National and University Library of Slovenia in Ljubljana: A Symbol of Slovenia's Rich Intellectual Heritage and Commitment to Education

Reysa Alenzuela

The National and University Library (NUK) in Ljubljana is the central library of Slovenia and the hub of knowledge dissemination safeguarding and documenting the nation's cultural and scientific legacy. As a knowledge hub, it plays a vital role in preserving and promoting Slovenia's cultural and scholarly heritage. With its architectural grandeur and extensive collection of books, manuscripts, and digital resources, the library serves as a space for lifelong learning and intellectual stimulus for scholars, students, and the public.

The roots of the National and University Library dates back to the late 18th century when the Enlightenment
movement spurred a growing need for a central repository of knowledge. Established by a decree released by the Empress Maria Theresa in 1774 as the Lyceum Library, it evolved over the centuries, adapting to changing societal and technological landscapes. In 1919 the library undertook the functions and role of the central university library. It was also in the same year of the establishment of the University of Ljubljana. With the high education law, it became the University Library in 1938. After the second World War it remained university library, but it became also the National Library of Slovenia merged with the University Library, creating a unified institution that caters to both academia and the wider community recognised and renamed as the National and University Library.

Nestled in the heart of Ljubljana, the building's exterior showcases a harmonious blend of neoclassical and art nouveau elements. Designed by the renowned architect Jože Plečnik, it reflects his vision of creating spaces that inspire intellectual pursuits while harmonizing with the cityscape.

The entrance to the reading room of the National and University Library of Slovenia serves as a powerful metaphor, representing the transition from ignorance to knowledge. The dark-hued walls and pillars at the entrance symbolize the initial state of lack of understanding. However, as visitors proceed further into the reading room, they experience a transformation, with the space gradually becoming brighter and filled with light. This transition serves as a reminder of the essential role libraries play as beacons of knowledge, guiding individuals on a transformative journey from darkness to enlightenment.

As the central library for the University of Ljubljana, the library plays a crucial role in supporting the research and educational needs of the academic community. It serves as a hub for scholars, providing access to a wide array of scholarly resources and specialized collections. Through its diverse range of services, including interlibrary loan, research consultations, and workshops, the library actively promotes academic excellence and intellectual growth. The library boasts an impressive collection of almost three million items, including rare and antique books that preserve the nation's cultural heritage. It serves as a legal deposit library where every publication published in Slovenia is kept, ensuring the preservation of the country's written output for future generations.
Beyond academia, the National and University Library endeavors to connect with the public. It is not just a sanctuary for scholars but also a vibrant cultural hub that engages with the wider public. It organizes exhibitions, lectures, and cultural events, inviting the community to explore its treasures and engage in intellectual dialogue. The library's doors are open to all, encouraging a love for reading, critical thinking, and the appreciation of Slovenia's cultural heritage. One of the upcoming activities is an exhibition "Slovenians and Imperial Censorship from Joseph II to the First World War" explores the profound impact of censorship on Slovenian literature and culture during the long nineteenth century, featuring emblematic figures like France Prešeren and Miroslav Vilhar and demonstrating the crucial role censorship played in shaping Slovenian literary landscape, with the aim of conveying this message to the audience in an accessible and impactful manner.

Moreover, this knowledge institution has embraced the digital age with enthusiasm. It provides access to an extensive range of digital resources, including e-books, online databases, and electronic journals. This digital transformation has not only expanded the library's reach beyond its physical walls but has also facilitated new modes of research and learning.

**Preserving the Past, Creating a Better Future**
The National and University Library in Ljubljana stands as a testament to the importance of preserving the past while embracing the possibilities of the future. It bridges the gap between tradition and innovation, offering a sanctuary for knowledge seekers in an ever-evolving world. In 2020, the UNESCO National Committee for the Memory of the World Programme was established in Slovenia under the National Commission for UNESCO, with the goal of promoting and preserving written cultural heritage through international, regional, and national registers, and Slovenia's representative institutions include archives, libraries, and museums. Slovenia's entry in the Memory of the World International Register is the Codex Suprasliens, a tenth-century document in Old Church Slavonic, stored at the National and University Library in Ljubljana.

Moving forward, the National and University Library of Slovenia is embarking on the project NUK 2 - LIBRARY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY. It will serve as the first public space dedicated to culture and knowledge in independent Slovenia. NUK 2 aims to create a modern hub that intersects knowledge, creativity, innovation, imagination, dialogue, and connections, blending culture, science, and the economy. It will serve as a link between the past and future, alongside the iconic Plečnik palace. NUK 2 will cater to the needs of the modern user, featuring state-of-the-art technology and a versatile multi-purpose center. The facility will house 1,500 study reading seats, individual research carrels, computer classrooms, project rooms, creativity spaces, studios, presentation halls, meeting rooms, workshop areas, study groups, and educational spaces for librarians, as well as a social area. The library will openly provide access to 300,000 books, while digital resources such as serial publications, films, and music will be available through the internal network. NUK 2 will foster inclusivity and serve as a space for learning, embracing all generations. It will promote an open exchange of ideas, encouraging discussions, dissent, and critical thinking. The library will foster interdisciplinary collaboration, host community gatherings, and serve as a vibrant hub for university events.

With the inclusion of a night reading room, NUK 2 will be accessible to users 24 hours a day, further enhancing its role as a modern and educational cultural center. Spanning seven floors and covering 13,600 square meters, NUK 2 will be a space where cultural heritage, accumulated knowledge, experience, and imagination are passed on to present and future generations. It will foster the emergence of new ideas and reflections, while also serving as a hub for knowledge creation.

