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INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS
ROUND TABLE

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Encuentro Bibliotecario INTERAMERICANO de Información y Alfabetización

FORMING KNOWLEDGE AND COOPERATION NETWORKS: THE FIRST INTER-AMERICAN LIBRARY MEETING ON INFORMATION AND LITERACY

Haydee Hodis - USA
Teresa Tobin - USA
Roxana Benavides - USA
Elizabeth García - USA
Danitza Coronel - Bolivia
Ramiro Rico - Bolivia
Roly R. Lázaro C. - Bolivia

Introduction

The 1st Inter-American Library Meeting on Information and Literacy, born from the visionary initiative of librarians from the United States and Bolivia, was proposed as an ambitious project with the objective of fostering and promoting a movement of sustainability and regional collaboration for the benefit of libraries and their communities in the Andean

FORMANDO REDES DE CONOCIMIENTO Y COOPERACION: EL PRIMER ENCUENTRO BIBLIOTECARIO INTERAMERICANO DE INFORMACION Y ALFABETIZACION

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Elizabeth García - USA
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Introducción

El 1er Encuentro Bibliotecario Interamericano de Información y Alfabetización, nacido de la iniciativa visionaria de bibliotecarios de Estados Unidos y Bolivia, se propuso como un ambicioso proyecto con el objetivo de fomentar e impulsar un movimiento de sostenibilidad y colaboración regional en beneficio de las bibliotecas y sus comunidades. Celebrado del 24 al

Region of South America. Held from November 24 to 26, 2023 in Tacna, Perú this event represented an unprecedented space for exchange and mutual learning, where professionals in the library field could share experiences, challenges and successful methodologies, seeking to renew the role of libraries in contemporary society (Lázaro, 2023).

Coronel (2023) highlighted that the meeting met all its goals, thanks especially to the support of the Jorge Basadre Grohmann National University in Tacna, which showed a strong commitment to literacy and access to information, demonstrating the significant impact of libraries on the development of more informed and participatory communities.

Start and Objectives of the Meeting

The symposium began with a clear vision and defined objectives, and focused on the creation of a unique space for dialogue and regional cooperation. In this regard, Coronel (2023) points out that, “together with the organizing committee, there is an urgent need to unite librarians, authorities and institutions under the same vision.” Its objective was clear: to strengthen literacy and facilitate access to information in Latin America. This purpose underlined the importance of libraries as fundamental pillars in promoting a more educated and connected society, highlighting the crucial role they play in the social and cultural fabric of the region.

Presentations and Discussions

Liendo (2023) commented that each presentation sparked interest in learning a little more about the experiences in other communities. It was moving to learn about the existing challenges, the obstacles to overcome and the goals achieved by those who shared their experiences, many of them without staffing and material resources.

The meeting was extremely interesting with participants from Perú, Chile and Bolivia, and Puerto Rico as well as other representatives from Central America and the United States of America.

26 de noviembre de 2023 en Tacna, Perú, este evento representó un espacio de intercambio y aprendizaje mutuo sin precedentes, donde profesionales del ámbito bibliotecario pudieron compartir experiencias, desafíos y metodologías exitosas, buscando renovar el papel de las bibliotecas en la sociedad contemporánea. Lázaro (2023)

Coronel (2023) resaltó que el Encuentro cumplió con todas sus metas, gracias especialmente al apoyo de la Universidad Nacional Jorge Basadre Grohmann en Tacna, que evidenció un fuerte compromiso con la alfabetización y el acceso a la información, demostrando el impacto significativo de las bibliotecas en el desarrollo de comunidades más informadas y participativas.

Inicio y Objetivos del Encuentro

El Simposio se inició con una visión clara y objetivos definidos, centrados en la creación de un espacio único de diálogo y cooperación regional. Al respecto, Coronel (2023) señala que, “junto al comité organizador, se identificó la urgente necesidad de unir a bibliotecarios, autoridades e instituciones bajo una misma visión”. Su objetivo era claro: fortalecer la alfabetización y facilitar el acceso a la información en América Latina. Este propósito subrayaba la importancia de las bibliotecas como pilares fundamentales en la promoción de una sociedad más educada y conectada, destacando el papel crucial que juegan en el tejido social y cultural de la región.

Ponencias y Discusiones

Liendo (2023) comentó que cada ponencia fue despertando el interés por conocer un poco más de las experiencias en otras comunidades. Fue conmovedor enterarnos de los desafíos existentes, los obstáculos por vencer y las metas alcanzadas por los que compartieron sus vivencias, muchos de ellos sin mayores recursos humanos y materiales.

El Simposio resultó sumamente interesante con participantes de Perú, Chile, Bolivia, así como otros representantes de Puerto Rico, Centroamérica y los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica.



Opening ceremony of the 1st Inter-American Library Meeting on Information and Literacy and organizing committee of the 2023 meeting.

During the event, presentations stood out such as:

<https://ebibliotecarios.wixsite.com/encuentro-biblioteca>

- Jeannette Lebron Ramos (Virtual): Driving Excellence in Libraries in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Work of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Division of IFLA LAC
- Tania Gómez Valenzuela: Decentralization of the information services of the National Library of Perú: Experience of the “Armando Claros Cáceres” Public Library Station of Tarata
- Roly Raúl Lázaro Cari: Integrated and collaborative work through the Koha UNIFRANZ Bolivia library system
- Lucía Abello A.: (Virtual) Network of Public Libraries of the Los Ríos Region, Chile, more than reading spaces: Selection of Good Practices
- Verónica Patricia Sandy Bellido: The Role of Libraries within the framework of Objective No. 16 of the 2030 Agenda: Access to Information and Transparency
- Cassandra Larico López: The library as a place of welcome: Experiences around the activities of the “Readers of the South” club project
- Discussion: Sustainability and collaboration in the region by Danitza Noemí Coronel
- Keynote Talk by Ana María Talavera Ibarra: "IFLA guidelines for professional programs in Library and Information Sciences: A comparison with different professional training programs in South America"
- Sandra De La Quintana Ríos: What direction will the library profession take in Bolivia?
- Angie Edith Huancas Gastañadui: General concepts for the support of public libraries
- Sullman Maryola Liendo Chipoco: How does our brain learn to read and understand?
- Luis Angel Condori Mamani: Reading to improve society: Experiences of the Tacna Reading Club
- Claudio Briceño Mansilla: Reading on wheels. Touring the Corners of Atacama
- César Castro Aliaga: Jorge Basadre Grohmann (1903-1980): Thought and action in library cooperation. Other challenges and creative solutions were explored.

