

# focus

## on International Library and Information Work

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## Editorial

It is a great honour to be editing this journal following in the footsteps of Stella Keenan, Ann Irving and (for the past 5 years) the stellar work of Roger Stringer who has taken the publication from strength to strength. My thanks to him for that achievement for which the Committee and the ILIG community are greatly indebted.

I am delighted that my first issue contains two articles from Russell Bowden in Sri Lanka about the REFSALA conference and council meeting, since I have a special association with that country and a particular school in Andragasaya which I visited in 2006 following the tsunami of 2004. Reading, the encouragement of reading and its value to society and to each of us as individuals is central to the articles from Ingrid Bon in the Netherlands and Hrafn Andres Hardarson and Margret Sigurgeirsdottir in Iceland. This topic is also reflected strongly in some reports included in the new column of "News from around the world". I would welcome contributions to this new column for future issues and am grateful to my IFLA colleagues for providing a range of interesting news pieces for this issue. In particular, they demonstrate an abundance of activity in public libraries around the world at a time when we are facing huge challenges to the continued existence of the public library system in the UK. I point you to the excellent Voices for the Library website if you need to read up about the onslaught which many local authorities are dealing with in the light of revenue budget reductions:

<http://www.voicesforthelibrary.org.uk/wordpress/>

To begin the first issue of 2011 though there is an upbeat article from Hosea Tokwe on the International Schools Conference in Gweru and a report on Brian Hall's (the new CILIP President) talk to the ILIG meeting in February. I hope that you find them interesting and look forward to receiving your feedback and any news on what is happening in your library service.

John Lake

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# Gweru Schools Celebrate International School Library Month

29th October 2010

A report by Hosea Tokwe\*

## Introduction

Despite Zimbabwe's 10 year economic crisis and massive neglect of the country's library sector, International School Library Month celebration was a resounding success. Hard work, enthusiasm and the love of books compensated for lack of resources of all kinds.

This event was celebrated on Friday 29 October 2010 at C.J.R. Primary school in Gweru. The idea to celebrate this event was spread to all the provinces by the Zimbabwe Library Association although there was no funding to support the celebration of this event.

The school library is seen as the heart of the school as it plays a crucial role in the teaching and learning process. In order for the school to carry out its full mandate, there should be a well equipped school library that should serve as the soul of the school. It is, however, significant to note that a number of schools in Zimbabwe do not have school libraries, and government has not given attention to urgently address the need to come up with a school library service that would be a watchdog for the efficient running of a school library in every school. In the city of Gweru there is only one public library built way back in 1956. It is a subscription library used by the general public, school leavers and secondary school students who utilise the facilities in preparation for examinations.

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*Gweru students and banner for ISLM parade*

## The Passion

My passion as a librarian to see school libraries flourish gave me the urge to organise and celebrate the International School Library Month in this small town of Gweru, the provincial capital of the Midlands Province, in Zimbabwe. Coming up with a programme was not easy, it was purely professional sacrifice and dedication. Among my list of stakeholders were, primary and high Schools, the Ministry of Education, Arts, Sports and Culture, the Midlands Regional Offices of Primary Education, Zimbabwe Library Association – Midlands Branch, school/teacher librarians and both school teachers and school heads.

To organise this event I met with the C.J.R. Primary School Head and she agreed to host the event. I then collaborated with the School Librarian at this school and he supported me in distributing invitations to various schools, inviting school heads, teacher librarians and at least 10 children per school.

## The Procession

On 29 October 2010, the International School Library Month procession got off to a

good start led by two high school students who held the banner on either side. That morning the weather was cloudy, and it was threatening to rain. In Zimbabwe the month of October is very hot, with jacaranda trees shedding off their purple flowers to the ground leaving a purple carpet on the tarmac. The procession began at ten in the morning according to the programme. At ten minutes after ten the International School Library Month procession began with a High School boy and girl taking the lead holding the Banner up high followed by colourful Drum Majorettes. The City of Gweru was brought to a standstill, the procession marched through the central business district. It was a joy to watch the procession through the city with the Banner bearing the words in bright red reading "International School Library Month" sending the message home.

On arrival at C.J.R. School Hall, all was set for the celebration. On stage, high up another banner hung with the theme: "One School One Library One Librarian" It was celebration time! As I stood on the podium, I felt great and triumphant, being rewarded for the hard work I had gone through, with close to two hundred pupils and students all their eyes fixed on me. Being Master of Ceremonies I briefly highlighted the purpose of the International School Library Month. The school teachers sat in attention taking



*Attendees at the opening ceremony*



*Hosea Tokwe as Master of Ceremonies*

note of every word. Indeed it dawned on me that school teachers really appreciate having libraries in their schools. I then called upon the Guest of Honour, the Deputy Head of C.J.R. School to present his speech.

#### **The Guest's Speech**

Not all schools have properly organised libraries. The highlight of the guest of honour focused on the need for schools to organise knowledge to support learning, pointing out that support for learning will support the curriculum. Obviously a library not well organised will not fulfil the needs of the school curriculum. Another emphasis was on lobbying. In order to have effective libraries in Zimbabwe, schools have to lobby government to make it acknowledge that the school library is useful in teaching. Another addition was to encourage school plans for library use to be put in place, meaning the library's written plan will serve the need of different classes and forms in the schools. School teachers nodded in agreement on the point made for the need to develop information acquisition skills so that pupils/students should learn to use the library on their own rather than waiting to be taught. Last and most important he urged all schools

to encourage pupils/students to read so that it becomes a way of life in schools and libraries. It has been noted in recent years that both Zimbabwean adults and children are shunning books thus slowly creeping into a dangerous culture of illiteracy.

#### **The Need for School Libraries and Books**

The local Chair of the Zimbabwe Library Association - Midlands Branch spoke of the need for schools to have libraries, set up library committees, and engage the School Development Committee and parents to work together. A short survey carried out, revealed that only a third of the schools in Gweru have libraries. Hence the local Zimbabwe Library Association - Midlands Branch proposed to write a report for Book Aid International – Bulawayo Distribution Office to make it known that both primary and secondary schools in the Midlands Province, (that is Gweru, Kwekwe and others) are in dire need of book donations. To present a true picture for schools in the Midlands Province, a survey will be first conducted to determine each schools' profile and their book needs.

#### **The Poems**

The audience had the opportunity to listen to a variety of poems from primary school pupils. Seven to eleven year olds performed good poems. Pupils from Mvuma Primary School 80km out of Gweru performed as a group singing a song based on the theme to the accompaniment of the piano from their male teacher. The High School students also provided joy, inspiration, self-actualisation and invaluable experience for the children. The platform enabled them to display their insight into the art of performance poetry. There was joy and excitement as all those

who performed, received gifts of books and bookmarks.

#### **Conclusion**

After the celebration of this event, it was recommended that other stakeholders like book publishers and writers should work together with librarians, for the inclusion of book displays and other events in the next International School Library Month event. A committee from the local Zimbabwe Library Association – Midlands Branch will meet early January and prioritise seeking support from International Librarians, Institutions, Charities and UN Organizations to give credibility to this kind of celebration. The Committee proposes to set up guidelines to appeal for help with the supply of books, magazines, newsletters, children's readers, library posters, charts and all sorts of pamphlets, the preparation of t-shirts, souvenirs, etc. For further information on other kinds of help being sought contact can be made by emailing the author of this article at [hoseat35@gmail.com](mailto:hoseat35@gmail.com).

This event has brought together teachers and librarians from different schools. It provided a learning experience and an opportunity to exchange ideas. Some schools have already made enquiries for assistance with help to revitalize their libraries in order to start on a high note next year. This I believe sets the ball rolling for all schools in the Midlands Province, Zimbabwe to overcome challenges and pursue interest in the effective development of the School Library at their school.

# From the Clouds of Mount Everest to the Surging Monsoon Waves of the Indian Ocean

A report on the Regional Federation of South Asian Library Associations  
[REFSALA] Council Meeting II by Russell Bowden\*

REFSALA (the Regional Federation of South Asian Library Associations) had been founded in Nagarkot, Nepal in September 2004 on a mountain top overlooked by Mt. Everest (if it could have seen REFSALA through the un-obligingly and solid banks of enveloping clouds). This, its second Council meeting, was held overlooking the sun-lit pounding breakers of a monsoon-driven Indian Ocean in Colombo on 6 October 2010. Its primary purpose was to re-invigorate a relatively newly-born regional organization of library associations.

Attendance was impressive - boding well for REFSALA's future honoured with the presence of Dr Ellen Tise, IFLA's President paying the very first visit of an IFLA President to Sri Lanka. Also in attendance were the Presidents (or representatives) of the library associations of the SAARC countries of Bangladesh (Dr Nazim Uddin), India (Dr Dharam Veer Singh), Maldives (Ms Aishath Shabana), Nepal (Prakash Thapa), Pakistan (Prof Malahat Sherwani) and Sri Lanka (Mr Upali Amarasiri and Mr Anton Nallathamby) and a founder-member of REFSALA (Prof Russell Bowden) with only a representative from Bhutan unable to be present. (It currently has not established a library association like Afghanistan which also is not yet a member of REFSALA.)

Welcoming the participants to what she believed was an extremely important meeting the IFLA President stressed the important role played by other regional forums of library

*\*Russell Bowden is a founding member and an Honorary Advisor to REFSALA.*



*The REFSALA Council meeting, Colombo, 6th October  
Seated front row: [left to right] Prof Russell Bowden (Hon  
Advisor), Prakash Thapa (Pres Nepal LA), Dr Ellen Tise  
(President IFLA), Upali Amarasiri (Pres Sri Lanka LA),  
Prof Malahat Sherwani (Pres Pakistan LA).*

*Standing back row: Dr Nazim Uddin (Council  
Bangladesh LA), Ms Aishath Shabana (Pres Maldives  
LA), Anton Nallathamby (Sri Lanka LA), Dr Dharam  
Veer Singh (Pres Indian LA).*

associations around the world hoping that REFSALA too would follow these examples and play a similar dual role. Firstly, by working as an umbrella organization, initiating regional projects, engaging in advocacy work, getting the attention of Unesco, IFLA and other international and regional fora, by establishing itself as a vibrant and active organization and secondly, by winning the confidence of SAARC and political authorities in the region through professional and inspired leadership. She said that she would also like to see it encouraging sub-sectors to initiate their own works, for instance by forming regional alliances amongst LIS educational institutions, national, parliamentary, research and special libraries and similar special interest groups in which situations REFSALA could act as a guide and mentor. Ellen summarized by emphasizing the numbers of avenues

available for such initiatives and the huge possibilities open to REFSALA at regional and international levels.