*Acknowledgement: Thanks to Dr. Alenka Kavčič – Čolić and Mr. Žiga Cerkvenik for the input.*
As Hong Kong goes its merry way rewriting history, academic libraries have not become immune, but in this case some donors of protest literature and artwork have chosen to withdraw their donated collections. Most significant among the losses: Chinese University of Hong Kong Library has lost its well-regarded Umbrella Movement Visual Archive, which has fled overseas in 2022. At this point other archives remain accessible in Hong Kong and books in academic libraries do not seem to be targeted by the pro-Beijing media, which had led eventually to their removal in public libraries. This is likely the result there is no overall public access to academic libraries as a rule in Hong Kong. Access is reserved for students, faculty and staff and those who have research needs on campus.

CNBC reported last year: "Residents of Hong Kong are leaving the city in droves in 2022 — not because they want to, several told CNBC, but because Covid restrictions and what they see as an erosion of democratic norms are pushing them to leave."

It's not just people who are migrating from Hong Kong, archives have also disappeared. As an AFP dispatch in retrospect in 2018 was appropriately titled, "Disappearing Act: What happened to the art from Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement?" Indeed, it has disappeared abroad.

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EDITORIAL

As we approach our final issue of International Leads, we, as co-editors, want to express our deep gratitude for the opportunity to serve in this role. It has been an incredible experience, especially considering that our team consisted of three who came from diverse backgrounds, working in different library sectors, even working from different time zones on different continents. Despite these challenges, we believe that our unique perspectives have allowed us to work together harmoniously building meaningful connections to each other and our colleagues and readers. We truly appreciated the chance to share numerous fascinating and significant activities, news, and accomplishments from libraries and librarians across the globe.

To the incoming co-editors, we extend our heartfelt congratulations, and we eagerly anticipate reading future issues.

In this concluding issue, we have highlighted the status of Hong Kong Libraries, shedding light on their current state and developments. Additionally, we have delved into the significance of the National and University Library of Slovenia in Ljubljana, which stands as a powerful symbol of Slovenia’s abundant intellectual heritage and unwavering dedication to education. You will also find in this issue the messages from the Chair and Chair-Elect of IRRT (International Relations Round Table) which provide insightful perspectives into the international library landscape.

Furthermore, an exclusive interview with the Executive Director of the House of Wisdom in Sharjah, UAE, shares the community’s vision and endeavors. Other noteworthy news are RUSA 2023 Best Emerging Technology Application Award; the groundbreaking work on Kindle Early Language Learning in Sudan by Janet Lee and Tegest Hailu; the exciting progress made through the collaboration between the IRRT and the 2023 ALA Emerging Leaders Project, showcasing their joint efforts; highlights of the IATUL Conference in Dubai, the second International Conference organized by the Colorado Association of Libraries; the 51st annual conference of ARLIS/NA (Art Libraries of North America) in Mexico City; The Meet the National Libraries Series introduces readers to the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR). Each report/article captures the vibrant atmosphere and valuable discussions that take place at conferences and gatherings, plus the IRRT webinar that addressed the changing landscape and challenges faced by Latin American Libraries.

Looking ahead, we provide a glimpse into upcoming international conferences, ensuring readers stay informed about future opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing. On the lighter side, we close this issue with a comic illustration, appreciating its unique ability to communicate narratives visually.

As co-editors, we bid farewell with immense gratitude and pride in the journey we have undertaken together, having enjoyed working with two IRRT executive boards and looking forward to the major anniversary IRRT will soon celebrate. We are confident that International Leads will continue to inspire, inform, and connect librarians worldwide under the guidance of the new editorial team and our readers’ generous contributions.

Reysa, Michele & Julia

THE EDITORS

Reysa Alenzuela
Reysa is the Head Librarian of the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences in the Czech Republic. She has over 20 years of experience as a librarian and has been working as an international librarian for almost a decade. She is a Member of ALA IRRT.

Julia Gelfand
Julia is the Applied Sciences & Engineering Librarian at the University of California, Irvine. She has been a member of IRRT most of the 45 years she has been involved in ALA and has been working with international colleagues most of her career.

Michele Fenton
Michele is a Monographs Catalog Librarian at the Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA. Michele is active in the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, the International Relations Round Table, and the Library History Round Table.
MESSAGE FROM THE IRRT CHAIR

Safi Safiullah

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We have accomplished so much together throughout my tenure as the IRRT’s 2022-2023 Chair. Several inspiring leaders and team players have poured energy into strengthening the IRRT, and I am so grateful for those who replied to my requests for calls to serve on committees.

My intention in creating the Chair’s theme, “The New Normal for Libraries around the Globe 2022-2023” was to encourage intellectual discussion on how librarians around the globe are coping with the new policies and procedures. The Chair’s Program Committee organized a session “From Epidemic to Endemic: Global Experiences and Perspectives” that will delve into this topic further by featuring three international library professionals and their discussion on OCLC’s “New Model Library: Pandemic Effects and Library Directions.” I appreciate Clara Chu, Barbara Murson, all the Chair Program Committee members, and the OCLC for coordinating this session.

IRRT Executive Board’s Accomplishment

The IRRT EB has remained active throughout the year and worked tirelessly to achieve the following:

• Collaborated with the ALA Board to reduce the international librarian’s membership fee to $56 and provide an opportunity to join the IRRT without additional fees
• Consulted with the ALA By-Law Committee to better the IRRT’s by-law structures
• Formed the International Librarians Network (ILNP) subcommittee to facilitate international partnerships and build networks of information professionals as well as support knowledge and information exchange between colleagues around the world.
• Sponsored an Emerging Leaders scholarship from the IRRT fund. Thank you to Mark Mattson, Jim Neal, Barbara Marson, and Erica Sato for their hard work on these initiatives.
• Restructure Committee: As Chair, I felt it was necessary to look at the IRRT’s organizational structure to find ways we can work better together and create manageable workloads. Since August 2022, Jim Neal, Mark Mattson, Felicia Chan, and I have worked together on this Committee to examine all 15 of the committee’s activities and functions. The Committee will present our recommendations for voting at the ALA Executive Board meeting on Sunday, June 25th. If able, we would like IRRT members to attend and offer feedback.
• IRRT’s 75th Anniversary: The EB formed a sub committee to celebrate IRRT’s 75th Anniversary during ALA’s Annual Conference in San Diego, 2024.
• International Leads (IL): It has been my pleasure to work with the 2021-2022 Editorial Board Members of IL Julia Gelfand, Reysa Alenzuela, and Michele Fenton. They have spent weeks and hours collecting news from international libraries/librarians in creating newsletters to share innovative ideas and activities. Thank you Julia, Reysa, and Michele for your time and care. I am grateful for your contributions and wish you the best on your next projects. Further, I am pleased to announce that the executive board has appointed Whitney Bevill, Amanda Harrison, Gloria Creed-Dikeogu, Anna Kozlowska and Johann Frederick A. Cabbab (Igor) to the IL helm. Both outgoing and incoming editors have worked together on this newsletter issue to ease the transition, thank you! To learn more about the incoming editors, click here.