The talks covered a wide range of topics, from how to improve the decentralization of library services to the crucial role that libraries play in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Also, the development of the library professional was discussed.

Projections and the Future

The anticipation of the 2nd Inter-American Library Meeting scheduled for Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2024 symbolizes an opportunity to expand the collaboration and impact of librarians on social and economic development. These events are key to creating a network of committed librarians, promoting libraries as pillars of progress and equity in

Durante el evento, se destacaron ponencias como:

<https://ebibliotecarios.wixsite.com/encuentro-biblioteca>

- Jeannette Lebron Ramos (Virtual): Impulsando la Excelencia en las Bibliotecas de América Latina y el Caribe: El Trabajo de la División Regional de América Latina y el Caribe de IFLA LAC
- Tania Gómez Valenzuela: Descentralización de los servicios de información de la Biblioteca Nacional del Perú: Experiencia de la Estación Biblioteca Pública “Armando Claros Cáceres” de Tarata
- Roly Raúl Lázaro Cari: Trabajo integrado y colaborativo mediante sistema de bibliotecas Koha UNIFRANZ Bolivia
- Lucía Abello A.: (Virtual) Red de Bibliotecas Públicas de la Región de Los Ríos, Chile, más que espacios de lectura: Selección de Buenas Prácticas
- Verónica Patricia Sandy Bellido: El Rol de las Bibliotecas en el marco del Objetivo No 16 de la Agenda 2030: El Acceso a la Información y la Transparencia
- Cassandra Larico López: La biblioteca como un lugar de acogida: Experiencias en torno a las actividades del proyecto club “Lectores del sur”
- Discusión: Sostenibilidad y colaboración en la región a cargo de Danitza Noemí Coronel
- Charla Magistral a cargo de Ana María Talavera Ibarra: "Las directrices de la IFLA para programas profesionales en Bibliotecología y Ciencias de la Información: Una comparación con diferentes programas de formación profesional en América del Sur"
- Sandra De La Quintana Ríos: ¿Qué rumbo tomará la profesión de bibliotecólogo en Bolivia?
- Angie Edith Huancas Gastañadui: Conceptos generales para el sostenimiento de las bibliotecas públicas
- Sullman Maryola Liendo Chipoco: ¿Cómo aprende a leer ya comprender nuestro cerebro?
- Luis Angel Condori Mamani: La lectura para mejorar la sociedad: Experiencias del Club de Lectura Tacna.
- Claudio Briceño Mansilla: La lectura sobre ruedas. Recorriendo los Rincones de Atacama
- César Castro Aliaga: Jorge Basadre Grohmann (1903-1980): Pensamiento y acción en cooperación bibliotecaria.

Otros desafíos y soluciones creativas fueron explorados. Las charlas cubrieron una amplia variedad de temas, desde cómo mejorar la descentralización de servicios bibliotecarios hasta el crucial papel que desempeñan las bibliotecas en la consecución de los objetivos de la Agenda 2030. También, el desarrollo de la profesión bibliotecaria fue materia de discusión.

Proyecciones y el Futuro

La anticipación del II Encuentro Bibliotecario Interamericano en Cochabamba, Bolivia simboliza una oportunidad para ampliar la colaboración y el impacto de los bibliotecarios en el desarrollo social y económico. Estos eventos son clave para crear una red

access to knowledge. Thus, it is expected to strengthen innovation and education, positioning libraries as nerve centers of the community and learning. Lázaro (2023).

The perspective and critical eye of the illustrious Jorge Basadre Grohmann (1903-1980) leads us to remember that he began to understand the complex, historical relationships between Perú, Bolivia and Chile; among the anecdotes of this versatile character as well as a librarian, we remember according to his memoirs, that he tried to enter the reading room of the National Library of Perú, but was denied under the slogan that children were not allowed. For this reason, when he was Director of the BNP, in addition to his magnificent work of reconstruction and modernization of the library, one of his first tasks was to found the Children's Room. Today the Basadre message is valid, quoting our speaker César Castro Aliaga regarding regionalism and library cooperation, transcending our geographical borders that still divide our towns.

Literary Picnic and Closing

Talavera (2023) recounts her experience as a member of the IFLA Latin America and Caribbean Regional Division and participant in various commissions in her country, highlighting her participation in numerous international conferences and meetings between colleagues. However, she affirms that this was the first event in which she experienced a “hands-on” activity. It specifically refers to the “Picnic Literario”, the day of storytelling, puppets and gift-giving for local children, held on the last day of the symposium. She describes this experience as incredible and praiseworthy, noting that it was made possible thanks to donations, with major support from Lectorum Publications and other sponsors.

Her impression seeks to maintain the essence of the original message, while organizing the information in a way that highlights the key points: the uniqueness of the author's practical experience at this event, the nature of the activity, and recognition of the sponsors who made it possible.

de bibliotecarios comprometidos, potenciando las bibliotecas como pilares del progreso y la equidad en el acceso al conocimiento. Así, se espera fortalecer la innovación y la educación, posicionando a las bibliotecas como centros neurálgicos de la comunidad y el aprendizaje. Lázaro (2023).

La perspectiva y ojo crítico del ilustre Jorge Basadre Grohmann (1903-1980) _ nos lleva a recordar que él empezó a entender las relaciones complejas, históricas entre Perú, Bolivia y Chile; dentro de las anécdotas de este polifacético personaje además de bibliotecario, recordamos: según sus memorias, que trató de ingresar a la sala de lectura de la Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, pero se lo negaron bajo la consigna de que no se permitían niños. Por eso, cuando fue Director de la BNP, además de su magnífica labor de reconstrucción y tecnificación de la biblioteca, una de sus primeras labores fue fundar la Sala de Niños. Hoy cobra vigencia el mensaje Basadre, citando a nuestro ponente César Castro Aliaga con respecto al regionalismo y cooperación bibliotecaria, trascendiendo nuestras fronteras geográficas que aún dividen nuestros pueblos.