She then sought nominations for an Interim Chairman. Professor Russell Bowden's name was proposed and seconded as one of the 'Founding Fathers' of REFSALA way back in 2003 and 2004. On taking the Chair he outlined the significant tasks left over from the Nagarkot inauguration that required to be undertaken in this Colombo meeting - the first of which was to nominate and vote on the selection of a country to host REFSALA (as its Constitution required) given that Nepal's occupancy had ended. Sri Lanka was nominated and Russell called on the President of the Sri Lanka Library Association, Mr. Upali Amarasinghe to take the Chair.

Business conducted under his able chairmanship was to agree a roster of future countries to host REFSALA and consequently the library associations and their presidents as REFSALA's President - until 2025 given the difficulties associated with finances, geography and politics that might in the future endanger meetings at which handovers (as had just happened) should take place. Each would serve for a maximum period of three years. Other business conducted on which agreement was reached were future relations with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and with IFLA and particularly its Regional Standing Committee for Asia and Oceania (RSCAO). Membership subscriptions established in 2004 by the Council I meeting in

Nagarkot were noted, the need to open bank accounts as the Secretary-ship and Presidency moved from country to country and urgency to establish a website were agreed.

Although only two hours had been allocated for this significant meeting, in the two days of the Professional Programme being held to celebrate the 50th Anniversary Golden Jubilee of the establishment of the Sri Lanka Library Association, much work was accomplished in a friendly and cooperative atmosphere. Dr Tise offered the support of IFLA to get this new regional body well-established and active and to this end Russell Bowden was also unanimously elected Honorary Advisor to REFSALA to assist its Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer who were soon to be appointed by the SLLA's Council in accordance with the Constitution.

Given the uneven states of libraries' and information services' developments in the region and even within member-countries there is much that REFSALA will be able to do in the future to assist in redressing these. Ideas included sharing training and education activities, improvements to bibliographical services, extended inter-library cooperation, improvements to the management of the library associations and many more.

The meeting concluded after the customary photograph (see previous page) with plans to meet again for REFSALA Council Meeting III in either India or Pakistan in the first half of 2011.

# Sri Lanka Library Association 50th Anniversary Golden Jubilee International Conference, 7 – 8 October 2010

A report by Russell Bowden\*

This Report is in two parts reflecting the composition of the Golden Jubilee International Conference – coverage of the Inauguration (on the afternoon of 6th October) in front of an invited audience of SLLA members and its guests and (the second part) a report on the two day Professional Programme in which more than one hundred and thirty SLLA members paid to participate.

## Inauguration

The Inauguration was graced by the presence of the Prime Minister, the Honourable D.M. Jayaratne, and Honourable John Seneviratne, Minister of Public Administration and Home Affairs, and the President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Dr Ellen Tise - the first time that an IFLA President had visited Sri Lanka.

After the customary procession, with Kandyan dancers, into the hall of the Chief Guest and the Guests of Honour followed by the lighting of the ceremonial lamp and the playing of the National Anthem the SLLA's President, Mr. Upali Amarasiri, welcomed the Chief and honoured guests and the Presidents of library associations from South Asian countries - from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan who were also representing (along with Sri Lanka) the relatively newly-founded organization REFSALA – the Regional Federation of South Asian Library Associations. Thereafter Professor J Lankage presented to the Prime Minister the SLLA's 50th Anniversary 'Charter for the Future' in which is expressed the intention of the Association to support the Government's initiatives and programmes with library and information management



Front Row [left to right]: Mrs DID Andradi (Pres Elect); Prof Jayasiri Lankage (Past Pres); J Rathmayake (Vice-Pres); Dr Ellen Tise (President IFLA); Mr. Upali Amarasiri (President); Ms Pushpamala Perera (Gen Secretary); Prof Russell Bowden (Council Member); GR Padmasiri (Educ Officer) with members of SLLA Council.

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\*Russell Bowden is Convener of the SLLA International Conference Task Force

activities in the hope and expectation that the Government in its turn would provide support for the Sri Lanka Library Association's future activities. After addresses that followed by the Honourable Minister and the Prime Minister, IFLA's President presented the President of the SLLA with a plaque from IFLA to commemorate this Jubilee event. Thereafter, she presented awards to SLLA members who had served on the Council of the Ceylon Library Association in its early formative years, to SLLA Past Presidents, to a non-Lankan SLLA member in recognition of 'the outstanding contribution made to the LIS profession in Sri Lanka' and other members who also were recognized for their outstanding contributions. The Prime Minister presented the IFLA President with a beautifully-worked silver model of a Lankan elephant and thus brought to a close the proceedings of the International Conference's Inauguration.

### **Professional Programme**

The Professional Programme was graced by the presence of Dr Ellen Tise, the President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions [IFLA] and the Presidents (or representatives) of library associations of six of the seven SAARC countries that meet together as the Regional Federation of South Asian Library Associations (REFSALA). (*See a separate report on page 7 of this issue of Focus – ed.*)

This Programme consisted of twelve sessions comprising a Theme Paper accompanied by two supporting papers, respectively, of 30 minutes and 20 minutes each chaired by an eminent librarian – either a visiting REFSALA library association President or a Sri Lankan. The visitors, in addition to Dr Tise, included Professor Malahat Sherwani (President Pakistan LA), Dr. Dharam Veer Singh (President

Indian LA), Ms Aishath Shabana (President Maldives LA) Mr Prakash Thapa (President Nepal LA) and Dr. Nazim Uddin (Council Member Bangladesh Association of Librarians, Information Scientists and Documentalists) all of whom also made presentations. The Opening Session introducing the theme of the entire Conference 'Libraries: Access to Information and Empowering People' chaired by Mr Upali Amarasiri (President Sri Lanka Library Association), was made by Ellen Tise on 'Libraries Driving Access to Knowledge' the theme also of her year as IFLA's President. This was followed by 'Access to information and the digital divide in Sri Lanka' and 'Access to information; experiences in Maldives' These served to establish the contexts in which the other themes were examined in the remaining eleven presentations.

These were 'Empowerment of People' (Session two) including 'Empowerment of people in the 21st century' (Lead Paper) and 'Contribution of ICT in rural empowerment in Sri Lanka' and 'Free flow of information and removal of barriers'. Session three had as its theme 'Access to Health Information' with 'Empowering people through health information' as the Lead Paper followed by 'Utilization of epidemiological publications among health professionals' and 'Barriers in accessing health information in Sri Lanka'.

'Information Literacy' was the theme of the fourth session with the Lead Paper on 'Information literacy: new beginning for LIS professionals in Sri Lanka' and 'Using Empowering 8 as a teaching module for information literacy' and 'Internet competencies of the distance learners; a case study at the Open University'. Session five had as its theme 'Community Information' with the Lead Paper on 'Community information services:

a comparative analysis of four venue types' followed by 'First Provincial LIS project in Sri Lanka' and 'Role of Jaffna Public Library in community information services'. 'LIS Curricula Reforms' was the sixth theme with the Lead Paper on 'Changing scenario of librarianship in Pakistan and its impact on LIS education' with 'LIS curricula changes to suit the development needs' and 'What employers expect from LIS professionals in the early 21st century' following. 'National Library Services' provided the seventh theme the Lead Paper being on 'Dissemination of S&T information at the national level in Sri Lanka' followed by 'National bibliographic services for empowering librarians and researchers' and 'Initiatives for building institutional repositories in Bangladesh using D-space: a new paradigm for scholarly communications.' 'Indigenous Knowledge' was examined in the eighth session with the Lead Paper on 'Indigenous knowledge for national development' and then 'Indigenous knowledge in medicine' and 'Preserving indigenous knowledge'. In the light of so many changes the 'Changing Role of Library Associations' was Theme nine with the Lead paper on 'SLLA at fifty: a critical look' then examinations of 'Library education and training – role of the SLLA' and the 'SLLA looking towards the future'. The theme of session ten was 'National Unity' with the Lead paper examining 'National unity from diversity: role of the libraries' followed by the 'Role of the National Library in Sri Lanka in national unity'. The 'History of libraries' was the eleventh Theme with the Lead Paper on 'Historical evidence in library services in Sri Lanka' followed by 'Development of libraries in Nepal' and 'University library services in Sri Lanka'. 'Disaster Management in the LIS Field' provided the twelfth Theme with the Lead Paper on 'Sri Lanka's palm-leaf manuscripts'

heritage: a critical review' followed by a video clip from the CILIP (UK) Government Librarians Group on its support for Hikkaduwa Library's post-tsunami reconstruction.

The programmes and themes had been carefully selected to provide opportunities for SLLA members to celebrate this Jubilee by themselves participating and making presentations as well as the Presidents of REFSALA-member LAs and eminent Sri Lankan scholars. In the event the plan seemed to work: attendances were 109 on the first and 94 on the second day. Presentation standards, as with any conference, were a 'curate's egg – good in parts', in that there were some of excellent and scholarly standards that should prove to be seminal. Nevertheless, what mattered was that librarians from all parts of Sri Lanka and others, along with south Asian colleagues, were able to network together to share knowledge and debate and discuss subjects in a professional and scholarly manner. The Professional Programme, consequently, can be assessed to have proved to have been an historical landmark in the developing progress of the Sri Lanka Library Association.

The International Conference drew to a close on (Saturday 9th) after memorable complementary social events which included a dinner hosted in their private residence by Mr and Mrs Upali Amarasiri and dinners by the University Librarians Association (ULA) and by the National Institute of Library and Information Sciences (NILIS) for the overseas guests. The Saturday saw visits by IFLA's President, representatives of the library associations of Bangladesh and Pakistan along with a few senior members of the SLLA, to the elephant orphanage at Pinwella, to the Dalada Maligawa in Kandy and to the Peradeniya

Botanical Gardens. There was a stop en route to tour the new building of the Central Province's Library Board and meet with the Board's Chairman, Mrs Daya Ratnayake, who with her colleagues, hosted an excellent lunch in the Earls Regency Hotel overlooking the filled headwaters of the Victoria Reservoir.