IRRT Committee Activities and their Programs during the ALA-2023 Annual Conference:

• International Librarians’ Pre-Conference Committee: By utilizing all of his connections, Jim Neal brought together a panel of scholars to organize the Global Libraries As Advocates For Information Policy Change pre-conference opportunity. This will be the first time for a pre-conference session after the pandemic and we are fortunate to have a good group of panelists who will be talking about library policies. I am grateful to Jim Neal, Buenaventura B. Basco, and Sandy Wee who worked with Barbara Marson along with the committee members to organize this valuable Pre-Conference session.
• Nominating Committee: The IRRT’s Nominating Committee members including Sandy Hirsh (Chair), Loida A. Garcia-Febo (Past ALA President), Michael Bailou Huang (IRRT leader and CALA Chair), Robin Kear (Past IRRT Chair), and Laverne Page (Prominent IRRT leader and LC Librarian) have worked efficiently and promptly to submit a pool of nominations during the ALA election—thank you all. As a result, Carol Brey (Past ALA President) has emerged as an incoming IRRT Chair, Peter Bae as member-at-large, and Erica Saito as Secretary and Treasurer. I welcome the new leadership chaired by Mark Mattson and look forward to working together.
• Membership Committee: The IRRT was honored
to present the IRRT Notable Member Award to the late Donna Scheeder. This was a team effort led by Nafiz Zaman Shuva, Mark Mattson, Anna Kozlowska, and Delin Guerra of the Membership Committee. I am thankful for all their hard work.

• International Connection Committee: The IRRT’s International Connection Committee has organized the Best Practices from World Libraries Photo Gallery featuring libraries from around the world and their responses to the pandemic. Thanks to Jim Neal and co-chairs Katie Dow and Mrs. April Moyo for collecting these photos. The committee is also hosting the Learning International: Notes from the Field ALA session.

• IRRT Poster Committee: IRRT Poster Committee members have selected 18 entries, most from international participants, representative of how different global areas are coping with the “new normal.” The posters will be displayed during the Global Solutions Poster Session (Sunday, June 25, 2023 from 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM at McCormick Place, W190a). Thanks to Andrea A. Wirth, Florence N. Mugambi along with committee members who put this session together.

• Papers and Projects Committee: Brea Hansen, Michele Fenton, and Paper and Projects committee members will be hosting the Finding a New Normal: Library Policies and Practices ALA conference session, which will include several presentations on how librarians from the Philippines, Canada, Singapore, and Australia are navigating this post-pandemic period. They will also explore emerging discussions on inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. I am grateful for Brea, Michele and Felicia for coordinating with international presenters to create this session.

• Orientation/Mentoring Committee: Karen E. Downing and Andrea R. Malone worked with Delin Guerra of the ALA Office to organize this year’s International Librarians Orientation. I consider this as one of our signature programs since we have the opportunity to welcome international attendees to the ALA Conference. Seeing as many international librarians have registered for this year’s annual, we are expecting that this meeting will host the biggest crowd since the pandemic began.

• Reception Committee: During the ALA conference’s International Librarian’s Reception, the committee will announce the two winners of ALA Presidential Citation for Innovative International Library Projects. I send many thanks to Katie Spires, Eileen K. Bosch, and the committee members who went through the lengthy process to select these finalists, as well as Dalin Guerra and the Chicago Public Library for coordinating the event.

• Webinar Committee: I am grateful to Shrianjani Marie De Alwis Jayasuriya and Danilo M. Baylen, and Ophelia T. Morey, who offered several webinars throughout the year. Sessions such as Changes and Challenges in Libraries in Latin America, Secret International Library Networks No One Has Told You About and Sister Libraries Chat have helped librarians connect from around the globe.

The following programs will be offered by some IRRT committee and the International Relations Committee (IRC) members. They have worked diligently to create ALA sessions on how libraries have responded to the pandemic and what they are doing in the post-pandemic environment. Their presentations include:

• Innovative Asian Public Libraries Transforming Services and Communities
• Making a Difference with School Libraries in Kenya and Opportunities for You to Volunteer
• Books Are A Refuge: Supporting Ukrainian Language Communities through Library Collections

For further information about all the IRRT sessions and when they are being hosted, please visit the ALA Conference International Meetings and Programs Schedule.

It has been my pleasure to work with many prominent IRRT and ALA leaders who love to work with international librarians to improve the libraries of the world. I enjoyed working with the exceptional team of the current board including Jim Neal, Mark Mattson, Felicia Chan, Barbara Marson, and Erica Saito, whom I have learned much from and admire deeply - I enjoyed working together with the team, thank you. I also thank the exceptional ALA program manager Delin Guerra, who consistently provides timely updates and—along with Michael Dowling—knows the ins and outs of the international librarians and communities. Thank you, Delin.

During my tenure, I had the opportunity of a lifetime to work with 7 IRRT Board Members, 29 co-chairs for 15 committees and 4 task forces/sub committees, one interest group and over 70 committee members. I am humbled and thankful for your trust and support. Thank you for your work to advance libraries, improve librarians’ lives, and to work for the betterment of our communities. I hold you all dearly in my heart.