Picnic Literario y Cierre

Talavera (2023) relata su experiencia como miembro de IFLA America Latina y la División Regional del Caribe, y participante en diversas comisiones en su país, destacando su participación en numerosos congresos internacionales y encuentros entre colegas. Sin embargo, ella afirma que este fue el primer evento en el que experimentó una actividad “práctica”. Se refiere específicamente al “Picnic Literario” la jornada de cuentacuentos, títeres y entrega de regalos para los niños de la localidad, realizada el último día del Simposio. Describe esta experiencia como increíble y loable, señalando que fue posible gracias a las donaciones, con el apoyo mayor de Lectorum P otros patrocinadores.

Esta versión busca mantener la esencia del mensaje original, al tiempo que organiza la información de manera que se destaquen los puntos claves: la singularidad de la experiencia práctica del autor en este evento, la naturaleza de la actividad y el reconocimiento a los patrocinadores que lo hicieron posible.

Literary Picnic Activity and Closing of the 1st Inter-American Library Meeting on Information and Literacy.



Conclusion

The 1st Meeting not only served as a space for the exchange of knowledge and experiences, but also reaffirmed the vital importance of libraries and information professionals in fostering a more informed, educated and connected society. Inter-American collaboration emerges as a fundamental pillar to face the challenges of the future, uniting voices for universal access to information and culture.

The challenges strengthen the need that we have to work together. We need to promote the library profession in the university academy, improve the infrastructure of library facilities, develop lending or circulating collections, address the lack of government or municipal budgets that support maintenance, dissemination, fees, etc. in favor of our libraries.

It is also gratifying to mention that decentralization from the capital city Lima, has helped the work in provinces such as Tarata in Tacna. Gómez (2023). Another positive aspect is the formation and interest of reading clubs that are formed by a common interest: reading and access to resources. This enables adults, young people, teenagers and children to meet periodically to learn, play, create and imagine wonderful worlds around books, always looking for different spaces, inviting new members and creating solid bonds. Liendo (2023).

Sponsors

None of these important results would have been possible without the generous collaboration of our sponsors:

American Library Association (ALA); REFORMA: National Association to Promote Library and Information Services for Latinos and Spanish Speakers; Bolivian Information Society; SALALM - Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials; REFORMA – Northeast Chapter, and LECTORUM Publications

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Photography: Lázaro Roly. Tacna, Peru 2023.

Conclusión

El Primer Encuentro no sólo sirvió como un espacio para el intercambio de conocimientos y experiencias, sino que también reafirmó la importancia vital de las bibliotecas y los profesionales de la información en el fomento de una sociedad más informada, educada y conectada. La colaboración interamericana emerge como un pilar fundamental para enfrentar los desafíos del futuro, uniendo voces por el acceso universal a la información y la cultura.

Los desafíos establecen la necesidad trabajar conjuntamente. Necesitamos promover el impulso en la academia universitaria de la profesión bibliotecaria, mejorar la infraestructura de los recintos bibliotecarios, desarrollar colecciones prestantes o circulantes, señalar carencia de presupuestos gubernamentales que ayuden al soporte, mantenimiento, difusión, honorarios, etc en pro de nuestras bibliotecas.

Es gratificante también mencionar, que se ven resultados de Descentralización de la ciudad Capital, Lima ha ayudado al trabajo en provincias como Tarata, en Tacna. Tania Gómez (2023). Otro aspecto positivo es la formación e interés de Clubes de lectores que se forman por un interés en común; la lectura. Así es como adultos, jóvenes, adolescentes y niños se reúnen periódicamente para aprender, jugar, crear e imaginar mundos maravillosos en torno a los libros, buscando espacios diferentes, invitando a nuevos integrantes y creando vínculos sólidos. Liendo (2023).

Patrocinadores

Ninguno de estos importantes resultados habría sido posible sin la generosa colaboración de nuestros patrocinadores:

Asociación Americana de Bibliotecas (ALA); REFORMA: Asociación Nacional para Promover los Servicios Bibliotecarios y de Información para los Latinos y los Hispanohablante; Sociedad Boliviana de Información; SALALM - Seminario sobre la Adquisición de Materiales Bibliotecarios Latinoamericanos; REFORMA – Capítulo del Noreste y LECTORUM Publications

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Fotografía: Lázaro Roly. Tacna, Perú 2023.

IRRT FINANCIAL UPDATE

Érica Saito

As IRRT Secretary and Treasurer, I would like to provide a brief financial update on IRRT revenues. As of November 2023, IRRT reserves were US\$64,312.00. This figure represents a balance after accounting for various expenses and revenue sources.