Thus concluded a series of memorable occasions: the Inauguration, the Professional

Programme, only the second Council meeting of the Regional Federation of South Asian Library Associations (REFSALA) and a full social programme and visits to significant places for the overseas visitors that - for the Sri Lanka Library Association and all those members and staff involved with them - will go down in the annals of the Association's history.

You are warmly invited to the next International Library and Information Group (ILIG) Informal

**Visitors from across the Globe: Using International Scholarship to Develop Services**

Wednesday, 13th April 2011

Time: 18.00 - 19.45

CILIP HQ, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE

Cost: FREE (but please confirm attendance by emailing Alice Tyler: [a.m.tyler@btinternet.com](mailto:a.m.tyler@btinternet.com))

Dr Sunil Gorla, Muhammad Farooq and Titlayo Ilesanni will be talking about their experiences of working in India, Pakistan and Nigeria, why they applied for a Commonwealth Fellowship and what they have achieved during their visit to the UK.

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC) supports fellowships for mid-career professionals from developing Commonwealth countries to spend periods within the UK. Middlesex University plays host to a number of Fellows on an Annual basis.

For further information about CSC:

[http://www.cscuk.org.uk/apply/professional\\_fellowships.asp](http://www.cscuk.org.uk/apply/professional_fellowships.asp)

Directions to CILIP: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/contact-us/pages/map.aspx>

# “You Live Longer by Visiting your Local Library, Borrowing Books and Reading Them”

A study and hypothesis by Hrafn Andres Hardarson FCLIP and Margret Sigurgeirsdottir\*

Reading is a kind of sport. Everyone must learn to read. Once learned, it is then imperative to maintain this skill by constantly reading, both fiction and non-fiction, for one's betterment and for the sheer enjoyment of it. Exercising the tools of reading, the eyes and the brain, means that the sport of reading is also a training for a healthy brain.

Libraries are the power stations for this sport of reading and are where endless processes of reaction take place in thousands of brains. People of all ages walk or run or take buses or cycle to their library (others may of course choose to come by car or taxi) so as to select books and other media to take home. And this movement to and from the library is both sound and refreshing.

Using scientific research<sup>(3)</sup>, it has been proved that the reading of books and the use of libraries actually lengthens people's lives. In fact, these investigations show that it is more likely to make us live longer than any other physical activity. As a corollary to this, it has become evident that people who smoke but don't read

have a shorter life expectancy than those who smoke but do read. In other words, reading has been shown to extend life; and the benefits of using libraries surpass other social activities such as work-outs in the sports centre. Run by municipalities, libraries can therefore be seen as something akin to health care centres. As library people have long known, the brain is a part of the body that needs both practice and challenges to function fully. Reading is the best brain-training possible; and the combination of this and of walking regularly to the library is something both healthier and cheaper than many other pastime activities.

Whilst other sports may also be beneficial, all of them having many positive aspects, the list of additional things that are also health-giving is topped by reading. Your local library can therefore be seen as a physical training centre and a place of energy generation as much as a cultural centre. It can therefore be concluded that to drop by the library and train one's brain is a smart thing to do.

## The example of the woman who says that reading is best

‘Some years back I became ill and had to undergo a general anaesthetic on several occasions within a short period. Following this, in spite of being a book-lover, I suddenly stopped reading and became rather forgetful. Something that was far from pleasant for me. I had always kept myself quite fit by working out and felt that I should therefore have been in good shape. But while my body had recovered fully, reading was a problem for me. I simply could not concentrate on books or other information media. I was neither able to remember things nor to apply myself properly



\*Hrafn Andres Hardarson FCLIP (left) and Margret Sigurgeirsdottir MS (right) contact: hrafnah@kopavogur.is margretsig@kopavogur.is Bokasafn Kopavogs, Hamraborg 6a, 200 Kopavogur. ICELAND

to anything. Something had to be done.

Thinking of how one has a personal trainer for the body, I transferred this idea to training for the brain. So I went to school and for a whole winter I sat on a school bench and completed a course. And this was my personal training for the brain. This obliged me to read simply because the courses all finished with an exam. Through this work my memory improved greatly and I found that I was once again able to concentrate and get real enjoyment from reading. And so, in my opinion, reading is the best of all activities. It was this that saved me.<sup>(1)</sup>

Another example<sup>(2)</sup> that is relevant is the Kopavogur Library's Literary Club which has now been running for over 25 years. It was aimed at people aged over 50 and intended as a 'soft landing into old age'. It currently has about 30 members, including some of the founders who are now close to 100 years old. It only meets during the winter months and in spite of what the weather may be like, they all attend every single meeting.

Do we need further proof?

### **The eyes are the portals of memory and remembering**

Our eyes are a part of the body that needs training; and for this purpose reading is particularly suitable. At the same time they clearly also need to be rested so as not to overstrain them. That is where one of the beneficial side-effects of reading enters the story, the side-effect of improved memory since, through reading, we also collect other people's memories into our brain's store. Furthermore, when we read something that we especially like, we tend to make the effort to learn it by

heart. Once learned, it can then be brought to mind time and again, and recited silently or out loud—and even with one's eyes closed, the eyes thus being given the chance to rest.

In the article *Besök ofte ditt lokale bibliotek og lev lenger*<sup>(3)</sup> it says:

The library is a formal space where people from many different walks of life can meet without concern. With no regard for either age, gender or social standing, all sorts of friendships and relationships can easily develop from such meetings. In this way a visit to the library can be seen as a thoroughly positive experience, something which can indeed lengthen our lives.

Dr. med Docent Markku T. Hyppa of the Nasjonalt Folkehelseinstitutt in Finland<sup>(4)</sup> sees this participation in the social community as something that both strengthens democratic awareness and encourages further activity. After many years of research, he concludes that the library is one of the few institutions where everyone can meet on an equal footing, which makes it an extremely healthy place for people.

### **'Novels make one smarter.' Read novels, be smarter.**

In an interesting article in *Morgunbladid* on Saturday, 23rd August 2008, Throstur Helgason wrote:

Keith Oatley, writing in the *New Scientist*<sup>(5)</sup>, says: 'For the first time it can now be proved that fiction has a good effect on one's soul.' Oatley, himself a novelist, is also a professor in psychology and leads a team of researchers at the University of Toronto which has studied the effects of reading fiction on a person's

intelligence.

In an interview <sup>(5)</sup> with the Toronto Star, Oatley says that the reading of fiction seems to stimulate those parts of the brain where compassion and empathy are born. 'When you read a novel you are allowing yourself to become another person for a short time; and this loosens up the strictures of your own personality. Through a series of studies, we have discovered that, at its best, fiction is not only enjoyable but also enhances our ability to empathise with other people, thereby connecting us with something larger than ourselves.'

The article goes on:

Oatley and his team ran a combination of experiments before arriving at their conclusions. They first assembled a number of people who were split evenly between those who liked and those who disliked fiction. Both groups took a series of diagnostic tests to determine their social acumen. The readers of fiction, they found, demonstrated 'substantially greater empathy' than their counterparts. But which came first, they wondered, the chicken or the egg? Could it be that people who are naturally more socially developed gravitate towards fiction, that their affinity for novels is an expression, not a cause, of their talent for empathy? To resolve this, the researchers then came up with another experiment, this one involving Chekhov's story 'The Lady with the Dog'.

### **The Lady with the Dog**

First, researcher Maja Djikic wrote a 'control' version of the story. This was written in a documentary style, was the same length as the original and described precisely the same events. This was rated just as interesting by

Group A (non-fiction readers) as Group B's (fiction readers) rating of the original text. Before and after the reading, both groups filled out questionnaires which evaluated their personality traits and emotions.

Oatley declined to speculate much further, pointing out that similar experiments using video games or movies instead of Russian literature could very well produce comparable results. And he freely admitted that there were many questions his findings did not resolve. Would, for instance, a short story by Chekhov produce the same result as a Tom Clancy airport thriller? In which is one more likely to gather knowledge about a people, a pop novel or a literary memoir? And what about a piece of writing that purports to be non-fiction but is actually in large part made up (à la James Frey); or a piece of fiction that is actually a thinly concealed account of things that real people really did?

Oatley concedes that it's possible his research applies, if not exclusively then at least especially, to good fiction. But what, then, is good fiction?

*This article was previously published in the Icelandic daily Morgunblaðið and the Iceland Library Association's Bókasafnið in Icelandic*

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1. NN, a woman, interview
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3. Selja Kivi, freelance journalist *Besök ofte ditt lokale bibliotek og lev lenger* in *Bibliotekforum* 7 06 pp. 12-13
4. Markku T. Hyypä et al. *Leisure participation predicts survival: a population-based study in Finland* in *Health Promotion International* Vol.21 No.1 7. Dec. 2005.
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# Easy to Read Squares in Dutch Public Libraries

by Ingrid Bon\*

Although the Netherlands is well-known as a rather sophisticated and educated country it also has to deal with a lot of difficulties. On a population of 17 million people we are facing the problems arising from 1.5 million adults who are illiterate or have very poor reading and writing skills.

For several years children with reading difficulties caused by all kinds of problems (concentration problems, autism, dyslexia, sight problems and many others) were not really recognised within the school system. Nowadays, children who get behind in school performance can be tested and diagnosed with dyslexia for instance. But once the diagnosis has been made, the problem is still not solved. Therefore, several publishers, authors and illustrators are creating special publications for these children aged between 8 and 12 years. Of course the problem doesn't stop at the age of 12; it is an ongoing problem for the rest of their lives.

Besides the adults who suffer from these problems the Netherlands is, as many countries nowadays, a real multicultural country. In the 1960's lots of workers from Mediterranean countries came to the Netherlands to find a job, earn some money and go back to their homeland. At least that is what the government of the time thought. Instead, the workers stayed and after several years their families came over



*MLP library*

and were reunited with husbands and fathers. Unfortunately, most of these women were not encouraged to learn the Dutch language as they were often illiterate in their own mother tongue. The children learned Dutch at school but spoke Arabic, Croatian, Turkish, Italian, Spanish or whatever other language spoken at home. They had a lot of problems learning to read, write and speak a language that they had only used at school. In their leisure time their mother tongue was the most important.

