

International Relations Committee Report to Council

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Submitted by Sha Li Zhang, Chair

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International Librarians at the Midwinter Meeting

At the beginning of the Midwinter Meeting, IRRT organized a welcome reception for the international librarians and donors who helped raised the first endowment fund for the round table. It was an opportunity for our international visitors to meet and network with U.S. librarians. This year, 95 international librarians are at the Midwinter Meeting. The Conference site in Dallas provides them with a unique Texas experience.

Carrying out the ALA 2015 International Strategic Plan

IRC continued its work on developing and planning international activities with the goals and objectives in the 2015 International Strategic Plan. ALA units, offices, and ethnic caucuses were invited to contribute action plans to the international goals and objectives. These units, offices, and affiliates will also take responsibilities to help carry out the planned activities.

Prepare international programs for the 2012 Annual Conference

IRC and its regional subcommittees, IRRT, and some other ALA units are planning and preparing international programs at the ALA 2012 Annual Conference to be held in Anaheim, California, in June 2012. Both U.S. and international speakers were identified and will be invited to present various sessions on international topics. ALA conference attendees will have opportunities to learn and appreciate the international experience through these programs and events.

IFLA Updates at the Midwinter Meeting

Ms. Ingrid Parent, IFLA President, and Ms. Donna Sheeder, IFLA Treasurer, were at the Midwinter Meeting. Both attended several events and met with ALA members during the Midwinter Meeting. At the IFLA Updates Session held on Saturday, Ms. Parent shared with the ALA audience her IFLA presidential activities since taking office in August 2011 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Ms. Parent met librarians and spoke at the library conference in the countries where IFLA is less visible (e.g., Tunisia, Slovenia, and Barbados). With the IFLA presidential theme, Libraries – a force for change, five program priorities are undertaken during Ms. Parent's term: digital contents, international librarianship leadership development, outreach for advocacy and advancement of the profession, cultural heritage reconstruction, and multiculturalism.

Ms. Parent spoke highly on the contributions and support from ALA and its members on IFLA functions and activities. One hundred twenty-five ALA members are serving on IFLA committees. IFLA is also working on a new membership category (non-salaried group) to encourage individual membership. The Chinese American Librarians Association recently joined IFLA, becoming the newest national association member. 2012 IFLA Presidential Meeting will be held in Vancouver, Canada, in April 2012. Ms. Parent encourages more ALA members to participate in the meeting, with a theme on Indigenous Knowledge: Local Priorities, Global Contexts.

ALA participation in the IFLA Conference in San Juan

More than 400 ALA members participated in the 2011 IFLA Congress in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in August 2012, which was a great support to IFLA. Many ALA members also helped staff the ALA Booth, one of the most popular spots in the Conference exhibit halls. Many international librarians visited the ALA Booth and asked for information about ALA and its programs and services. The copies of the ALA publications and ALA Read posters were the sought-after items for international librarians to take home. Molly Raphael, ALA President, and Maureen Sullivan, ALA President-Elect, represented ALA at the Conference.

The 2012 IFLA Congress will be in Helsinki, Finland, in August 2012. IRO will assist ALA members' participation in the conference.

International Book Fairs

International Relations Office arranged and coordinated several book fairs for the ALA members:

Ten ALA members took a part at the Hong Kong Book Fair in July 2011. With increasing needs of Chinese language materials in U.S. communities, direct purchasing at the Book Fair helped make the materials available to users quickly.

The newest book fair was the America Reads Spanish Program in October 2011. The Program was collaborated between ALA and LIBER International Book Fair. Sixty-five ALA members were selected to participate in the Book Fair for purchasing Spanish-language materials.

In November 2011, more than 100 ALA members participated in the Guadalajara Book Fair. It was the 15th anniversary of the ALA-FIL Free Pass Program. U.S. librarians were able to select and purchase Spanish-language materials for their communities at the Book Fair. Jesus Lau, a longtime ALA member, was honored as “Librarian of the Year” at the annual event.

ALA signed a new agreement to continue the ALA-FIL Free Pass program through 2015.