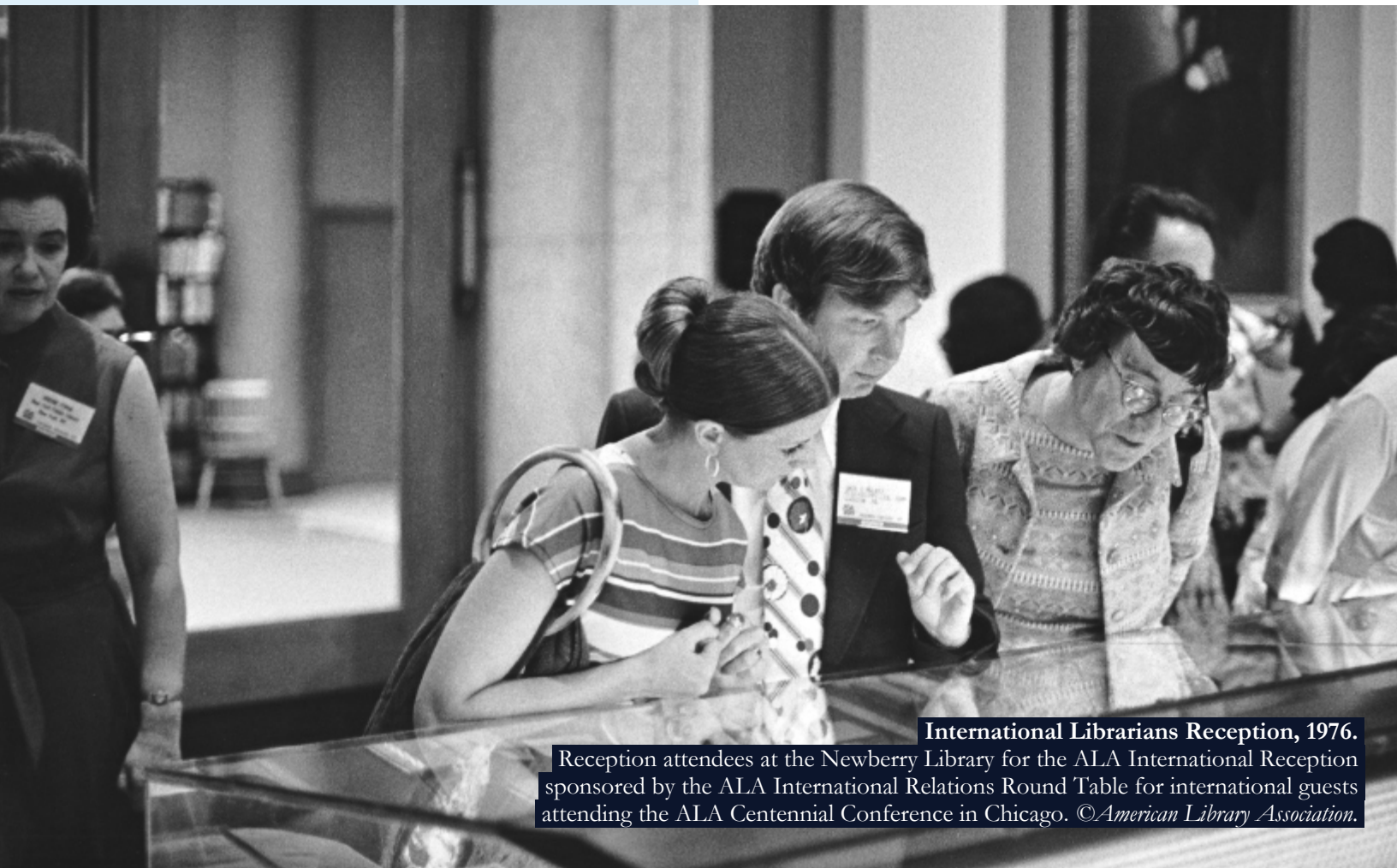
IRRT's biggest revenue is its membership from the paying members and subscriptions. Membership fees are vital for IRRT, as they provide the financial backbone for IRRT's activities and services offered to its members. The revenue generated from membership dues helps fund free memberships for librarians outside of the U.S., and the various costs associated with the IRRT's operating expenses, including the aforementioned events, awards, webinars, and supplies. Additional revenue is generated through registration fees of its annual preconference held during ALA's Annual Conference.

On average, annual expenses, which amount to US\$9,750.00, are dedicated to meal-related events, including the IRRT pre-conference, International

Librarians Orientation, the International Visitors' Lounge, and other conference-related expenses. We were able to make up the difference in income and expenses through some registrations for both the preconference and the reception. These additional registrations had contributed significantly to balancing our financial accounts and ensuring IRRT has healthy finances. Additionally, the IRRT has invested in US\$1,000.00 sponsoring an Emerging Leader who is currently actively engaged in an IRRT project focusing on membership; this individual is set to showcase the outcomes of their group project at the ALA Annual Conference and share project outcomes in an article in International Leads.

The endowment established for the 60th Anniversary is also keeping up with projections and is able to fund the Mission Enhancement Grant awarded each year.

IRRT is deeply grateful to its 1,293 current members for their unwavering support, which empowers our mission on fostering librarians' interests in international library relations.



International Librarians Reception, 1976.

Reception attendees at the Newberry Library for the ALA International Reception sponsored by the ALA International Relations Round Table for international guests attending the ALA Centennial Conference in Chicago. ©American Library Association.

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EDITORIAL

IRRT is celebrating its 75th anniversary!

As the Round Table celebrates decades of international librarianship, we've brought together a history of IRRT, along with photos from the archive. Long-time member and friend of IRRT, Fred Gitner, shares his perspectives. We learn about trends and challenges for Latin American libraries. We meet four of IRRT's Emerging Leaders and find out about their interests. And finally we provide the IRRT financial update. Enjoy and happy reading!

The Editors



ABOUT INTERNATIONAL LEADS

International Leads (ISSN 0892-4546) is published quarterly by the International Relations Round Table of the American Library Association in March, June, September, and December. IL is indexed by Library Literature and Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) and ProQuest. The IRRT mailing address is: International Relations Office, American Library Association, 225 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601.

MESSAGE FROM THE IRRT CHAIR

Mark Mattson

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In the last Chair's Column, I was able to announce the exciting news that the committee restructuring plan had been approved and is moving forward. With this column I am thrilled to be able to announce that the IRRT Executive Committee has officially voted to approve the revised IRRT Bylaws (Rules) Draft and it will be included on the Spring ballot for membership voting! The draft conforms to the standardization template that was created by the Round Table Coordinating Assembly, with IRRT representation, and it will also bring the language of the Rules up to date with how we currently operate. Approval of the new Rules requires a vote of the members and I would ask that you make sure to submit your vote on the upcoming ALA elections ballot.

At the end of January, I held an informal online presentation of the "Bylaws to Rules" process and changes. We had been planning to record that meeting, but unfortunately were unable to do so due to technical issues. I will be recording a new presentation and we will send out that recording link to the IRRT members prior to the ballot distribution so that everyone understands why we are proposing new Rules, the process that we followed, and what the implications are for the round table should the new Rules be adopted. Additionally, both the current Bylaws and the new Rules draft will be available for members to review. If you have any questions or concerns about the draft or the process, please do not hesitate to contact me at mam1196@psu.edu.