For the Dutch government this large number of poorly skilled adults (original Dutch and from other origins) was a signal to improve the circumstances for them. For people for whom Dutch is a second language special training, courses and classes were organized. But in order to practice their reading they needed easy to read material and at last publishers in the Netherlands are starting to print easy to read material for both people whose first language is Dutch and for those people for whom Dutch is a second language.

The public libraries feel the need to help these children and adults in finding their way through the large amount of materials. The public library of Haarlem started a phenomenon which they called: *Easy to Read Squares*.

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Children between 8 and 12 years of age with reading problems can search through this special cabinet for all kinds of adjusted material: easy to read books, daisy-roms, listening books, magazines, movies, software, DVD's of films based on books, websites, play and learn material like puzzles and games etc.

All material in this cabinet is placed with its cover to the front, so children can find their choices very easily and it looks far more attractive to them. And that is just what they need! When you have reading skill problems, the way public libraries present their materials is not the best way for them. All books on a shelf give the image of a large wall of books, a big hill to climb, an enormous challenge. By placing the books with their cover in the front children can tell so much easier if the book is attractive to them or not. The fiction books have a genre symbol like animals, sports, detectives, horror and friends. Not too many subjects, but just the topics the majority of the children want to find. Non-fiction books are placed together by subject as well, like history, animals, health (your body), and the environment. The subjects and genres are not static, nor are the materials placed in the cabinets. If after some time it becomes clear that a title is not in the right place in the *Easy to Read Squares*, it will be removed and either placed in another part of the library collection or removed from stock completely.

This way of working with children was so fruitful that Haarlem Library received a special library price for this concept. The website: [www.makkelijklezenplein.nl](http://www.makkelijklezenplein.nl) gives a good demonstration of what it is all about. Unfortunately, it is only in Dutch but the images can explain a lot and of course this



*Taalpunt Library*

best practice, is embraced by the Dutch public libraries and local and provincial governments.

In my own province of Gelderland, the provincial government put a lot of money into the project in order to establish an Easy to Read Square in all public library organisations, in almost all branches and even several *Easy to Read Squares* for adults that received the name: *Language Point*. All participating libraries now have the same look and feel. The furniture is roughly the same, the logos and signs in the libraries are the same, so that a customer from any part of the province can quickly recognise where to find the easy to read materials for children and for adults.

Within 7 months, 106 Squares were completed - a big job. A project group supervised the implementation and by setting to work a few working groups, the tasks were divided. Some dealt with the furniture, others with collections, with logos, brochures, pamphlets, daisy-roms etc. At some point we thought we could never realise the assignment for the provincial government which required fulfilment of the project within 7 months and in at least 10 organisations. But in the outcome,

22 organizations wanted to participate in this project and the result was that in fact 106 Squares were opened in a few months.

But as every librarian and every manager knows: the real work starts after this point. One of the biggest issues is how to get poorly skilled adults into the public library, how to attract the collection materials for children who like to play with their I-pod, Wii and other stuff instead of reading a book and improve their skills or just reading for fun, to enjoy the story.

Public libraries and primary schools (children between 4 and 12 years of age attend primary school in the Netherlands) have a long history of working together, so that is not the biggest issue. School classes that visit the library must be told what kind of material it contains and how much fun it is to read or to see the movie from a book if reading is too difficult.

However, getting the adults to the library is a far bigger task and a huge challenge. Those libraries that are working together with schools where they teach adults reading and writing in Dutch were considered the best starting point. It was by inviting those students into the library, showing them the amount of

material, being as helpful and understanding as possible and offering a free subscription for 2 or 3 months which proved attractive and appealing to potential customers.

All these changes also ask a lot of the library staff. During the project time of 7 months all staff in the front office were trained on all the elements of these *Easy to Read Squares*, the collection, the special media, how to deal with this special type of customer etc. The specialists who were going to work with the adults themselves had special training as well because it is very hard to imagine what it feels like if you have poor reading and writing skills. Luckily at the same time as we were planning and opening all these Squares, a very important commercial was on national television to inform people that they were very welcome at the public library and in lots of schools in order to get their classes and training.

The first step has been taken in the province of Gelderland in the Netherlands but time will tell if all effort will result in better reading skills and use of the public library by this newly targeted group of users in our communities.

### **ILIGlist and Facebook**

ILIGlist is an e-mail discussion group run by, and primarily for, members of ILIG, but open to all librarians and information professionals involved in LIS activities across the globe.

To join the list, please send a brief message to <iliglist-owner@yahogroups.com>.

If you have already joined ILIGlist, please spread the word to colleagues

If you're on Facebook, why don't you join us?

<<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=13131232426>>.

If you're not on Facebook, maybe it's time you were!

Make contact with librarians around the world and start networking!

# CILIP President Brian Hall's talk to the International Library and Information Group of CILIP, 9th February 2011.

A report by Alice Tyler\*

This is not a transcript, or a verbatim report, but I hope I have captured the spirit of Brian Hall's witty, but thought provoking, talk and the discussion that followed it. Brian's theme was comparative librarianship, particularly the provision of public libraries in England and abroad.

He told us he was one of those annoying people who visits libraries wherever he goes, although he confessed that he had never been out of Europe - yet. He has also taken parties of LIS students on study tours to Europe and discovered that they often did not really take in what they had seen, or heard, about the libraries they had visited. As a result, he has put together some ideas of what to look for when visiting a public library for the first time - and some important points to bear in mind when comparing the public library system in one country with that in another.

He has found it a good exercise when visiting strange towns, to see how many people he had to ask before finding someone who knew where the local public library is! Then, having found it, is the building easy to get into? That includes being open at times that are convenient for the people it is supposed to be serving. Does the library feel welcoming when you get inside or is it, like some libraries he told us about, somewhere you want to get out of as soon as you can! Are the staff helpful? Does a staff member approach anyone who looks lost when wandering round the shelves?

Looking at the library's stock, does it include fiction and non-fiction? Is there multi-media provision? Not just books and pamphlets and periodicals, but CDs and records and

videos and DVDs - in other words, look at the whole range of materials and resources offered. Can you borrow items? Can you use the non-book material in the library? He told us that, during a study tour to Helsingborg in Sweden, he sent all his students off across the Öresund to Elsinore in Denmark - chez Hamlet - while, since he had been there before, he stayed in Helsingborg public library listening to a wonderful recording of Mahler's Resurrection Symphony. He does not know of many libraries in England where you can sit and listen like that.

Does the public library you are visiting provide other services such as ICT facilities and ICT training? Is there provision of books and so on for different groups within the local community served by the library - for example the young, the old and ethnic minorities? How is the library reaching out to people who see no relevance of the library to their needs? Or to people who are unwilling, or unable, to reach the library such as people in prison, in hospital and so on. Does the library support adult learners and independent learners? Does it support workforce development - he told us that services to the unemployed were all the rage in England in the 1980s but hardly anyone provides them now.

How is the library staffed? Are the staff helpful as well as efficient? Are specialist staff available? He has noticed a worrying trend in England - the demise of the special librarian. Children's librarians, music librarians, local studies librarians and law librarians are being turned into generalists.

Is the library an active part of the community?

Does it have any links with local schools? Does it provide storytelling, for both children and adults? Brian told us that the Boroughs of Lambeth and Camden in London used to tell stories to adults and that it is quite common in Scandinavia. Does the library building provide a meeting place for local groups and a venue for their activities? A public library in the suburbs of Malmö, Southern Sweden, had three theatres and numerous workshops! It is also a beautifully designed library.

Brian told us he is a great believer in the concept of democracy. But, of all the thousands of students he must have interviewed for a place at library school over the years, not one had mentioned that they wanted to be a librarian because they believed in democracy. To him democracy is important and implies free and equal access for everybody to all information. He does not think you can have a democratic society without it. He asked us to think about this.

He asked how many public libraries in England actively promote their services. And what about peer group assessment? That is something that can be applied to all kinds of libraries - academic, special and so on. You can get an awful lot of good ideas from your colleagues working in the same sort of field. And library professionals can provide advice to library providers. For example, is a library meeting the key policy objectives of the providers?

He also pointed out that there are some important points to bear in mind when comparing the public library system in one country with that in another. Be very careful not to ascribe British or other colonial values to overseas libraries and be aware that there

are other points that are not always obvious during a visit but, if you have a guide, you can pump them for information.

What is the role of public libraries seen to be in the country you are visiting? In Sweden, public libraries are seen as very much part of the cultural and educational development of the community as a whole. Brian thought the problem in England is that here we have never really sat down and defined what our public libraries are for. He felt that in Sweden, they invest a lot of money for the future, and plan ahead, while here in England our politicians are all looking towards the next election.

Is the provision of public libraries in the country you are visiting a national requirement, as in England<sup>(1)</sup>? In the United States of America there are whole areas with no public library provision because there is no federal legislation which says that everybody must have access to a public library. Who provides the public library service in the country you are visiting? Is it, as in England, the local authority or is it private enterprise as happens in quite a lot of France? In the Netherlands and Belgium there can be libraries provided by housing associations, cultural organisations or political organisations with the result that there may be three or four different public libraries in the same area all serving the same community – or at least different sections of that community. Is the public library service free, as in England, or do people have to pay to borrow books, as in the Netherlands and other parts of western Europe? How much of a library's stock can be borrowed? How much of the stock is on open access? We heard how a Russian library student visiting Reading asked how much was stolen when they saw that everything was open access. Does everyone have equal

access to the whole library or are some areas only accessible to certain users?

Are public libraries seen, in some countries, as a mouthpiece for government propaganda? Brian told us how, when he gave a talk in Rome on access to government information via the Internet in British public libraries, everyone assumed this was the case. He assured us this is nonsense! Is there any evidence, in the libraries you visit overseas, of the important concepts such as intellectual freedom, democratic engagement, community adhesion, social justice, social skills, economic regeneration?

