the opportunities for networking among the participants from the four



The delegations from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the United States (led by Nancy Kranich, ALA President) at the South Caucasus Workshop.

(Photo: Nancy Kranich, May 2001)

bibliography issues with the help of the Library of Congress. The delegations departed eager for a follow-up workshop in Yerevan, Armenia, in the fall of 2002. The Carnegie Corporation of New York awarded ALA a \$25,000 grant for the workshop. Additional support for regional participants was provided by the Open Society Institute, the

countries between sessions, during meals, and through other informal gatherings, created unique and memorable occasions for librarians to become better acquainted, to share in each other's cultures, and to enjoy the sights and sounds of Tbilisi. For more information, visit <http://www.ala.org/work/international/caucasus>

Resolution on Access to Information by Cuba's Libraries

WHEREAS the U.S. Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control, Cuba Sanctions Program - Guidelines and Information and the Code of Federal Regulation (PART 515—CUBAN ASSETS CONTROL REGULATIONS) allows an exemption for informational materials (defined as publications, films, posters, phonograph records, photographs, microfilms, tapes, compact disks, CD-ROMs, artworks, news wire feeds, and other information and informational articles), and

WHEREAS the U.S. Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control, Cuba Sanctions Program is designed to limit Cuba's access to hard currency — currency that Cuba's libraries need to acquire materials published outside of Cuba, and

WHEREAS U.S. Public Law 104-114, Section 109 states that "the President is authorized to furnish assistance and provide other support for individuals and independent nongovernmental organizations to support democracy-building efforts for Cuba, including the following: (1) Published and informational matter, such as books, videos, and cassettes, on transitions to democracy, human rights, and market economies, to be made available to independent democratic groups in Cuba."

WHEREAS Cuban librarians support open selection

and access policies for their library materials, therefore be it **RESOLVED THAT**

The American Library Association urge the U.S. government to share information materials widely in Cuba, especially with Cuba's libraries, and not just with individuals and independent nongovernmental organizations; and be it further resolved that

The American Library Association urge the U.S. government to put policies in place, including more equitable postal fees for service to Cuba, that will make sending books and other materials on all subjects to Cuba's libraries easier for U.S. libraries and citizens who wish to improve access to information in Cuba through strengthening library collections; and be it further resolved that

The American Library Association oppose all efforts, including those of the U.S. government, to limit access to informational materials by Cuba's libraries and Cuba's library users; and be it further resolved that

The American Library Association urge the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) to take action to improve the Cuban people's access to books and other information materials on all topics through Cuba's libraries.

Welcome New IRRT Members!

Edward Averette
Christopher Bailey
Laurie Bonnicl
Constance Champlin
Christina Chester-
Fangman
Claudia Deane
Barbara Cosart
Margaret Dittimore
Vera Gao
Suzanne Gyeszly

Erleen Harris
Debbie Holmes
Margaret Irwin
Michael Jackson
Robert Joven
John Kaare
Carol Kem
Jane Kolbe
Edward Kwon
Thomas Larsen
Nadia Lashmanova

Nora Luaces
Mimi McCain
Alana McGrattan
Jane Morris
Mary Muller
Chander Rai
Shauna Redmond
David Richards
Elizabeth Rogers
Gail Sacco
Isabel Silver

Charles Spetland
Maria Staiano
Patrick Sullivan
Nancy Tkauz
Amy Vaccarella
Roberto Valdez
Aletta Waterhouse
Mary Wilkins
Valerie Wonder
Mary Yadegari
Priscilla Yu

ALA Members at HKBF 2001

By Frank Xu and Carol Alabaster

Hong Kong International Book Fair, the annual extravaganza for book-lovers, is organized by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and held in mid-July each year. Ten American librarians participated in the Hong Kong Book Fair (HKBF) through the ALA-HKBF Free-Pass program this year. Each of them received four free hotel nights plus free registration from HKBF organizing committee and \$100 from ALA as airfare compensation. All the participating librarians were committed to purchasing Chinese material for the libraries. The setting for the Book Fair is unbelievably beautiful, the recently completed convention center has every amenity from a trade center library with free Internet access to an astounding array of excellent eating establishments with international fare of every price.

The single most outstanding aspect of the HKBF is the attendees — this is a book fair with exhibition area of 25,733 square meters and 370 exhibitors from Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, Taiwan, Egypt and the United States. The exhibition area was created for the general public. And the public loves it! It is open on the weekend until 10 p.m. The public even line up the night before the fair opens. Even more astounding is that every other visitor to the fair appears to be a teenager! Really and truly, teens are queuing up to buy books! The line snakes around the building and we, the visiting librarians from the U.S., feel like pinching ourselves. Is this a dream? How has this happened? What's the magical ingredient that draws teens to the book fair?