Along with the foundational changes that the IRRT Executive Committee has worked to plan and implement, we are also now preparing for a revision of the IRRT Officer's Manual to reflect the updated committee structures, new Rules, and the realities of working throughout the year in an online meeting environment. We have also been informed of new timelines for an ALA website redesign and will be looking to work with the organization and our IRRT Website Editors to update and clean up

our webpages in coordination with the overall redesign. These two projects are also major initiatives and are projected to be ongoing into the next ALA term as well.

In addition to the work of the Executive Committee, IRRT has been busy with other fantastic work. Our committees have been hard at work producing or planning compelling programming, initiatives, and services. A couple of examples that I would like to point out are several informative webinars (including a webinar in Spanish on the benefits of attending the ALA Annual Conference), the launch of a new membership outreach campaign driven by our Membership Committee, and an offering of networking programs focused on international collaboration that were (or will soon be) deployed by the Sister Libraries Committee and the International Connections Committee. The Emerging Leaders group has also begun their work on their IRRT project and we are looking forward to seeing the results of their collaboration in the next several months. Thank you all for your hard work to make IRRT impactful!

Speaking of impactful programming, we are coming to the time of the year when folks begin planning for ALA Annual and our conference-oriented committees are working to put together some great programs for San Diego! To help you plan out your travel, I would like to provide you with the IRRT programming as it currently stands: IRRT will be holding a preconference program and International Librarian Orientation on Friday; the IRRT All Committee Meeting will be on Saturday morning; the IRRT Chair's Program, the Global Solutions Poster Session, and the IRRT Executive Committee meeting will all be on Sunday; and then we will be concluding the conference with the Leaning International Program on Monday with the International Reception Monday evening. Registration for the ALA Annual Conference opens on Tuesday, February 20th and you can also register at that time for the IRRT Preconference and International Librarians Reception to secure tickets. Also, if you need letters of invitation for visa purposes, you can get in touch with the ALA International Relations Office.

In closing, I would just like to, once again, thank you all for the great work of IRRT this year! There is a lot going on within our Round Table at this time of the year, so please reach out if you have any questions, concerns, or needs!

MESSAGE FROM THE IRRT CHAIR-ELECT

Carol Brey

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Be Part of IRRT!

I have been a member of ALA for over 40 years now - I started when I was quite young :) - and often reflect on how ALA membership has enriched my life. Being part of ALA – and IRRT – is what you make of it, and I learned early on that being involved in ALA and its many units made my experience much more valuable – even giving me the opportunity to serve as ALA President in 2004-2005. That is also why I chose to step up and become Vice Chair/Chair-Elect of IRRT, so I could work with and help foster libraries and librarians from around the world. I know our IRRT members join me in our desire to strengthen the global library network.



If you are looking for a way to become more involved in ALA, and specifically IRRT, I urge you to consider one of the many Committee positions we have available starting at the end of this year's Annual Conference. Following IRRT's recent reorganization, we have streamlined the number of Committees and there are many exciting opportunities to serve! Examples of Committees seeking members and Co-Chairs include: Nominating Committee, IRRT Chair's Program Committee, the Endowment and Fundraising Committee, and the Webinar Committee. There are several other IRRT Committees, so please take a look at the reorganization information here to learn more. A formal call for volunteers to serve on IRRT Committees will be going out soon; the nominations form is available at this link.

Involvement in IRRT, and ALA, not only strengthens your individual professional resume and experience, but fortifies our national and international library networks as well. I invite you to join me in this journey to support libraries and librarians worldwide!



International Librarians Reception, 1995.
 Contact sheet of the ALA International Reception hosted by the IRRT at Loyola University during the 1995 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago.
 ©American Library Association.

IRRT @75 In the Archives

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The American Library Association Archives is pleased to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the International Relations Round Table and now is a time to reflect on its beginnings. We all know a simplified history of its founding, in 1949, a petition was brought to ALA Council during the Midwinter Meeting to form the Round Table on Library Service Abroad. The petition was approved and thus officially began what was later known as the International Relations Round Table. However, IRRT's origins can be traced to a year earlier in 1948 to the (confusingly named) International Relations Round Table on Library Service Abroad, a conference held at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Also called the Williamstown Conference, its resounding success laid the foundation for IRRT.

Origins in Williamstown

In February 1948, the ALA International Relations Office (IRO) sent out a questionnaire to librarians on its Foreign Library Service Roster. The last question asked, "Would you be willing to attend, at your own expense, a 'guinea pig' session, devoted to the international aspects of library work ...?"¹ 100 librarians affirmed their unreserved interest in the "guinea pig" session, while others noted their interest dependent upon funding.² With a strong response to the question, Helen Wessells, associate director of IRO, started planning.

The intent for the "guinea pig" session was to utilize seminar methods to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of working abroad and how to prepare librarians to work overseas. Along with interested librarians, a group of resource people would attend to speak and help facilitate discussion, composed of

Helen Wessells, 1959.



Photos on this page from the International Relations Round Table on Library Service Abroad, June 1948, held at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts.



government representatives, librarians with international experience, and area and subject specialists. The outline of the program focused on four areas: library work from an international viewpoint, area studies, interpreting the United States, and diplomatic relationships.³

Pulling together the ambitious event was not an easy task. With hopes of hosting the session after the ALA Annual Conference in Atlantic City that June, Wessells only had a few months to plan. At the start of March, Wessells had no venue, funding, nor approval from the ALA Executive Board. However, everything started to come together by the following month. Williams College librarian, Wyllis E. Wright, confirmed the college's ability to host the event, lodging was secured at the Williams Inn, and the Executive Board gave its approval, telling Wessells to



write a proposal to the Carnegie Corporation for funding. While the grant wasn't confirmed until May, the Carnegie Corporation quickly signaled its interest by deeming the session "a project deserving further, and probably favorable, consideration."⁴

Wessells desired a relatively small group of attendees to facilitate free discussions, so prospective participants had to submit a letter of interest to the IRO to be selected to attend. Those who did participate were provided with thorough information to prepare themselves. The IRO gave out train and flight schedules, room rates at the maximum of \$4 a night (for the privilege of a semi-private bathroom), and the warning that the food at the inn was "excellent, but you can prepare to put on some weight."⁵

What came together was a weeklong conference from June 21 to June 28 with over fifty librarians, ALA staff, specialists, educators, and government representatives in attendance. The schedule was packed with sessions on language and culture, book selection, impacts on communities and people, and services to children and youth, along with documentaries and talks that extended into the evening. The round table was so productive that it had its own daily bulletin for attendees, recapping the day's discussions, events, announcements, and even a "Social Note" with notices for a garden party with Wyllis Wright and a cocktail party hosted by the Williams College president.