Are individual library authorities big enough to take advantage of the economies of scale or can smaller authorities achieve this by coming together and centralising purchasing - even

internationally, as Brian had come across in Scandinavia.

He also touched on the role of national libraries. The Danish National Library is empowered to lend books to other libraries in the country but the British Library at St Pancras is not allowed to do so. It is interesting the number of countries that are developing new national libraries with a wider range of powers.

To Brian, international and comparative librarianship is important. The world is getting smaller because of the uses of the Internet and things like that and the more we understand this the more international understanding we are able to develop. We can influence other countries, and they, he hopes, can influence us in return.

*\*Alice Tyler is an elected member of the ILIG committee and Associate Editor of Focus. Email <a.m.tyler@btinternet.com>*

*1. Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 which applies to England and Wales. There is separate legislation for Northern Ireland and for Scotland.*

### Notes for contributors to *Focus*

Articles for publication in *Focus* are always welcome. *Focus* is not peer-reviewed, and articles are primarily intended to keep readers (who are professionals from a variety of different types of library and information services) informed about what is going on in the international library and information world, to introduce new ideas and programmes, report on activities and experiences, etc., rather than be 'academic treatises'.

Articles are normally between 1,500 and 2,000 words, though can be a little longer if necessary. The inclusion of references and URLs/links to further information is valuable, as is a relevant photo or two (640 × 480 at good resolution), if appropriate.

*Focus* is published in March, July and November and copy deadline is normally the end of January, May and September, respectively.

Please e-mail material for consideration to the editor at <iligfocus@cilip.org.uk>.

Articles should normally not have been previously published, or be under consideration elsewhere.

# Obituary

## Edward Dudley

(7 April 1919 – 22 November 2010)

Edward Dudley died peacefully, with dignity and in comfort on 22 November 2010, nursed by his partner Kate Wood in the Barbican house where they had resided for over 30 years. To be asked to write an obituary for such a legend in his own lifetime is a daunting task which carries a huge responsibility and honour, but I have intended this obituary as a celebration of his life as I hoped he would have seen fit.

Edward made a “Unique unparalleled contribution to the profession”, to quote the words of the citation at the CILIP Members Day ceremony in October 2010, when he was awarded with the CILIP Medal – the first time this award has ever been made. That depth of recognition of achievement and contribution to the profession of which he was a lifelong member, echoes the sentiments of the citation made when he received his Honorary FLA Award in 1989. Edward was unable to attend the ceremony in 2010 due to his failing health but he was chuffed to know that he was held in such esteem by his colleagues and not a little surprised that he was the subject of such an award.

I began to know Edward personally in the profession only as far back as the mid 1980's when we were both working on the preparations for the 1987 IFLA Conference in Brighton, UK. But of course he was already well known to me, as for many reading this obituary, as a champion of high standards in the profession and someone who was ready to challenge the status quo or what he might see as “daft” logic.

Edward was from the very first beginnings



*Edward Dudley (on right) in Tanzania*

as a librarian, a person who looked at the philosophy of why and how things are done and the international perspective on his work was already evident at the time when he pursued the Fellowship of the Library Association course and submitted his essay on the topic *Libraries in the USSR: some post war developments* in May 1953.

Long before this though he began work in Fulham public libraries as a Library Assistant in 1936 as a tender aged 17 year old where he worked up until the outbreak of the Second World War. However, his cycling tour of Germany in 1937, to visit a pen friend (one of several since he spoke German, French and some Italian and Russian), alerted his already attuned international sensitivities as a signed up member of the Communist party, to the gathering threat which loomed in the country when the family of the young person he visited enthused about the publication *Mein Kampf* (of which, of course he was already familiar as a keen bibliophile).

In 1939, Edward was enlisted as an infantry soldier in the army until he was able to persuade the powers that be that he had all the skills required to be a soldier librarian in Northamptonshire. This aborted plans for him to be transferred to the then war torn Germany, but not before he had already experienced four years of active service in the Middle East and Italy where he witnessed and was involved with the hard realities of battle. Like Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, the drama of war drew the poet out in Edward and this was perhaps the first intimations of the journalist and writer which he was to become so well known for later in his life, as editor of the *Library Association Record* and *New Library World*.

Edward's published poem *Stalingrad*<sup>(1)</sup> penned in 1943 provides a glimpse of the literary leanings which he was to demonstrate in the writing of his columns *Libraryland* and *Clipboard* in the *Record* and *Update* much later in life and which entertained so many readers. It was one of several poems written at that time, some of which were published.



*Study tour of GDR in 1960.  
Edward Dudley second from left front, his son  
Martin third from left front)*



*Unesco Conference on Professional Journals,  
Paris 1971. Edward on left.*

**Stalingrad.** (Last verse)

Till now our dreams are false  
Pointers to nowhere.  
With passionate life  
You walled your city with death –  
Triumphant  
Swept away together  
Dead thought  
Dying fears  
Our barriers of expression  
Built our springing hope  
With the tissues of your pain

This creative talent clearly contributed to the empathy which he was able to apply to the literary community, (many of whom were of the Jewish faith and affected by the pre-war diaspora) in his duties as Branch Librarian of Belsize Park Library, Hampstead after the war.

After 6 years at Belsize Park Library, a position which he described as being “the right librarian in the right place at the right time”, Edward became involved in the world of teaching and it was this move to the world of academia, first at Ealing Library School and then as Head of the Library School at North West London Polytechnic (and its later emanations) for over 20 years which established Edward's name on the international forum in a variety of

ways. Many of his students from that period have found their careers in other countries and his name became known worldwide as a person of keen intellect imbued with the need to ask the hard questions and sometimes to provide the unpalatable answers but also as the educator of forward thinking librarians. Edward was once asked what he thought the most important skill a librarian required. His answer was simply - "thinking".

During this period of his career in the educational environment Edward encouraged his students and colleagues to seek out comparisons with the profession overseas, particularly in Eastern Europe and the first study tour he organised was, unsurprisingly, to the German Democratic Republic in 1960 (see photo) and included students from many countries including Indonesia, Libya, Algeria, Ghana, Cyprus, Australia and Canada as well as the UK. This was one of several academic sojourns overseas at that time for Edward, to participate in a conference on professional journals in Paris in 1971 (see photo), to teach at the University of Oklahoma in the USA, to the African continent (Tanzania in 1972 and Zimbabwe), Greece (1972 and 1974), Yugoslavia and later to the Sudan (1980). He visited various European library schools and wrote of one in June 1976 - "Hamburg went well and the students laughed at my ironies about International Librarianship replacing the British Empire as a world force." His interest in professional journals was already well established by this time having taken on the role of Editor of the *Library Association Record* in 1967 (despite initial misgivings).

But it was the establishment of the *Journal of Librarianship* (later *Journal of Library and Information Science*) in 1969 which he was most

proud of in the field of publishing. By 1970 he had persuaded the professional community of the need for the publication of which he became the first Chair of the editorial board between 1970 – 1973, later Reviews Editor. It was the publication with which he remained associated for the rest of his career. attending the board meetings up until only months before he died.

Edward participated substantially in the work of the Library Association and its successor, CILIP as a member of Council for 9 years, serving on its Education Committee, contributing to the output of the publications programme and serving at a branch and root level in a variety of ways. Edward was a founding member of the International and Comparative Library Group and in 2010 once again joined the committee of its successor, ILIG. Sadly, due to his failing health we were never to have the benefit of his presence at committee meetings but his development of that group from its inception has deeply rooted it into the work of CILIP and helped make it the effective group it is today.

Edward's second time of being elected chair of the London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association (never previously achieved) was due to his passion for international work and the need for informed and well-judged involvement with the 1987 IFLA Conference in Brighton. This position required Edward to ensure the conference was adequately provided with an Information Centre, that the Branch hosted receptions and arranged tours to libraries elsewhere in the UK for overseas librarians. This was to become one of his enduring legacies within the UK, since Edward and Kate's hospitality to visitors during both individual and group tours of libraries

and to the winners of bursaries from London CILIP which he organised for international visitors on a regular basis, became a much appreciated and enjoyable part of the visit for participants. He would always meet, greet and orientate overseas visitors in this way and this was due to his deep commitment to people as much as to his professionalism of how things should be done.

Edward was never complacent and sometimes his irritations of what he felt was unequal or unfair in the profession could result in raised hackles and adversaries in committees in the corridors of Ridgmount Street, but Edward's standpoint never failed from reason (England is a home nation alongside Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales for example) and his intellectual approach to making his case rarely, if ever, meant that he made life long enemies. His humanitarian attitude, kindness to strangers (and friends) and thoughtful attitude meant that he was well liked and loved. I mention above that he was a bibliophile with

close association since he was a regular user of the Barbican Library of which I was in charge for over 15 years. Witnessing the breadth of his reading provided a glimpse into how he cultivated his depth of knowledge and understanding of issues and I never lost the sense of alertness that, despite knowing him as a friend, he would be the first to complain if he thought something was amiss in the Library! However, his absorption of information was comprehensive and all pervasive and might just as easily come from a newsagent's billboard or from flyers left by students on lampposts outside CILIP's Ridgmount Street offices. Once devoured it could be recalled with the clarity, accuracy and pithiness which only his twinkling wit and humour could convey.

He is greatly missed by his partner, family and of course by his colleagues and friends in the professional community to which he contributed to and believed in so much.

*1. Return to Oasis: War Poems and Recollections from the Middle East, 1940-1946 by Victor Selwyn. Hardback 254pp. Published January 1980. Shephard-Walwyn Ltd. ISBN0853683047X*

*John Lake, Editor, Focus*

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/ilig>

Look for more information about informals, seminars and other events on ILIG's Website.

ILIG one-day Conference

## Library Advocacy: Sharing and Learning from National and International Experiences

Monday, 23rd May 2011

at CILIP, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE

In the current climate, advocacy skills are increasingly essential in order to demonstrate the value of libraries and information professionals to society and businesses. But, do we really know what advocacy is, how can we develop our advocacy skills, and who should be advocating for libraries and LIS professionals?

This One Day Conference, aimed at library and information professionals in all sectors and at all levels, focuses on providing tools and sharing expertise for library advocacy in the current financial climate, while providing excellent peer networking opportunities.