ALA President’s International Engagements

ALA President Molly Raphael continued international outreach efforts. She gave a keynote address at the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa held in Wellington, New Zealand, in November 2011. She also spoke at “Empowering Voices” Workshop there. Ms. Raphael represented ALA at the Guadalajara Book Fair, and IFLA Congress as well. IRC would like to recognize and appreciate President Molly Raphael’s commitments and outreach efforts in representing ALA at the international events.

Relief fund donations

IRO has continued coordinating and receiving donations by ALA members for the Japan Library Relief Fund, Haiti Library Relief Fund, and Chile Library Relief Fund. Forty thousand dollars have been distributed to three projects in Haiti, and \$4,000 to Japan. A donation of \$2,000 will be sent to Chile shortly, along with over 900 cataloged books from REFORMA.

Campaign for the World’s Libraries

ALA organized another good program at IFLA in Puerto Rico that highlighted efforts in Argentina, Barbados, and Taiwan. Latvia is embarking on the second phase of its campaign in collaboration with its national UNESCO commission.

Reports from the ALA representatives

In fall 2011, ALA Executive Board approved the IRC’s recommendation that Winston Tabb serve a second term as the ALA Representative to the Board of Trustees of American Library in Paris (ALP). The Board of Trustees has responsibility for oversight and the setting of policy for the American Library in Paris, Inc. The ALA Representative and the Director of the Library serve as non-voting members of the Board. The Library serves nearly 2,500 members from more than 60 countries. The library’s budget is about one million Euros annually. Mr. Winston Tabb

provided a report to IRC at the Midwinter Meeting. This year, in partnership with the Library of Congress Center for the Book, ALP will participate for the first time in the Center's very popular "Letters about Literature" program as the first non-US participant. The Program has become popular with American students. Mr. Tabb has volunteered to serve on the judges' panel. The ALP Circulation Director, Ed Aguila, will attend the ALA 2012 Annual Conference in Anaheim. More information about ALP is at <http://www.americanlibraryinparis.org/>

In spring 2011, ALA Executive Board appointed Ms. Barbara Ford as the ALA Representative to the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO. The appointment was also confirmed by the U.S. National Commission, which serves as a federal advisory committee to the U.S. Government through the Department of State. The Commission supports worldwide humanitarian development and values by coordinating efforts and delivering expert advice on issues of education, science, communications, and culture. Ms. Ford started that role immediately after the appointment.

At the Midwinter Meeting, Ms. Ford reported she participated in the International Conference, "Preservation of Digital Information in the Information Society: Problems and Prospects," held in October 2011 in Moscow, Russia, with 150 participants from 37 countries.

Ms. Ford gave a paper on education about the preservation of digital information and included activities of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, Library of Congress, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, American Library Association, and University of Illinois. The final document from the Conference is "The Moscow Declaration on Digital Information Preservation," available at <http://ifapcom.ru/en> The document offers very useful information about the preservation of digital information and how UNESCO and the UNESCO National Commissions can assist in addressing the issue.

Nancy Gwinn, ALA Representative to the U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield, reported on the Committee's ongoing preservation work in Haiti. The Blue Shield has helped the Smithsonian with the Haiti Cultural Recovery Center (HCRC) and the training of Haitians, who are now carrying on the preservation work. Thousands of works of art and cultural artifacts have been conserved and re-housed. In early December, the Smithsonian held a program to thank the myriad volunteers who travelled to Haiti to conserve items and train staff.

The Blue Shield also continues to train U.S. military personnel to recognize, appreciate, and preserve cultural resources in any location in which they might be involved.

Preparation for the 2013 IFLA nomination through ALA units

This year, IRC and IRO will work with ALA units on IFLA nominations. U.S. librarians have served on 43 IFLA standing committees, which provide opportunities for them to connect, learn, and share experience with librarians from other countries.

Participate in the ALA Advocacy Coordinating Group

The IRC Chair has continued participating in the ALA's Coordinating Group's meetings and conference calls since the ALA Annual Conference in June 2011. She brought international perspectives to the Group's advocacy agendas.

Staff Thanks

IRC wants to express its appreciation to Mr. Michael Dowling, IRO Director, for his outstanding support and assistance to the Committee's tasks.