The last day of the conference was reserved for self-reflection of the program. What came out of the discussion was the intent to form an ALA round table with the purpose "to discuss all aspects of library service abroad."⁶ In this session, the participants also informally elected three officers for the proposed

round table, Wessells as chair, Marie Hurley as vice-chair, and Katharine Shorey as secretary-treasurer.⁷ These officers were also charged with starting the process of formalizing the round table in ALA.

The Williamstown Conference was well received. Enthusiastic feedback, letters, reports, and writeups were produced about the success of the program, its collegial atmosphere, and Wessells' leadership. One attendee called it the "most memorable weeks of my life." Wessells was surprised by the overwhelming response, writing that "It is surprising how the fame of Williamstown marches on. People ... have heard about it and have been more than vocal in expressing their interest ..."⁸

A report on the conference noted that, "The Williamstown Round Table is over but there is little doubt that the reverberations will echo for some time."⁹ With seventy-five years of hindsight, we can safely assess this as an apt evaluation. Through the leadership of Helen Wessells and participation of enthusiastic and internationally minded librarians, came the start of the International Relations Round Table.

IRRT in the Archives

All the sources utilized in the overview of the Williamstown Conference came from the American Library Association Archives at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Correspondence, proposals, reports, financial records, schedules, programs, publications, and photographs held within the collection build a picture of the event over seventy-five years later.

As the official repository of ALA, the Archives retains the institutional memory of the association, including its round tables. Currently, the Archives holds five



Photos on this page from the International Relations Round Table Hospitality Booth, 1959.



Photos on this page from the International Librarians Reception, 1976.



cubic feet of physical materials from IRRT, consisting of meeting minutes, correspondence, reports, event files, photographs, and publications. The materials are cataloged into finding aids and accessible in the Archives database, [available here](#). An increasing number of materials are also made available online. Visit [IRRT's community](#) within the ALA Institutional Repository to view over 200 digital items.

IRRT's history can also be found throughout the ALA Archives collection. Early reports of the round table were published in ALA conference proceedings and the *ALA Bulletin*. Photographs of IRRT events and members are within collections from *American Libraries*. Files on IRRT, along with the planning materials for the Williamstown Conference, are within the International Relations Office archives. If you cannot find what you are looking for, archives staff are available to assist in research and copy requests.

Contribute to the Story

While archives help us remember the past, they're also about the future. Continue IRRT's story within our collection by donating materials. The ALA Archives collects the official records of the ALA, along with its publications, members' papers, and records on the history of librarianship. This includes physical and

INTERNATIONAL LEADS

International Librarians Reception, 1996.



digital materials such as reports, correspondence, bylaws, minute meetings and agendas, photographs, posters, newsletters, audiovisual recordings, scrapbooks, speeches, and more!

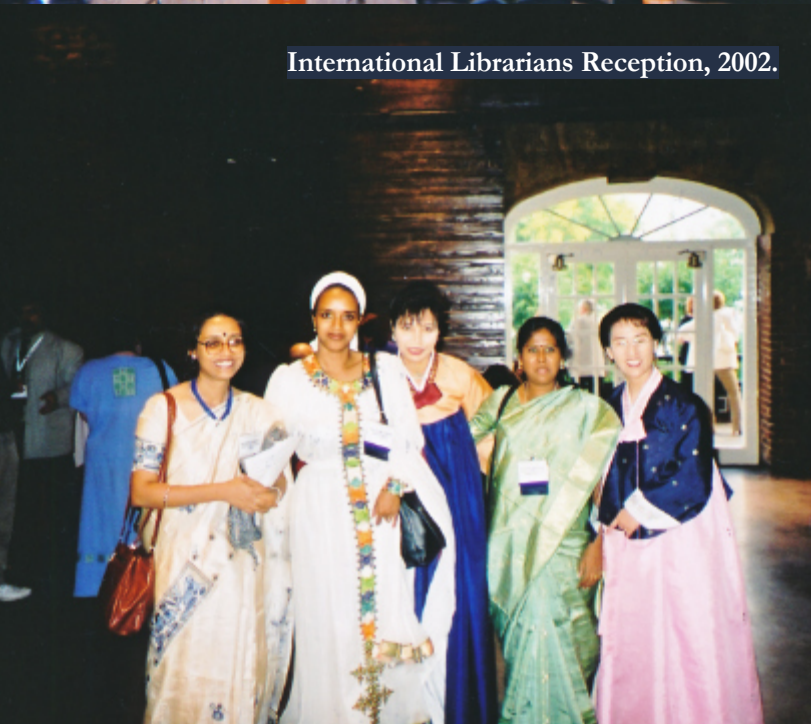
The Archives serves a diverse pool of researchers, ranging from ALA staff and members, scholars, professors, teachers, librarians, students of all levels, and the public. The Archives also has an international reach, in the past three years Archives staff has helped researchers from Canada, China, France, Italy, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. If the records of IRRT are not at the Archives, then researchers cannot access them. ALA staff and members also heavily utilize the Archives, often accessing files on policy changes, the history of awards and campaigns, speeches, recordings, and photographs of members and staff.

If you have questions about donating, accessing materials, or would like to schedule a visit, please contact us at ala-archives@library.illinois.edu or visit our website at <https://www.library.illinois.edu/ala/>. The Archives works closely with ALA staff and members and provides research and copies in support of the work and research of ALA units. Reach out to us for your next ALA unit project!

Marian Hekell and Sigrún Klara Hannesdóttir, June 1999.



International Librarians Reception, 2002.