### Speakers

**Stuart Hamilton**, Senior Policy Advisor, IFLA

**Barbara Schleihagen**, Executive Director, German Library Association (dbv)

**Annie Mauger**, Chief Executive, CILIP

**Elaine Fulton**, Director, Scottish Library and Information Council  
and CILIP in Scotland

**Tom Roper**, Voices for the Library

**Kathy Roddy**, Library and Information Trainer

For full conference programme and further details contact Maria Cotera:  
mariacotera10@gmail.com or visit ILIG website: [www.cilip.org.uk/ilig](http://www.cilip.org.uk/ilig)

The International Library and Information Group has been awarded the CILIP Seal of Recognition, which recognises high standards in the content and relevance of its training.

### Delegate rates:

ILIG members - £40 + 20% VAT = £48

CILIP members - £60 + 20% VAT = £72

Non CILIP members - £80 + 20% VAT = £96

Unwaged - £20 + 20% VAT = £24 (limited places available)

## Letters to the Editor

**Re - Bob McKee**

Dear Editor

I cannot recall exactly when I first met Bob McKee. Either long ago, when I visited London at the invitation of CILIP or in a corridor at an IFLA Congress somewhere in the world. Maybe it was in La Habana or at the birth of FAIFE when we contributed to its organisation and development. I feel as if I have known him all my life.

What I can say is that over the past few years, since we worked together at FAIFE, we strengthened our links, switching from being colleagues who meet in corridors and greet each other, to being friends who took a real interest in each other. We often had conflicting

views but he was always understanding, with a smile on his face, ready to listen and understand other realities. It was part of his way of working for peace and understanding among people, without prejudices of any kind.

In thirty years, the IFLA Gothenburg Congress is the first I haven't been able to attend. Maybe it was fate or fortune that didn't want me to witness his disappearance. I cannot imagine the grief and distress experienced by my dear colleagues and friends who did witness it.

I hope his generosity, altruism and professionalism may serve as an example and guide new librarians the world over for whom he was so concerned.

**From Marta Terry, Librarian, Librarian & Ex-President of ASCUBI, Honorary Member of IFLA, Ciudad de La Habana Cuba**

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## News Around the World

Thanks to Christine Mackenzie in Australia, Chair of the Metropolitan Section of IFLA and Barbara Gubbin of Jacksonville, USA, Secretary of the Public Libraries Section of IFLA who have provided news and activity from their contacts around the world.

### **Australia**

A summer of extreme weather events.  
I love a sunburnt country,  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of ragged mountain ranges,  
Of droughts and flooding rains.  
I love her far horizons,  
I love her jewel-sea,

Her beauty and her terror –  
The wide brown land for me!

*Dorothea McKellar*

The wide brown land has endured extreme weather conditions this summer, from the devastating floods that affected large areas of Queensland including Brisbane and Victoria, the Category 5 cyclone that demolished the parts of North Queensland in its path and bushfires in suburban Perth.

Fortunately, library staff and libraries got off relatively unscathed. Three libraries were

affected by flood water in Brisbane; all the books were safely removed from these branches and disaster recovery work commenced once the buildings were declared safe. Brisbane Square Library in the CBD was unaffected but closed until normal services resumed in the City. The Library Service was put in charge of organising the 25,000 volunteers who helped clean up after the floods and also co-ordinated the donation of canned food. The State Library of Queensland suffered some flood damage in The Edge. The main State Library Building sustained minor damage to the lower floor but all collections were safe and secure. The Library has been closed due to flood damage to an electricity substation in the basement. Other country libraries have been affected to varying degrees.

#### **New Website for Yarra Plenty Regional Library**

Yarra Plenty's new website is chock full of exciting features and opportunities. It encourages user participation and moves effortlessly between the library catalogue data and the rest of the website. It incorporates the best features of social networks like Facebook and Amazon and search technologies like Google to create a whole new online library experience for members. There are two components of the new website – a discovery layer, Bibliocommons, which overlays the Library Management System to provide catalogue information; and a new website which are combined to provide a seamless user experience.

While the discovery layer is deployed in a number of North American libraries, Yarra Plenty is the first to implement the integrated website and catalogue, which has been built using Drupal, an open source content

management software product. It is possible to browse serendipitously, and borrowers are able to discover titles they did not know to ask for. It does this by Browsing widgets and a virtual shelf browser. There is also sophisticated blogging capacity on the site which enables branch staff to add up to date information about their branch as well as other staff having the ability to easily keep the site fresh and lively. The new website has been very well received and you can visit it at [www.yprl.vic.gov.au](http://www.yprl.vic.gov.au)

#### **Burkina Faso**

##### **Caterpillar book project in Africa**

An article on this IFLA supported book project appeared in Vol. 41, number 1 issue of Focus. Ian Stringer, who wrote the article and who has been the project leader for its implementation in Africa since 2006, has sent recent news of progress from his contact in Burkina Faso, Africa.

It was marvellous, the Caterpillar was received with joy in the rural district of



*Oumou Ouedrago, Archives Nationales, Presidence du Faso DCNA, Ouagadougou, Kadiogo, Burkina Faso (far left of photo)*

Thanghin Dassouri. The 1st assistant of the Mayor was there, with the people in charge of the college. They were happy because it meets their book requirements

*Oumou Ouedraogo, Librarian, Burkina Faso.*

## Canada

### Montreal Public Libraries – new technologies and young people

The city of Montreal, Canada, has 43 public libraries in its territory. The Bibliothèques publiques de Montréal (Montreal Public Libraries) head office is very proactive in reaching young people, using new technologies to do so. Here is news of the two most recent projects.

Last spring, the Bibliothèques publiques de Montréal launched a new website to help kids with schoolwork. It is called SOS Devoirs (literally Homework SOS). It is designed for children 6-12 years old, to help them with scholar projects, homework and educational games. At the beginning of 2011, the Bibliothèques publiques de Montréal also launched a video in order to promote its website: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJ4VvYipbnw&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJ4VvYipbnw&feature=player_embedded)

Last December, the Bibliothèques publiques de Montréal received a Boomerang award for its web novel called *Mille Vies* (A Thousand Lives), written by Denis Vézina. The award recognized this interactive and avant-garde project. *Mille Vies* is a free novel that one can read every Wednesday on the Bibliothèques publiques de Montréal website but the web novel goes beyond just reading a book, as many references to the different subjects can take you to another world, all within a click. <http://bibliomontreal.com/1000-vies/>

### Ottawa Public Library - Borrow your way to ski trails

The Ottawa Public Library (OPL), located in the capital of Canada, is now offering its users cross country ski passes to a conservation park and city trails. As of December 2010, 75 passes to cross country ski trails in Gatineau Park, a nature reserve located 20 minutes from the city, were made available to users as a result of a new partnership between the Ottawa Public Library and the National Capital Commission.

“I am delighted with this new partnership because it offers access to all and encourages people to get moving and enjoy a healthy activity”, said City Librarian Barbara Clubb.

Following the successful introduction of the Gatineau Park Cross Country Ski Pass, OPL is now offering City of Ottawa Ski Passes to its users. 75 passes to city trails can be borrowed. The loan period of these two passes is one week and it can be used multiple times during that period. OPL also circulates other admission passes for museums, pedometers and more. For additional information, visit [www.BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca](http://www.BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca)

## Croatia

### Zagreb City Libraries, Croatia - New libraries

In July 2010 August Cesarec Library was opened in Zagreb. This 900 sq.m. library is a part of the Zagreb City Libraries network and is located in a shopping centre in an urban area. It is the first public library in Zagreb to use RFID technology for customer self-service and is equipped with a large number of computers, a computer for the blind and visually impaired and wireless Internet access.

Two closed library collections, one for children and other for adults, were put together to build the new August Cesarec Library collection which was supplemented with the latest audiovisual and multimedia materials. Library programs for all age groups including babies and elderly citizens have caught the attention of the customers and the inhabitants of that part of the city and have improved the quality of library services in Zagreb.

In 2010 the construction of another new 1,000 sq.m. library building on the outskirts of the city commenced. The library is located in a new neighbourhood and will serve a population of 10,000 people. This is the first building in Zagreb constructed with the sole purpose of accommodating a public library. It is situated in the centre of the neighbourhood near the school, cultural centre, gymnasium and swimming pool and will open in late 2011.

#### **Digitized Zagreb Heritage**

Zagreb City Libraries are developing a digital collection through the project entitled *Illuminating a Part of Heritage: Zagreb at the Threshold of the Modern Age*. A selection of invaluable and rare materials of the Zagreb City Libraries' collections - Local History Collection Zagrabiensia, Musical Department and Croatian Centre for Children's Books, have been chosen and digitized, and are now available at the web site *Digitized Zagreb's Heritage* on Zagreb City Libraries' web pages [www.kgz.hr](http://www.kgz.hr). The project has been supported by the Republic of Croatia's Ministry of Culture and has joined the "Croatian Cultural Heritage" National project with the aim of contributing to the construction of the European Digital Library.

## **Singapore**

### **Public Libraries Singapore's Innovative Reading programs**

The Quest Reading Program is a highly popular reading program among children in Singapore. First conceived to promote reading among the 7-12 year old boys, who have been identified as reluctant readers, Quest has proven to be popular among the younger children as well. By combining the popularity of the fantasy genre, children's love of collectible card games and comic manga characters, Quest has helped to give reading a boost in the circle of urban subculture.

Quest has so far two stories in its series, "*The Quest of The Celestial Dragon*" and "*The Quest of the Rain Dragon*" (written by the library's own children's librarian). The stories are narrated on the back of collectible cards featuring the characters and items in the story which children have to collect in order to get the full storyline. By borrowing books from the public libraries, children can redeem a packet of random Quest cards to get parts of the plot and use the cards for a Quest game. This proved to be an instantaneous hit with more than 700,000 children redeeming over 5 million cards, which also resulted in 4 million book loans. This amounted to an improvement of more than 25% increase in readership for the targeted age group. A third instalment is to be launched in the middle of the year. Here's where to check out the Quest website for the story and interesting activities.