I look forward to meeting my colleagues at the ALA’s IRRT’s meetings (especially during the IRRT’s EB and All Committee meetings), as well as in various sessions in Chicago’s Annual-2023. Let’s continue to work together to improve communities all around the globe.
It is hard to believe that our working year will soon be coming to a close and we will be gathering at the annual conference to celebrate the accomplishments of our Roundtable! This year in Chicago, IRRT will continue to offer fantastic programming and provide a warm welcome for international colleagues attending the conference. We will also have the opportunity to reflect on the work and impact of the roundtable, which is substantial, and also to consider our plans for the future. I am very much looking forward to getting together in person with IRRT colleagues in late June!

In previous Chair-Elect Columns, I provided updates on some of the organizational work that we have been doing related to standardization across the ALA roundtables. One key aspect of this work is the standardization of our bylaws. With the passage of the new ALA Bylaws, the Round Table Coordinating Assembly (RTCA) has set up a small taskforce to realign the roundtable bylaws template that was created by the RTCA a couple of years ago. Having represented IRRT on the original Bylaws Standardization Taskforce, I have volunteered to serve on this new taskforce to update the original template within the new overall governance structure. I believe that this work will be accomplished quite quickly as the template already mostly conforms to the new ALA Bylaws. Once the template is complete and has been approved, we will be able to revise our own IRRT bylaws. This revision should also be relatively straightforward as well. Before the changes go to the ballot in the next election cycle for IRRT membership, we will organize a Zoom session for IRRT members regarding the changes that are being proposed.

Related to the updates to our roundtable bylaws, this year the Executive Board has also been taking some time to think strategically about IRRT’s future needs and structure. As Safi mentioned in the Chair’s Column, we have done this work with feedback and input from several committee chairs, and we are excited to talk with you all about some proposed changes related to realigning our structures to our current ways of working. The goal of the proposed changes is to allow IRRT to continue to innovate while supporting the important programming we have developed over the years. If you would like to hear more about this work, please plan to join us during the IRRT Executive Board meeting at the annual conference.

Finally, after the annual conference this year we will be kicking off the year leading up to the celebration of IRRT’s 75th anniversary at the Annual Conference in 2024. This is an important milestone for our roundtable and a great opportunity for reflection, celebration, and strategic planning. With all the proposed changes and the anniversary celebration coming together in the next year, my theme as IRRT Chair starting in July will be, “The Impact of IRRT: Celebrating our Past and Looking to our Future.”

If you would like to play a role in IRRT’s success in the coming year but have not yet found the role or opportunity that fits, there are still many opportunities to serve on committees and contribute to IRRT’s impact within both ALA and the larger profession! Feel free to reach out to me directly with any questions. See you in Chicago!
INTERVIEW WITH THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE HOUSE OF WISDOM IN SHARJAH, UAE

This interview was conducted via eMail with Marwa Al Aqroubi, Executive Director of the House of Wisdom in Sharjah, UAE in May 2023 by Julia Gelfand, co-editor, International Leads.

Thank you for this opportunity to learn more about the House of Wisdom (HoW) that opened in Sharjah on 9 December 2020. This is a very special community center and library that I was able to visit a couple of months ago and am pleased to share more about it with our readers.

Most of us are familiar with associating the “House of Wisdom” with the Grand Library of Baghdad and we hope you can share how that name came to be for the public community center/library in Sharjah. The House of Wisdom (HoW) takes its name from the famous center of learning and discovery during the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258 AD). The original House of Wisdom in Baghdad has historically served as a beacon of intellectual enlightenment, where scholars from different cultures and religions came together to share knowledge, conduct research, and translate works of the Greeks, Persians, and Indians into Arabic.

In Sharjah, the House of Wisdom serves as a modern interpretation of the same values and legacy of the original institution. It represents a tribute to the pursuit of knowledge and the advancement of the arts. As a hub of cognition, it aims to foster learning, cultural exchange, and scientific discovery, by providing a space for scholars, students, and the public to come together and access knowledge across different disciplines.

The House of Wisdom is not only a center of learning, but also a social and recreational venue that offers the community members a diverse range of programs and activities to promote cultural exchange and encourage people to interact with each other. We believe that this approach creates an inclusive environment that fosters innovation and helps to promote understanding and respect for different cultures and traditions.

Sharjah, named the World Book capital by UNESCO in 2019 hosts the annual international book fair every November now also has this new library/community center that opened in 2020. How were the priorities identified for this complex and the services it would offer in the community? And what kind of build-out are you expecting as I understand that an expansion is already being planned?

As a modern cultural landmark in Sharjah, the House of Wisdom was commissioned by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, to commemorate the emirate’s recognition as the UNESCO World Book Capital 2019. Priorities were collectively identified through a comprehensive process of community consultation and engagement with various stakeholders, including government entities, academic organizations, artists, and members of the public.

Developed by Sharjah Investment Development Authority (Shurooq), House of Wisdom features a contemporary architectural design spread over 12,000 square meters across two floors, incorporating both traditional and digital sources of knowledge. Its open, column-free interiors feature several halls, indoor and outdoor reading areas, and a children’s edutainment space. It is a dynamic and constantly evolving project that plans to continue growing and expanding in the future. The addition of new services is already underway to meet the changing needs of the community as the HoW remains a vibrant futuristic library that fosters learning, arts, and scientific discovery, and inspires future generations.

Please share the staffing model for this facility – how many professional librarians are currently employed and do they provide or host traditional
library services? Since it is more than just a library, what other kind of services do you provide?
We rely on a dedicated team of highly-qualified professionals with expertise in library and information science, as well as specific knowledge in different fields related to arts, culture, and education. The team includes professional librarians, who are in charge of managing the physical and digital collections and providing a range of traditional library services such as cataloguing, circulation, reference, and research support.

Additionally, our cultural establishment offers an array of services and programs that go beyond traditional library services. These include exhibitions, workshops, lectures, cultural events, and educational programs for all ages. The goal is to create a dynamic and engaging environment that fosters learning, creativity, and innovation, while providing spaces for knowledge sharing and community engagement.