This year the fair set up a series of programs to promote reading among teenagers in Hong Kong such as: Writers' Choice, Reading Write-up competition, Sharing Session of

Authors-in-school, New Books Release Presentation and Overseas Writers.

With the public attending the fair in such droves makes it difficult, particularly in the early afternoon, to get a close look at the books and to write up orders. Fortunately the Joint Publishing Co., one of the major vendors for the U.S. libraries, has graciously supplied scribes, who are very knowledgeable and who speak English to write up orders for us all. However, having the public at the fair has one distinct advantage — it is very easy to spot what Hong Kong residents are reading. Just look for the mobs of teens and you will know exactly what books they are craving. Unlike Book Expo the publisher booths are very basic and other than an occasional handfan there are no give-aways, no freebies, no reading copies. Everything at HKBF is for sale and at reduced prices — certainly one of the major lures for attendees. The quality of the books is excellent and the cover graphics are stunning. The staff at the individual booths, most of whom speak English, are very helpful and usually come over to see if they can be of any assistance.

The Trade Development Council graciously opened their lounge to us with its comfortable chairs and wonderful view overlooking the exhibition floor, offering a much-appreciated respite from the hurly-burly of the exhibits. Bottled water was available, too.

Apart from roving from booth to booth at the fair, the librarians had an opportunity to visit the newly-built Hong Kong public library. Every visitor was amazed at the facilities, technology, furniture and thoughtfulness in the public service. At the meeting following the tour American



Above: U.S. librarians are visiting Hong Kong Public Library

Below: Frank Xu is selecting books at the book fare.
(Photos: Frank Xu, July 2001)



librarians and Hong Kong librarians exchanged experience and opinions on the library issues of common interests. It was a wonderful profession-related program. In addition to ten librarians on the ALA-approved list, several libraries sent the librarians to the fair entirely at the library expense because they did not want to miss this good opportunity to develop their collection. It was suggested to HKBF that more support be available so that more U.S. librarians are able to go next year. (Frank Xu is a librarian at Brooklyn Public Library and Carol Alabaster is Former Foreign Language Librarian at Phoenix Public Library)

Report from the International Relations Committee

By **Jordan M. Scepanski, Chair**

At its final session at the annual conference in San Francisco, the ALA Council approved a Resolution on Access to Information by Cuba's Libraries (see the text of the resolution elsewhere of this issue), which had been proposed by the International Relations Committee based upon the recommendation made of a delegation of ALA officials that visited Cuba in May 2001. The Cuban trip was one of two recent overseas events about which the IRC received briefings during the conference, the other being a workshop on strengthening library associations conducted in the South Caucasus. The committee met twice in San Francisco, among other things reviewing the process of ALA's involvement with IFLA elections, adopting a procedure for selecting members for participation in international meetings, deliberating on nominations for two IFLA committees— Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) and Copyright and other Legal Matters (CLM) committees— and endorsing the ALA Legislation Committee's "Resolution regarding the draft Hague Convention on Jurisdiction and Enforcement of Judgments in Civil and Commercial Cases." The committee also heard reports from its chair, from Michael Dowling, Director of the International Relations Office, from the ALA representative to the American Library in Paris, and from Fred Lynden, chair of the International Relations Round Table.

During the spring, the committee reviewed the credentials of individuals previously nominated for election to IFLA's presidency and executive board, and recommended to ALA's executive board those who should receive association support. At the conference, the IRC reviewed the process it had used, talked about how it might be improved, and considered ways ALA might assure its continued involvement and influence in IFLA governance and programming.

Working from one of the objectives found in the IRC planning paper, a subcommittee had prepared a document outlining procedures to be followed in designating ALA members who would represent the association in international settings. It did so based upon an approach developed by the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS). The IRC accepted the subcommittee's work and recommended that other ALA units responsible for naming members to international positions make use of similar procedures. Former ALA President Betty Turock told the committee that there was need for the association to appoint a representative to the American Library in Paris board of directors. The matter was referred to the Europe and Canada subcommittee.

ALA President Nancy Kranich reported on leading a delegation of seven librarians to Tbilisi, Georgia in early May this year to assist the Armenian, Azerbaijan, and Georgian library associations with collaboration on regional projects and in developing advocacy programs that could contribute to the advancement of democratic processes in their countries. The event was well received by participants from all three countries. A follow-up conference with ALA involvement is anticipated and the workshop will be used as one model for future international collaborative efforts by the association. Kranich's report on the trip can be found at www.ala.org/work/international/caucasus.