¹International Relations Office questionnaire, February 16, 1948, series 7/1/6, Box 7, Folder: Foreign Library Service Round Table – Orientation Program, 1948, American Library Association Archives.
²Helen Wessells to Robert Lester, April 13, 1948, series 7/1/6, Box 7, Folder: Foreign Library Service Round Table – Orientation Program, 1948.

³“International Relations Round Table on Library Service Abroad,” May 6, 1948, series 7/1/6, Box 7, Folder: Foreign Library Service Round Table – Orientation Program, 1948.

⁴Robert Lester to Wessells, April 26, 1948, series 7/1/6, Box 7, Folder: Foreign Library Service Round Table – Orientation Program, 1948.

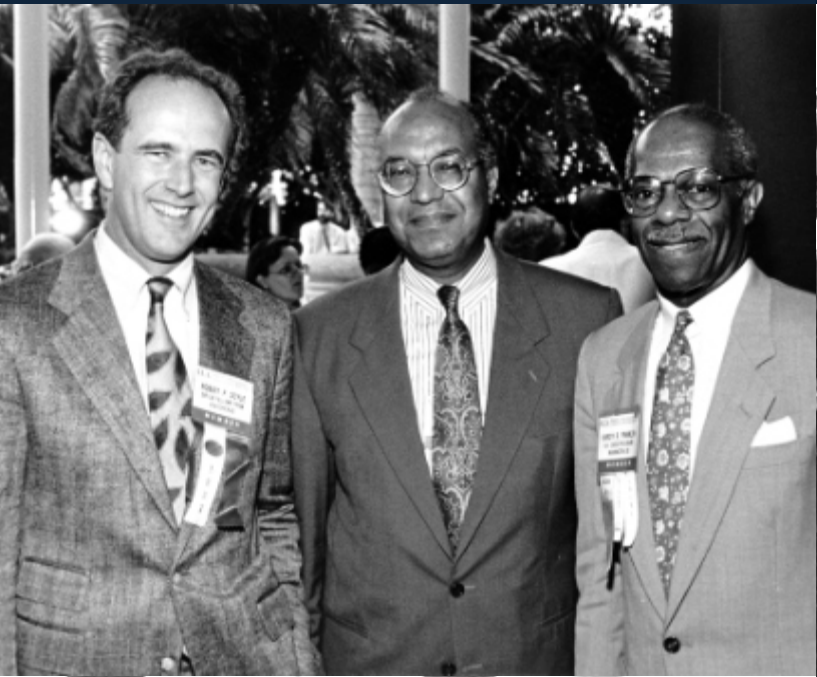
⁵Wessells, “International Relations Round Table on Library Service Abroad,” May 24, 1948, series 45/1/6, Box 6, Folder: International Relations Round Table on Library Service Abroad, 1948.

⁶Daily Bulletin, June 28, 1948, series 45/1/6, Box 6, Folder: International Relations Round Table on Library Service Abroad, 1948.

⁷Tbid.

⁸Wessells to Andy G. Wilkison, July 30, 1948, series 7/1/6, Box 7, Folder: Foreign Library Service Round Table, 1948.

⁹Wessells, “Informal Report to the International Relations Board on the International Relations Round Table on Library Service Abroad,” July 12, 1948, series 7/1/6, Box 7, Folder: Foreign Library Service Round Table, 1948.



Photos on this page from the International Visitors Reception, 1994.



IRRT

Welcomes four 2024 ALA Emerging Leaders (EL) program recipients



Erica Saito and Nafiz Zaman Shuva

At the ALA Lib Learn X in January 2024, IRRT welcomed four recipients of ALA Emerging Leaders (EL) program. The ELP managed by the ALA Office for Human Resource Development and Recruitment (HRDR) selected 50 Emerging Leaders (EL) to participate in the Emerging Leader Program of ALA (see, <https://www.ala.org/news/member-news/2023/11/ala-announces-2024-class-emerging-leaders> for more information about ELP). Of 50 Emerging Leaders, IRRT welcomed four ELs with diverse experience and backgrounds to work on the IRRT project entitled “Expanding IRRT Membership Across Continents: Engaging New Members for Global Inclusivity” proposed by IRRT Secretary and Treasurer, Erica Saito. The four member group (Group F) of EL is composed of Camille Abdeljawad, Kellyanne Healey, Ezra Letson, and Kizuwanda Raines.

The IRRT operates as a crucial nexus within the ALA, dedicated to cultivating interest in global library issues and librarianship while facilitating international activities and connections. As libraries evolve into increasingly globalized institutions, the importance of fostering cross-cultural understanding and collaboration among library professionals cannot be overstated. The project objective is the development and implementation of membership activities designed to attract new members from diverse continents. By actively engaging with professionals from various regions, the committee aims to create a more inclusive and representative environment within the ALA. The group working with the IRRT project will help IRRT better understand its membership strength, identify gaps in membership and work on designing a survey that would assess the needs of current and past IRRT members. As IRRT is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2024, IRRT board and committees are working on comprehensively understanding its membership demographics and members’ needs to better support IRRT members across continents, in addition to IRRT’s other work and activities. Part of the EL program, Camille Abdeljawad, Kellyanne Healey, Ezra Letson, and Kizuwanda Raines will present a poster at the ALA Annual and present a report to IRRT by June 2024. Nafiz Shuva of Queens College, City University of New York and IRRT Membership Committee Chair, and Erica Saito of World Bank and IRRT Secretary and Treasurer, are serving as member guides, offering support and expertise throughout the project.