Sharjah is an international community with several universities nearby. How much of an academic library role is there and do students come to study there? What other academic expectations do you satisfy?
Ultimately, the House of Wisdom serves both academic and community needs. It houses an extensive collection of academic literature, i.e. books and journals, and provides research and reference services, interlibrary loan, and access to extensive online resources. Professional librarians with expertise in various subject areas are available to assist students and researchers with their academic pursuits. We also offer cultural and community events, such as book fairs, art exhibitions, and workshops, that attract a diverse audience, providing an engaging and dynamic environment for learning and interaction.

Could you recommend any hidden gems or lesser-known treasures to explore at House of Wisdom?
The beauty of the House of Wisdom is that there is a hidden gem for each kind of visitor all thanks to a plethora of unique features that distinguish it from other libraries. One such service is the Espresso Book Machine; a high-speed printer that can print and bind a book in commercial quality in just a few minutes. This not only allows visitors to print On Demand Books from our database, but more excitingly, gives up-and-coming talent the power to self-publish their works. Inside the same space, visitors can rent laptops and iPads as well as sanitise their books in our Book Sanitising Machine. There are so many treasures to be found and enjoyed; we encourage all visitors to explore the space and book a tour to learn more about all we have on offer.

The focus on children and literacy is very evident. Please share the kind of programming and the multilingual resources that you collect for the House of Wisdom that cater to children and youth.
We place a great emphasis on cultivating a love for learning amongst our children and youth. We offer a wide range of learning resources such as books, audiobooks, and e-books in a variety of languages, including Arabic, English, French, Spanish, and German.

We have a dedicated space for children, The Little Reader, that caters to age groups 3 to 12 years. The space includes a library, a play area, and workshop area that allow children to seamlessly play and learn at the same time. Little Reader follows a unique
learning philosophy that acknowledges the importance of play and leisure in children's learning and development. All the programs and activities follow an international framework that aims to enhance children's developmental skills in five main areas: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); Literature; Wellbeing; Music; Art & Identity. The framework ensures that children are fully engaged and increase their comprehension retention by ensuring that they go through the three main aspects of learning: Principles, Practice, and Learning Outcomes. Every activity also aims to develop children's social, emotional and communication skills.

Our Youth programs follow a similar philosophy and holistic approach to learning but we ensure that the programs are mentally stimulating for their age and interests.

Architecturally, this building is quite spectacular and contains several special features such as the Scroll Monument, the “Ladies Diwan,” Fabrication Lab, restaurants and eateries, and lovely gardens with fountains. Please describe these areas, the architectural elements and their sources of inspiration. We understand that there are already plans to extend the building. What new services and experiences will the additional space provide?

Designed by Foster and Partners, HoW space is a stunning architectural masterpiece that draws inspiration from the region's traditional architectural heritage although it implements a truly unique and modern aesthetic. The two-story building is characterized by a floating roof cantilevering on all sides of a transparent rectilinear volume, giving it a sense of lightness and clarity to complement the many “lightbulb” moments that happen within the walls.

One of the most noteworthy features of HoW is the Scroll Monument, a visually stunning sculpture designed by the famous British artist Gerry Judah, celebrating Sharjah’s year-long tenure as the UNESCO World Book Capital 2019. It is situated amidst landscaped gardens, shaded walkways, and water features. Additionally, the library boasts several unique spaces, such as the Ladies Diwan section, a peaceful space exclusively for women that allows them to be completely comfortable to read and study in a private setting; and Al Jazri FabLab, a state-of-the-art facility equipped with cutting-edge technologies like 3D printers, laser cutters, and virtual reality tools.

The House of Wisdom impressively blends nature and architecture, seamlessly integrating natural elements into both its indoor and outdoor spaces. The library boasts a total of 331 trees, comprising 12 different species, including 56 indigenous trees, shrubs, grasses, and groundcovers. Beyond the stunning outdoor sections, such as the knowledge garden and children's playground, the House of Wisdom's internal courtyard is another standout feature. Inspired by an oasis, the garden's lush greenery, water features, and fountains create a peaceful and calming atmosphere, making it an ideal place for visitors to unwind and relax.

Due to House of Wisdom’s great success so far, we have decided to extend the building to offer more for our visitors and partners. We are currently surveying and analyzing the services and facilities to be added in this new space.

Do you think that the library or community center approach will be the future dominant sense of the complex?

House of Wisdom was designed as a “Library of the Future.” By its very nature, it is built to adapt to the changing needs of the community and according to the advancements in technology and education. Our ultimate goal is to cultivate a love for reading and encourage seamless life-long learning. What that will look like in the future is yet to be known; but one thing is for certain—we are ready to adapt to the times in an effort to serve the greater good and Sharjah's cultural ambitions.

Please share any information you think readers will want to know about this incredibly special facility. The House of Wisdom is truly a remarkable facility that offers an unparalleled experience to its visitors. Whether you’re a resident of the UAE or simply on vacation here, we invite you to come and explore everything that the HoW has to offer. From its state-of-the-art library and immersive exhibitions to its serene gardens and tranquil spaces, there's something here for everyone. We hope that your visit will be a truly worthwhile experience that leaves you inspired and wanting to return again and again.

Thank you for your insights and introduction to this facility and I encourage anyone who visits this region to plan a stop at the House of Wisdom. For more information and photos, please visit https://houseofwisdom.ae/
Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) has announced Janet Lee (IRRT member) and Tegest Hailu, M.D. are the recipients of one of two 2023 ETS Best Emerging Technology Application Awards for the Kindle Early Language Learning project for serving children in the Hasheba Refugee Camp in Sudan. The $3,000 Best Emerging Technology Application (BETA) Award is sponsored by Chatstaff and LibraryH3lp.