<http://Quest.pl.sg>

#### **The Read and Reap initiative**

*The Read and Reap initiative* encourages the seeds of ideas to grow from reading a single literary extract and from there, spark a whole

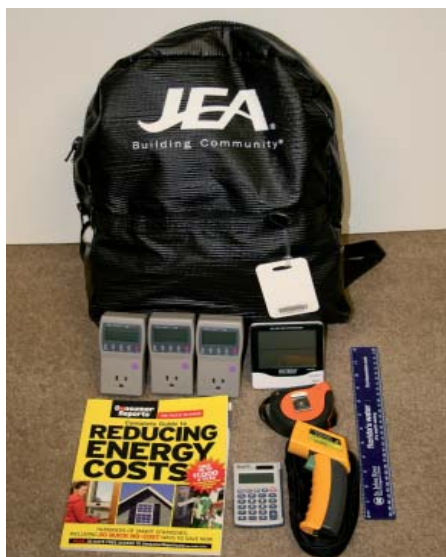
new reading and sharing experience. All the elements of an extract, quirky caption, reflective question and related recommended reads are placed together in a poster or online post. The extracts may be motivational, thought-provoking or inspirational - but mainly they are very interesting passages in bite-sizes as the whole idea is to capture the readers' attention fast and hook them to want to read the book. A reflective question further enhances the flavour of the piece and allows one to have common conversations with others. The quirky phrases used for captions are to draw the attention of the reader. In keeping with what all good librarians do, there are similar recommended reads to expand the reading appetite of the readers.

The reach is to school-going children and teens via beautifully-designed posters and flyers sent to schools on a monthly basis. These posters act like mini-book talks that hopefully engage readers who are bombarded with so many messages in the real world. So - short and simple - is the key to the whole programme. For teachers, there are accompanying activities and book club-like questions for them to facilitate further dialogue with their students. Besides posters, a blog site is available so that classes of students or members of the public can leave their comments on the provocative questions and get to read more interesting extracts. <http://ReadandReap.sg>

## USA

### **Jacksonville Public Library – conserving home energy and going green**

Jacksonville citizens are being encouraged how to conserve home energy and reduce their energy bills with an easy do-it-yourself Home Energy Evaluation kit, available free with a library card. Kits (see illus.) are available at



*Jacksonville Home Energy Evaluation Kit*

West Regional, Mandarin Regional, Beaches Regional and Main Library locations and have been produced in partnership with JEA the local electric utility company.

Patrons can discover even more ways to save, join JEA and the Jacksonville Public Library with hands-on workshops to learn how to conduct a home energy audit. The workshops include demonstrations of kit tools, tips from efficiency experts on easy ways to trim costs and save energy throughout the home, plus information on incentives that can help pay for it.

### **Queens Library, NYC Schedules Opening of the Children's Library Discovery Center**

Queens Library has developed a unique children's library that combines the best of children's programming/collections and museum-quality interactive science and technology exhibits. Funding for the exhibits

was provided by a National Science Foundation grant. The award-winning building design reflects the needs of a younger audience and includes age-appropriate program spaces, collections and whimsical interior designs.

[http://www.queenslibrary.org/index.aspx?page\\_nm=DiscoveryCenter](http://www.queenslibrary.org/index.aspx?page_nm=DiscoveryCenter)

#### **Other news on the international front**

##### **ALA's Public Library Association (PLA) Forms International Relations Community of Participation (IRCoP)**

At the recent American Library Association Midwinter Meeting in San Diego, California the initial meeting of the International Relations Community of Participation (IRCoP) was held. The IRCoP is a virtual group in which any member can join and participate. Its key goal is to share and collaborate with public libraries/librarians all over the world to share initiatives, best practices, develop projects, create white papers, and in general expand the horizons of public libraries beyond country borders. Go to ALA Connect at [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org) to learn more.

##### **Queens Library to Host 2011 MetLib Conference**

Queens Library (Queens, New York) will host the 2011 Metropolitan Libraries mid-term meeting from Sunday, May 15 through Friday

May 20. Library directors and senior staff from member libraries will gather to share information on library programs and services, management topics and new technologies in the context of the theme "*The Metropolitan Library: a diverse community*" and also to network and socialise. If you are interested in hearing about the challenges and opportunities of metropolitan libraries and contribute your experiences you are very welcome to attend and participate. For more information on the conference, go to the MetLib conference website, at <http://www.metlib2011nyc.org>

##### **International Association of Music Libraries (UK & Ireland) position statement on the future provision of music in public libraries**

The International Association of Music Libraries (UK & Ireland branch) has produced a position statement which advocates the continued provision of recorded music as a core part of the cultural offer available from public libraries. The position statement can be used to support the continued provision of recorded music at a local level. It highlights the place recorded music plays as a universal language for learning, promoting diversity and multiculturalism and embraces the provision of online technologies as global resources.

See [http://www.iaml.info/iaml-uk-irl/resources/music\\_audio\\_provision.pdf](http://www.iaml.info/iaml-uk-irl/resources/music_audio_provision.pdf)

## **Nominations invited for the ILIG International Award 2011**

ILIG is currently inviting nominations for the

### **ILIG International Award (for making a difference in libraries and information services outside the UK).**

This annual prize is awarded to a person, group or committee, which has made a real difference to a community through their work in library and information services in countries outside of the UK.

The nominee will be or will have recently been working overseas in the library and information sector and the award will recognize an initiative that is either current or has been completed within the last year.

Precedence will be given to those who have not already received recognition for their work, e.g. by national organizations or publicity.

Any person or group, except members of the current and immediate past ILIG Committees, is eligible. They may be of any nationality and need not be professionally trained librarians.

The 2011 award will be made in June. There will be a cash prize of £100, plus one year's free subscription to Focus, ILIG's journal.

To make a nomination, please complete a proposal form, which can be requested from the Secretary of ILIG by e-mail to [ilig@cilip.org.uk](mailto:ilig@cilip.org.uk) or by mail to Anne Powell, INASP, 60 St Aldates, Oxford, OX1 1ST, UK

Any CILIP member may make a nomination.

The deadline for receipt of completed nominations is 30 April 2011

*ILIG'S committee met on Wednesday 9 February 2011*

## **People news**

The meeting noted with sadness the death of Edward Dudley in November (see obituary in this issue). ILIG had arranged for a book of condolence to be provided for the memorial evening at CILIP HQ in December.

Emma Farrow was welcomed as a corresponding member of the Committee and since the meeting the Committee has welcomed another new member, Florence Achen-Owor.

## **International work**

Some delay had occurred in procuring the finances and shipping of books to Sierra Leone for the middle of March but it was hoped that this would still take place and was being chased.

## **CILIP Subscriptions for Overseas Members**

Overseas membership subscription issues are still not resolved to the Committee's satisfaction. The Committee would like income related subs for overseas membership and will press for this at Council this year. One of the Commonwealth Fellows attending the meeting, Muhammad Farroq raised a problem with the online membership payment which can take 3 -4 weeks to take effect after payment is made online. The matter will be raised with the membership department since this has direct impact on our members overseas. It was also agreed that we should campaign for visiting overseas librarians to be able to use the CILIP facilities and be hosted by CILIP.

## **ILIG Finances**

The Treasurer reported that the finances are in a healthy position despite there being no capitation available in 2011 and that any Umbrella event income in 2011 would not be received until 2012. Nevertheless it was agreed to increase subscription rates for *Focus* 2012 by £5.00 per year on each type of subscription since they had not altered for several years. Advertising rates to be revised to include the new VAT rate but to round down the figure charged to encourage new adverts.

## **ILIG Web**

Alice Tyler reported that the CILIP Web Team is experiencing major problems with Windows 7, (and other new software releases).

## **ILIG monthly bulletin**

Roger Stringer has volunteered to take over the ILIG monthly bulletin from Sabelo Mapesure and this was agreed with thanks to Sabelo for his hard work on this facility.

## **ILIG Informals**

The 2011 dates for Informals were provided as follows;

13 April –The current visiting Commonwealth Fellows have agreed to speak.

8 June & 12 October- the subjects are still to be confirmed and ideas welcomed.

14 December – Christmas Quiz following the 2010 Quiz raising £96 for the Emergency Fund.

## **Fund raising seminars**

It was noted that the Seminar in November had raised £2000 and that the April 2011

Seminar would be run on a lower cost international theme. Ideas for future seminars were discussed and the following ideas – Usage Statistics for e-books and Exploiting your data were proposed as was Teaching Skills including Basic Skills, Information Literacy and Advocacy. The committee agreed to pursue the option of delivering seminars remotely via Skype and other webtools and the subject of *How to Run Reading Groups* would be the first of these types of events.

#### **Umbrella 2011**

Maria Cotera is leading on the planning for sessions at the conference as follows;

Tuesday 12 July. The Global Librarian: Showing our Diversity and Internationalism through CPD Opportunities. Workshop with the Diversity and Prisons Group.

Wednesday 13 July. New LIS Roles supporting dissemination of research: a national and international perspective.

Equalities issues in libraries: the emerging tensions. Panel discussion with Diversity group.

Enhancing value through partnership – international cooperation to improve information access. Followed by Developing the technology and capacity building skills of librarians to enhance health information access. Joint sessions with Health Libraries Group.

Check the Umbrella website for more details at; <http://www.cilip.org.uk/umbrella2011/Pages/default.aspx>

#### **ILIG Awards**

ILIG International Award 2011. Applications need to be received by 30 April (see advert elsewhere in this issue).

It was agreed to open up the newly agreed IFLA Bursary to any international conference/seminar and CILIP membership would be paid for in the year of the award and a lifetime subscription to *Focus* provided. The award will be a pot of money which can be divided up and need not all be awarded to one person. Preference will be given to professionals who are an active member of the main professional organisation in their country where one exists. The award will be made annually for a period of 3 years starting in 2013 with a total pot of £1500 p.a. with the stipulation that it may be withheld if no suitable or sufficiently deserving proposal is received. The financial situation and effectiveness of the award will be reviewed after 3 years.

Preparations are well in hand for the Anthony Thompson Award 2012.

It was agreed that ILIG would add the cost of the additional membership subscription to ILIG as part of the CILIP Aspire Award if required, or if not, that funding for an external subscription to ILIG Focus only would be paid for.