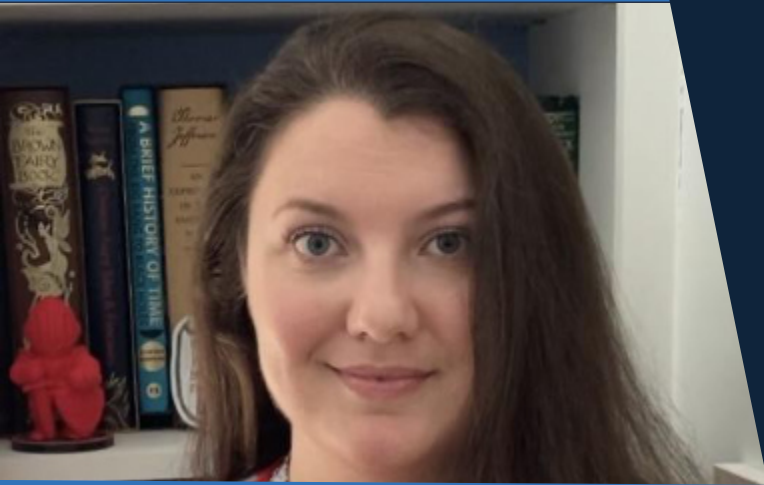
Camille Abdeljawad

Camille Abdeljawad (she/her) is an Assistant Professor of Library Instruction & Outreach and the First Year Experience Coordinator at Park University in Parkville, Missouri. She earned her Master of Library Science degree from Emporia State University. Camille's research interests include investigating student perception of source authority and misinformation. In her four years at Park, she has been an advocate for teaching information literacy skills to a diverse student population, including distance and contemporary students.



Kellyanne Healey

Kellyanne Healey (she/her) is a Children's Librarian at the Lake Hiawatha Branch of the Parsippany Library in New Jersey. She is a three-time Rutgers University alumna, graduating in 2023 with her Master's of Information (Library & Information Science). She's passionate about early literacy development, multilingual learning, and developing her library's collection to include international youth literature and resources for its diverse population, especially for new immigrant families.



Ezra Letson

Ezra Letson (he/him) is the Young Adult Library Associate at the New Hanover County Public Library: Pine Valley branch in Wilmington, North Carolina, where he coordinates programming for teens and young adults. He earned his Master of Library and Information Science degree from Appalachian State University, and is passionate about facilitating library experiences for teens that allow them to build self-esteem, practice self-expression, and explore the diverse and exciting possibilities of their futures.



Kizuwanda Raines

Kizuwanda Raines is the Teen Library Services Associate at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh in the Office of Programmatic Services. She manages the creation, upkeep, and circulation of teen and adult program kits. Previously the inaugural Teen Coordinator at the Sharpsburg Community Library, she cultivated a diverse teen library community. Her career focus is promoting librarianship and diversifying the field because diverse staff reflects the communities they serve and prioritizes culturally inclusive and accessible collections and programs.



FRED GITNER

2024 “I LOVE MY LIBRARIAN” AWARD WINNER
AND LONG-STANDING ALA IRRT MEMBER



Gloria Creed-Dikeogu

Interviewing Fred Gitner, a winner of the 2024, “I Love My Librarian Award” was both an eye-opening and a learning experience. Fred works at Queens Public Library (QPL) in New York where he has been with the New Americans Program since 1996, currently serving as Assistant Director of New Initiatives and Partnership Liaison. His program is center stage because New York City has received approximately 160,000 migrants since spring 2022. Texas alone has bussed more than 33,600 migrants to New York City since August 2022 (GOP Gov).

As a result, Queens Public Library’s (QPL’s) New Americans Program, under Gitner’s leadership, provides daily services to migrants and asylum-seekers through access to immigration materials in different languages, legal services and library resources in multiple languages, attempting to improve this information exchange for immigrants. Gitner has an A.B in Modern Languages from Hamilton College, NY, an MA in French from Middlebury College, VT, and an MLS from Rutgers University. In his current role at QPL, Fred serves as a mentor to aspiring librarians interested in work with immigrants; and coordinates QPL’s international partnerships program which includes the New American Corners added to each QPL branch library, developed to facilitate immigration knowledge exchange.

Gitner has been an active member of ALA IRRT and IFLA. He served as co-chair of the Europe Subcommittee of ALA’s International Relations Committee, was a member of the Standing Committee of the Section on Services to Multicultural Populations of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) from 2009-2017, and he serves on the Board of the New York Library Association’s Ethnic Services Round Table, where he is treasurer, and a Past-President. He also serves as Treasurer for the American Society of the French Academic Palms (ASFAP) and the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) - NY Metropolitan Chapter. Gitner has published several scholarly articles about library services to multicultural populations. He is a co-editor of “Bridging Cultures: Ethnic Services in the Libraries of New York State” (2001) and “Connecting Cultures: Ethnic Services in the Libraries of New York State” (2013) published by the New York Library Association.

Gitner further explains why he is an active member in ALA IRRT:

Gloria: You are an active IRRT member, can you tell me more about your IRRT connections?

Fred: I’m not sure exactly when I joined IRRT, but over the years I’ve been chair of two different committees. I was Chair of the Chair’s Program Committee. And I was also Chair of the International Sister Libraries Committee. After that, I was still a member, but I was no longer as much involved in IRRT committees. I later became the co-chair of the Europe Subcommittee of the International Relations Committee for quite a number of years with a colleague from a university library. Part of the reason for getting involved in the International Relations area was that at the Queens Public Library where I work, my duties include International Relations for the library. Over the years we’ve had memorandums of understanding, (MOUs) with different libraries abroad. Some started before I became involved in this area.

We’ve had agreements with the Shanghai Library, the Public Information Library at the Pompidou Center in Paris... I was fortunate through that agreement to spend a month at the library there as an intern and they sent someone to our library. That was quite a number of years ago...We have another active partnership with the National Library of Korea and also more recently, the Taipei Public Library. Those I think are the main ones that we’re active with right now. But we also do receive library school students from different countries from time to time. We had worked for a number of years with the University of the West Indies at Mona in the country of Jamaica. We had students coming from there. We’ve had students in the past from the University of Barcelona. And we’ve had on an irregular basis, but we still continue to have students from the National Graduate School of Library and Information Science outside of Lyon in France. ALA’s International Relations Office contacts us every so often to ask if we can host a visiting librarian from another country for sometimes just a couple of days or a week or even two weeks. This past year, we had a librarian from Abu Dhabi come to us. Why Queens? Because it’s such an international borough, or county, (a borough and county are the same thing in New York City). We have about 2.4 million people in Queens and about 47% of our population is foreign born and over 50% speak a language other than English at home. There are about 200 languages spoken in Queens. We don’t have collections in all 200 languages at the library. We probably have books in about 50, collecting maybe between 25 and 30 on a regular basis, I’d say.