For applying existing technologies in novel ways that benefit the library and patrons, Kindle Early Language Learning is an innovative way of replicating the library and its resources for children living in difficult conditions in Sudan’s Hasheba Refugee Camp, helping them learn reading, writing, and languages in engaging ways. – Award Committee Statement

The Kindle Early Language Learning Project in Hasheba Refugee Camp in Sudan introduces first language resources to refugee school children in a joint library/classroom through the use of Kindle technology. The children, many of whom are orphans, fled from the Tigray region of Ethiopia, when conflict broke out in November 2020 forcing them into exile in Sudan.

As basic housing and health services were implemented in the camps, housing over 60,000 refugees, it became apparent that the children needed educational resources and a sense of normalcy that a school would provide. An agreement was made among the refugees, NGOs and the Sudanese government to share classroom space with existing Sudanese students.

Among the refugees were Ethiopian-certified teachers, taking up the charge of teaching the students. Since resources such as books and supplies are scarce, printing costs prohibitive, and shipping expensive, the project introduced the use of specially configured Kindle devices that were loaded with storybooks and first language reading aids in the languages of Tigrinya, Amharic, and Arabic. The Kindle device is ideal because it can hold hundreds of book titles in a variety of formats, is easy to hold, emulates a print book, and can handle the script of Tigrinya, Amharic, and Arabic. Since the storybooks are downloaded, access to the books is available offline. In a remote area of the world such as in the refugee camps in Sudan, with little access to internet and few print resources, the Kindle Early Language Learning Project provides needed resources in an attractive and affordable way.

Janet Lee will be presenting with other awardees at the 2023 RUSA ETS Technology Showcase at the American Library Association Monday, June 26th, from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM.

**Janet Lee**

**Professional Activities:**
- Member of ALA
- Member of ALA, IRRT
- Co-chair, Denver Sister Cities, Axum, Ethiopia Committee
- Chair, International Library Cultural Exchange Interest Group, Colorado Association of Libraries

**Awards & Grants:**
- Recipient of the first IRRT Mission Enhancement Grant for Chromebook lab at the Axumite Heritage Foundation Library, Axum, Ethiopia. 2018
- Fulbright Scholar, University of Aksum, Ethiopia 2017-18
- Recipient of the 2021 John Ames Humphry/ OCLC/Forest Press Award.
- Recipient of the Alpha Sigma Nu Magis Medal, a national recognition of scholarship, loyalty, and service. 2019.

**Tegest Hailu, M.D.**

**Professional Activities:**
- Professional Affiliations
- Private medical practice
- Founder and CEO, ISBHA (The International Society for Better Health Access)
- Board member, Health Professionals Network for Tigray (HPN4Tigray)

The BETA selection committee was Chaired by Beth Caruso.

See announcement: [https://rusaupdate.org/2023/03/2023-ets-best-emerging-technology-application-award/](https://rusaupdate.org/2023/03/2023-ets-best-emerging-technology-application-award/)
The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) held its 2023 ACRL Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March 15-18, 2023. Held every two years, the ACRL Conference brings together librarians from academic and research libraries across the country and around the world for networking opportunities, empowerment, and professional development.

This year’s conference was in hybrid format, allowing participants the option of attending virtually or in-person. Approximately 2,100 people attended the conference in-person, while 700 attended virtually. The previous conference, held in April 2021 was completely virtual due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The conference opened with keynote speaker Rebecca Nagle, journalist and host of the podcast *This Land*. Nagle, of the Cherokee Nation, spoke about Native American representation in the media, the importance of recognizing their sovereignty, and the need for greater inclusion of Native American voices in society.

Attendees had a variety of sessions to choose from. Some sessions of interest included:

- **Building Bridges into Library Leadership: Five Women’s Journeys to the Top Amidst the Great Resignation** – presented by Tara Baillargeon, Mimi Carter, Joelle Pitts, Rachel Rubin, Alicia Salaz, and Hilary Seo.
- **Need Not Apply: Identifying Barriers to Application to Academic Librarian Job Postings** – presented by Carolina Hernandez
- **Algorithm Literacy in the Age of ChatGPT** – presented by Rachel Moylan and Marta Samokishyn.

The closing keynote speaker was Heather McGhee, author of *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*. McGhee spoke of how racism limits prosperity, accessibility, and opportunity for people of color; and the necessary work to foster a fair, inclusive, and equitable society.

Overall, the 2023 ACRL Conference was an enlightening and exciting event. Highlights of the conference are featured in the conference wrap-up video on YouTube at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtRWMLMJnIo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtRWMLMJnIo).

The 2025 ACRL Conference will be held April 2-5, 2025 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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### The 2023 ALA Emerging Leaders Project with the IRRT

Alex Dodd, Lucy Flamm, Beth Jarrell, Matthew Symes, and Erica Saito

The 2023 ALA Emerging Leaders (EL) Group G, formed by Alex Dodd, Lucy Flamm, Beth Jarrell, and Matthew Symes, was selected to work closely with IRRT on the project “International Librarians Network Program (ILNP): Evaluation and future steps” proposed by Erica Saito, IRRT Secretary and Treasurer. The group began working in January 2023 and will end their participation during the ALA Annual conference, where they will present their poster. Erica Saito serves as a member guide facilitating the group communications with the IRRT Executive Board and different committees.

The ILNP idea was conceived in 2019 by EL group G. The program aims to assist librarians worldwide in networking and exchanging professional knowledge and experiences. In 2020 the EL group E, of which Erica Saito participated, was responsible for marketing and launching the program.

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After a successful implementation, the program continues to strengthen. Multiple iterations of the program have led to rich relationships between librarians across institutional and cultural contexts. In 2023, the fourth INLP cohort received more than 550 applications from 56 countries. The program relies on a group of volunteers with this year’s cohort consisting of 188 applicants from 49 countries.