President-elect John Berry, having received an invitation to address the conference of the Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institutional Libraries (ACURL) in Havana, Cuba, responded to the IRC's Midwinter Meeting suggestion that the event offered opportunity to engage Cuban counterparts in discussion of important professional issues, including freedom of access to information. He asked six ALA members to join him on visits to Cuban libraries, and to collections that have come to be known as "independent libraries." Berry briefed the committee on the trip and he reviewed the report the delegation had prepared. The IRC subsequently approved the six recommendations made by the group, one of which was the basis for the aforementioned action item taken to the ALA council. The full report is available at www.ala.org/work/international/cuba.

On Our File

Ohio University announces that Dr. Hwa-Wei Lee, Dean Emeritus of Ohio University Libraries and Visiting Distinguished Scholar of the OCLC Online Computer Library Center, has been selected by the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board as a Fulbright Senior Specialist for a six-week assignment in Thailand from September 9 to October 20, 2001. Dr. Lee will be assigned to the Department of Library Science, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University and will assist the Department to revise its graduate program. In addition, Dr. will help with faculty development, conducting a series of lectures, planning an international seminar, and advising the Central University Libraries. Having a long and distinguished library career spanning a period of 40 years, mostly in the U.S., Dr. Lee has been very active in international librarianship and has received numerous recognition and awards.

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(i.e. books, websites, etc.), the role of the librarian in a digital world, and the library as promoter of culture in the community and among special populations.

Digital Resources and the Internet in Cuba

The Internet, as might be expected, was a topic of intense interest among librarians at the conference. In fact, the colloquium provided a setting for the unveiling of several new electronic products produced in Cuba. The team of developers of CubaLiteraria, a beautiful and comprehensive website dedicated to Cuban literature, was demonstrated (<http://www.cubaliteraria.com>). Billed as a “the portal to Cuban literature,” its content as well as its sponsorship by the Cuban Institute of the Book, make this an important resource for studying Cuban literary production and publishing. Another website demonstrated for colloquium attendees was the Portal for Philosophy (<http://www.filosofia.cu>). Additionally, it was announced that the proceedings of the 1999 and 2001 colloquia would be published on CD-ROM by the Fundacion Jorge Guillen in Spain, one of the conference sponsors. By the end of the week, many of the colloquium papers had been added to the Casa (<http://www.casa.cult.cu>) website, including the keynote speech

by Dr. Timothy Connell, Professor of Literature at City University in London, and the closing address by Dr. Eliades Acosta, Director of the Jose Marti National Library.

Jose Marti National Library (JMNL) Continuing Dialogue

The year 2001 is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Jose Marti National Library. Illustrating its commitment to professional communication, the National Library had received several delegations of international librarians since our last visit in March 2000. These visits resulted in new agreements on collection development, exchanges of people and in new collaborative projects. Dr. Acosta also visited the U.S. last year. At the University of California Berkeley, he signed an exchange agreement and participated in an inauguration of a Cuban book exhibit. Margarita Leon, Director of Research at the JMNL, visited the Berkeley campus as well as two other U.S. University libraries. In response to an invitation from Harold Schleifer, Dean of the Library, Leon visited California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, where she learned about library services and operations. At Wichita State University Libraries she was hosted by Dean Ruth Jackson and gave a lecture about public library development in Cuba to an audience of several area libraries. To conclude our

visit to the National Library, we gave Dr. Acosta and his staff greetings from the U.S. librarians they had met. We also gave him copies of the February 2001 issue of *American Libraries* so he could see (for the first time) the article written by George Eberhardt, Senior Editor of the journal about his visit to the National Library.

There are two major associations in Cuba: the Association of Cuban Librarians (ASCUBI) and the Cuban Society of Information Sciences (SOCICT). We met with both groups and learned of their organization and methods of professional training. They asked us to convey a special invitation to U.S. librarians and to members of the American Library Association to attend an upcoming conference that they were helping to organize. They consider this conference, “INF02002 Information, Knowledge and Society: Challenges of a New Era,” to be an important forum for dialogue between librarians from Cuba, the U.S. and Latin America. It will be held April 22-26, 2002 in Havana. The conference web site is at <http://www.congreso-info.cu/>. For details on this conference, contact the conference organizer: Lic. Nicolas Garriga Mendez, President of the Organizing Committee, Aptdo. 2019, La Habana 10200, Cuba, fax: (537) 338237, phone: (537) 635500, info@idict.cu. (*Rhonda L. Neugebauer is Latin American Studies/Humanities and Social Science Bibliographer at University of California Riverside*)

International Relations Office

American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611 USA

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