*John Lake*

## Book Reviews

T.T. Nguyen, *Knowledge economy and sustainable economic development: a critical review*. Berlin: de Gruyter Saur, 2010. ISBN 978-3-598-25181-8; (e-book ISBN 978-3-598-44157-8). €59.95; \$93.00

The knowledge economy existed before the ICT boom began in the 1990s. However, new Information and Communication Technologies add speed, efficiency or convenience to the way things have always been done, while others are facilitating previously inconceivable activities. Many leading 'developing' countries are seeking to increase knowledge production and services as a proportion of their economies, using ICTs to offset their dependence on the exploitation of natural resources - but to what effect? The author of this study previously worked in the office of the Steering Committee of the National programme on Information Technology, a joint Ministerial initiative, and is now the Vice-Director of the Vietnam-Canada Information Technology Project. The book appears to have been prepared whilst he was on leave to complete a research degree in Australia.

Vietnam is constructing a socialist-oriented market economy and, since 1986, has been pursuing a major reform programme known as 'Doimoi' (innovation), which amongst other things is encouraging and implementing new ICTs. The economy is growing, but so are the environmental challenges - population growth, pollution, water shortages, etc. Nguyen expresses concern about the erosion of global natural resources, global warming etc., but believes that there are knowledge based solutions to these problems, although he acknowledges that they require substantial investment. He argues that development based on the application of ICTs offers a more sustainable future, but concedes that the evolution of a knowledge economy depends on its social context, and he sets out to examine which conditions facilitate its development

in countries that currently produce physical goods.

Nguyen describes the challenges that may inhibit Vietnam's development, including traditional values and a shortage of labour with relevant expertise. Although the number of Internet users in Vietnam is growing rapidly, they are still only about 25% of the population, predominantly young and educated. Nonetheless, they make less use of the Net for educational purposes and compared with their western counterparts, perhaps this is a reflection on the limited content available in the local language. As well as outlining these perennial problems of developing countries, he turns his attention to new problems that rapid development has revealed, particularly a low level of knowledge and understanding amongst the country's political leaders and decision makers and the consequent weaknesses in government's capacity to manage the changes, including - it is said - a lack of understanding of 75% of the population who live in rural areas. However, he also points to one interesting initiative in rural services. In Vietnam, communal post and cultural points provide postal and communication services to communities where there would otherwise be no post office and, at best, limited library services, perhaps offering a lesson for other, more advanced countries where postal and library services are, separately, being closed because of economic pressures. (More commercially minded organisations have already recognised these opportunities; the area manager for one of the Scotland's Cooperative retail chains was most anxious to acquire the local post office licence in the village where I live, when its previous owners retired, because

he knew that it would increase the footfall and sales in the chain's shop.)

Later chapters tackle not only the issues of sustainable development of the ICT industry in Vietnam, but the broader and more complex debate about the extent to which a less developed country can develop a knowledge economy strong enough to resist the demands being made on its natural resources by the already developed countries. Nguyen contrasts the international trade of knowledge goods and services at a high price with the trade in physical goods at low prices. He sees the present inequality in this exchange of mind and matter, and describes the World Trade Organisation's TRIPS agreement as an attempt by the industrialised countries to retain their control over the global economy by heavily influencing the cost of joining the knowledge society.

The author's English has been edited to leave it almost free of grammatical and typographical errors, the latter being mainly stray hyphens that should have been eliminated in a final proof-reading, and heavily revised to present an articulate text. Nonetheless, this is not an easy read. It is based on an extensive review of the literature. Almost every chapter is a mini-survey, using the results of his fieldwork in

Vietnam to develop new understandings, and digesting this amount of information does not come easily. Some people may find individual chapters more accessible and interesting than the whole. However, the final chapter does summarise the whole of his evidence and argument and draws from its conclusions some mercifully simple guidelines for the way forward for Vietnam, presenting a number of policy options for governments that are relevant for other countries in similar situations – and in some instances for developed countries as well.

This is the first title in a new series from well known library and information science publishers. The series, *Knowledge and Information: Studies in Information Science*, is intended to publish high quality, peer-reviewed research monographs, which will appear in print and as an eBook version. The editorial panel includes some internationally well-known academics, and some who are less well-known (to this reviewer at least). For their first text, the editors have chosen well. Despite its emphasis on Vietnam, the book is worthwhile reading just to understand the challenges facing all developing countries.

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Ridha Methnani. *The Information Society and Development: what kind of relationship?*  
Manouba, Tunisia: Centre de Publication Universitaire; & Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 2010.  
ISBN 978-0-86372-379-7 £60.00

In the last Century, developing countries were encouraged to invest in education as a means of growing their economies and economics researchers were able to demonstrate that there was a clear link between such investment and growth. This

book describes the growth of the information sector asserting its impact on productivity and wealth creation. As a result the 'Digital Divide' is perceived as both a development gap and a barrier to development. International development agencies now

encourage investment in new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a further stimulus to growth, but on largely anecdotal evidence - formal proof of their impact on growth has not yet emerged. Part of this book is an attempt to present such evidence.

The Tunisian Government took the agencies' message seriously, and the country was thus an appropriate venue for the second meeting of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The development of an "Information Society" has been given very high importance there, and the book brings the author's perspective as both a senior government official and an academic. Professor Methnani began to examine this topic for his PhD in Information and Communication Sciences at the Sorbonne thirty years ago. He has held several senior government positions in Tunisia, including President of the Higher Council of Communication and Director General of International Cooperation in the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology. He also taught at the Institute of Law for Development in Paris and was Director of the Higher Institute of Documentation at the University of Manouba in Tunis.

The book has nine chapters which cover the emergence and characteristics of the Information Society, the challenge that it represents and the issues raised by taking up the challenge to join the rank of developed countries. He recognises that globalization provides opportunities for progress and that the creation of an Information Society might present a particular opportunity for less developed countries to shorten important

phases of their development. However, he also expresses concerns about the risk of cultural invasion and the possibility that developed countries may be deliberately limiting the information transferred to less developed nations.

The technical origins of ICT systems placed an early emphasis on the role of engineers and scientists - WSIS was started by the International Telecommunications Union for example. The book goes into some detail in describing the WSIS process, providing a useful record of events and outcomes and it summarises preparatory work in the Arab world. The book places a substantial emphasis on the experience of the Arab world in general and Tunisia in particular. Its account of the Tunisian government's actions to prepare the country's information sector could provide a useful model for other Arab states and other developing countries where availability and use of the Internet is still comparatively low. An appendix also usefully includes the reference documents issued from the WSIS. It is notable, however, that Tunisia's actions, generally little known in the developed countries, also included an increase in the number of students (and staff) in Higher Education, and in R&D expenditure - an object lesson for some developed countries that are currently reducing government expenditure in those areas.

Some of the content assumes a very low level of knowledge. The detail in the text and some of the footnotes, although possibly necessary explanations for the students that he teaches, can only be described as banal. The text is largely based on a Master's Degree course on 'The Information Society and

Modern Communication Technologies' that Professor Methnani teaches at the Institute of Press and Communication Sciences at Manouba University. There is thus much unnecessary repetition, lacking the holistic perspective that should have been applied to editing the content of lectures. His principal understanding of 'information' is as 'news.' Consequently the book contains little about library information, documentation, archives services, the book and journal publishing industry and their role in driving and sustaining the Information Society. There are also some curious minor omissions. For example, the book fails to mention the introduction of the GUIs such as Windows that led to the creation of the Web as we know it. Nor does the author seem to be aware of the Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society, which was agreed at the Summit Meeting of the G8 Heads of Government in 2000. The need for information literacy, and the implications for teaching and learning styles are also largely ignored. Nonetheless, the book's potential strength is in its assembly of factual material. As a description of the level of activity in the Arab world, this is a quite useful text, and the extensive references (many of them to web pages) are one of the book's major assets.

Other parts of the book attempt to present evidence for the impact of the Information Society but it is disappointing. In the Arab region, as the author acknowledges, the field of Information and Communication Science is still largely confined to interpretation, translation and imitation of events in the developed world. To initiate change, a higher level of understanding is needed. The author has clearly read widely, but

the text contains too many incoherent statements and half-digested facts. For example, the author cites the experience of Korea as a developing nation, without offering any explanation of the relevance of ICTs to its progress. The break-up of the U.S.S.R. is attributed solely to changes in the communication environment, ignoring its economic collapse, while the next paragraph cites China's economic progress without considering the contrast between its control of electronic media and its parallel efforts to transfer its scientific information services to the Web. As an examination of the question raised by the book's subtitle, it offers no new evidence to advance our understanding, and fails to provide a stronger rationale for action.

The appendices include a trilingual glossary (Arabic, French, English), covering more than 2,500 terms used in current research and studies in the field, which may go some way to overcoming the variations in the use of terminology between (and, in the case of the Arabic-speaking world, within) these linguistic groups. Regrettably, the text was translated into English by several non-native English speakers and in addition to frequent unfortunate use of words or phrases, there are typographical errors, punctuation mistakes and incomplete statements. The text should have been submitted to a native English-speaker, knowledgeable in the area for copy-editing and proof-reading, and perhaps for some judicious revision that could have enhanced the value of this work.

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# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## ILIG INFORMALS AND MEETINGS

### ILIG Informals are free

They provide an excellent opportunity to find out about international LIS issues in a relaxed setting and to meet like-minded professionals  
refreshments are provided - networking is encouraged  
everyone is welcome

They are held at  
CILIP, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE (unless otherwise stated)  
on Wednesdays from 6pm to 7.45pm

### **Wednesday, 13 April 2011**

#### **Visitors from across the Globe: Using International Scholarship to Develop Services**

Dr Sunil Gorla, Muhammad Farooq and Titlayo Ilesanni will be talking about their experiences of working in India, Pakistan and Nigeria, why they applied for a Commonwealth Fellowship and what they have achieved during their visit to the UK.

### **Monday 23rd May**

#### **ILIG one-day conference on Library Advocacy** (more details on page 26)

**Wednesday 8 June & Wednesday 12 October**  
to be announced

### **Wednesday 14 December**

Christmas Quiz following the 2010 Quiz raising £96 for the Emergency Fund.

Look for more information on our website [www.cilip.org.uk/ilig](http://www.cilip.org.uk/ilig) or  
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