The task of the 2023 EL group G is to identify where the program is successful and opportunities for improvement. Through analysis of existing data and participant surveys, the group will submit a report to the IRRT EB. These recommendations seek to formalize the program. In doing so, the group seeks to ensure the longevity and success of this unique international networking program for librarians.
The 43rd IATUL Conference

Julia Gelfand

The 43rd IATUL Conference was hosted for the first time in the Mideast in Dubai March 13-17, 2023 by librarians at Zayed University Dubai and the American University of Sharjah bringing together nearly 200 librarians from the region as well as South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India, Asia, across Europe, Caribbean, Canada and the United States. The conference co-chairs deserve to be introduced as they and their teams of colleagues planned an exceptional meeting that combined professional interests with a cultural introduction to the Emirates and its rich tradition. Lillian Li from Zayed University and Kara Jones at American University of Sharjah led exemplary planning as the conference logistics and hospitality made for a memorable trip. These two campuses each less than 30 years old, and neighboring libraries, including two that opened within the last two years, that were visited as part of the Study Tours, were a vital climax to IATUL planning.

The theme was “Libraries Pushing Boundaries,” and the sessions did not disappoint as speakers and organizers delivered a forum of timely and exciting sessions that captured extensive discussions around the four general themes:

- Vision, Leadership and Professional Growth
- Digital and Service Delivery
- Developing Capable Citizens
- Impact and Surfacing Research

Topics ranged from case studies and overviews that explored academic libraries strategic visions going forward in an uncertain world of reemergence after post-pandemic return to library life. After a generous welcome by the current President of IATUL, Dr. Anna Walek who also convened a business meeting that reminded us of how important community building is among professionals and the legacy we want to leave to our next generation of librarians who will continue responding to the enormous challenges presented globally and institutionally as we plan in each of these thematic areas.

A host of keynote speakers addressed many contemporary issues and concerns in libraries and the broader professional context and landscape. Nick Poole, Chief Executive CILIP in the UK opened the conference with a genuinely uplifting talk about information professionals and the new roles we can embrace and the communities we form. Peppered with lessons learned from how libraries worked through the pandemic and other challenging periods he reinforced how powerful professional organizations are to steer communities and institutions to stronger DEI goals.

Keynote speakers from the region included the dynamic Sallyann Della Casa, the founder and Chief Identity Hacker of GLEAC, a mentorship and learning platform based in Dubai with expansive wings regionally, in India and now worldwide. An entrepreneur who is applying the SDGs for quality education, gender equality, economic growth and collaboration, she pushes the boundaries with AI, other emerging technologies for the workplace and empowering through education. Exploring blockchain, Datalake, green work environments and other initiatives, she leads by example with great charisma and advocates how libraries will be central to these missions.

Ahlam Bolooki shared with us her vision as she leads ELF Publishing to promote strong regional outputs from the Emirates to inspire the next generation of leaders and her work with the UAE Wikimedia User Group and her founding of the Kateb Maktub movement to cultivate Arab authors.

Isobel Abulhoul, a serial bookstore owner in the UAE and founder of the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature, she is at the vanguard of contemporary Arabic literature and has been a leader of many cultural institutions, including serving on the Board of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Library. She inspired us with her commitments, far reaching interests and compassion for learning and community.

Kadija Muhsin Ali is the Manager of Library Services at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Library and is one of the most seasoned professional librarians in the UAE. The visit to this library was among the highlights of the conference. Early press reports did not give justice to the incredible physicality of the architecture and the service points and resources of this latest community resource that opened in June 2022.

Sheikha Bodour Bint Sultan Al Qasimi, the newly appointed President of the American University of Sharjah gave a welcoming address. In her multiple roles she brought in >$4B in foreign direct investment, created more than 20k jobs and contributed to a 78% growth in Sharjah’s GNP. She established the Emirates Publishers Association and various other book enterprises that reinforces Sharjah’s literary recognition now internationally.

Other international keynotes were delivered by Ujala Satgoor, Executive Director of the University of Cape Town Libraries who shared how her library responded
to a severe fire and planning the extensive renovations and program development needed to restore operations in their Special Collections and Archival units. Aaron Tay from Singapore Management University and offered an inspiring talk about library technologies and implementations for many services. Diane Job, Director of Libraries at the University of Birmingham, UK, and shared her experiences about the significant library renovations at both the Birmingham and Dubai campuses and the kinds of spaces faculty and students expect and use today.

Presentations by attendees explored a range of subjects and case studies that promote significant global challenges to libraries: diversity and equity; strategic planning; cultural heritage; post-pandemic services; evidence synthesis programs; transformative agreements; citizen science; AI; research metrics; open science, among others.

Library visits were prominent at Zayed University, Dubai and American University of Sharjah and the incredible architecture and exhibits of the new Mohammed bin Rashid Library, a public library that opened in June 2022.

The two study tours provided attendees with a deep appreciation for life in the Emirates. One option was a heritage tour through the historical district with stops in the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding and exploring the souks and architecture along the Dubai Creek that separates Deira and Bur Dubai and is a commercial hub. The second tour that I joined was the Futuristic Tour with stops at the Museum of the Future, an architectural icon with rich collections leaving visitors very upbeat about the role of technology in contemporary society and contributions to sustainability, food options, digital challenges. The last stop was the House of Wisdom, a new library/community center in Sharjah that is inspiring architecturally and programmatically.

Exploring the vertical Dubai, the varied architecture and how seeing the development in such desert conditions is remarkable. Exquisite hospitality, varied and delicious cuisines, an abundance of creativity with design, the arts and new community services leaves all visitors in awe. This author was also fortunate to visit Abu Dhabi, capital of the UAE and another city that is on a fast track development drive with many cultural icons of its own, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Qasr Al Watan Presidential Palace, the Louvre, NYU campus and the first synagogue complex in the Gulf, the Abrahamic Family House, an interreligious complex that celebrates Judaism, Islam and Christianity and just opened in April 2023.

Conference proceedings will soon be issued. Next IATUL meeting will be a Seminar at the Izmir Institute of Technology in Turkey 4-7 September and the 2024 conference likely to be held later that year.

THE MEET THE NATIONAL LIBRARIES SERIES: ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM (KBR)

On April 18, 2023, the Slavic Reference Service of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign presented a new episode of its Meet National the Libraries Series. Hosted by Olga Makarova, the episode focused on the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR). Presenters were Celine Ben Amar and Hannes Lowagie. Ben Amar is head of the library’s Department of Contemporary Books; Lowagie is head of the library’s Bibliographic Information Agency.

Ben Amar and Lowagie spoke about the library’s history and founding. Located in Brussels, the Royal Library of Belgium was established in 1837. They also talked about the library’s collections, services, departments, facilities, projects, and museum. The library’s collection includes numerous books, manuscripts, maps, microfilm, databases, online resources, and Belgian publications. Its museum houses the Library of the Dukes of Burgundy.

If you missed the webinar or would like to watch it again, the recording is available on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfDex8_cpDc.
IRRT WEBINAR: LIBRARY CHANGES AND CHALLENGES IN LATIN AMERICAN LIBRARIES

Gloria Creed-Dikeogu

May 19, 2023: A Report Summary

Carol Brey, Director, Quality of Life Department, City of Las Cruces, NM was the moderator of this IRRT Webinar. She is the IRRT incoming Chair and was a past ALA President (2004-5). Carol was a Foreign Service Officer for the US State Department, and as the Director of the Office of American Spaces in Washington D.C., she supports this program throughout South America. She was a librarian and has also worked as a diplomat in Latin America.

American Spaces supervises 600 spaces in 140 countries connected to the US Department of State, which includes spaces in 170 US embassies, American Centers and Corners across the world. American Spaces hosts makerspaces, teaches English, provides regional public engagement specialist services to foreigners, supports the increased use of digital resources, creates programming and stem learning opportunities, and provides possibilities that are open to librarians interested in serving the US State Department overseas in professional librarian positions.

The IRRT Webinar program presenters were: Petro Lutz (Interinstitutional Projects and Libraries at Centro Colombo Americano Bogota, Colombia), Francisco Javier Bolanos (Library Foundation of Columbia representing cultural/community and public sector libraries in Colombia), and Jesus Amado (Cultural Director at Centro Venezolano Americano del Zuilia, CEVAZ, Luiz Guillermo Pineda Library, Maracaibo, Venezuela).

Francisco Bolanos (Cali, Colombia)
Presentation Notes

Balonos has worked for 15 years in Colombia with community and public sector libraries. Colombia has 51 million people, with 39% living in poverty and 12% in extreme poverty. Most children have no access to library services. There are 1568 public libraries concentrated in 3 areas in Colombia: Bogota, the capital, Valle del Cauca and Antioquia. The community libraries that exist are very different, consisting of library boats, library cars, and biblioborros, attempting to provide people in the rural areas with services, so that innovation under the current circumstances, does not mean technology is present, to help and serve people in rural Colombia. Balonos works in Cali, a town of 2.5 million people. Cali has 64 public libraries, and 15 rural area libraries, with 90% of these areas, low-income neighborhoods, serving people experiencing a range of ongoing social and violence problems, with children having limited educational access. In Cali, the government does not provide public library services; instead, community libraries have sprung up at community meeting places and these currently provide people with technology, reading, writing and book resources and services, and some medical services e.g., access to vaccines.

Since these library buildings in Colombia providing multiple services to the community were very small and did not have enough books or good technology connections to provide to area users, Fundación BiblioTec, was created. The Fundación was created by 25 private companies to support community libraries in Colombia. The Fundación supports Colombian libraries through library building, renovation, training, technology additions and resource building. The Fundación was formed through private company alliances with universities in Spain, Portugal, Mexico and the U.S. to support Colombian libraries, so that 67 libraries were renovated, 37 innovation labs in public and school libraries were created, 44 reading rooms, 1 rural library for peace, and 4 bibliomios were built, 20 school libraries were built in 3 years, along with makerspaces for experimentation, creation and learning that provided spaces for collaboration and knowledge sharing in Colombia were created.

Pedro Lutz (Centro Colombo Americano, Bogota, Colombia), Presentation Notes

American Spaces are inviting, open-access learning and gathering places around the world that promote interaction among local communities and support US foreign policy. Lutz suggested that in transitioning from US libraries to Colombian, there were some major challenges because in Colombia, technology is not seen as a tool but a luxury. Lutz pointed out that a regular user could not use technology on public transportation, and not be accosted; thus, reading the regular paper book was still common, and the culture of photocopy still existed in libraries, as it was common for users to borrow a book or a textbook from a library, only to copy it in its entirety without any respect for copyright infringement. Although makerspaces were created with an emphasis on the culture of open access and do-it-yourself, a common mentality in the US, this mentality was not easily transferred into Colombian culture, and was found to be very difficult to teach, along with the adaptation to the development of good English language skills.

Jesus Amado (Venezuela), Presentation Notes

CEVAZ is 1 of 7 American bilingual centers in Venezuela funded by the US government, built to include traditional library loaning services to the
community, makerspaces, auditoria, art galleries and programming that includes cinema productions, plays, concerts, workshops, and conferences.

Through service provision and programming both face-to-face and online (2021-22), American Spaces was also created with the purpose of promoting US cultural exchange through planning, coordination, and the development of cultural academic and social outreach events through library services to the Venezuelan populace; thereby, fostering intercultural skills, promoting tolerance, empathy and meeting public civic and social needs.

The Centers have become academic and cultural hubs where people can receive education on issues related to citizenship, values and democratic principles since the government has removed several vital democratic courses from the school and college curricula; and further outreach allows for extended alliances with public and private schools and communities to expand the range of available democratic services needed in Venezuela, beyond library walls.

THE ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES’ RARE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS SECTION (RBMS) 2023 CONFERENCE

The Association of College and Research Libraries’ Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) will hold its RBMS 2023 Conference at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, June 27-30, 2023. This year’s conference theme is “A New Kind of Professional.”

Held annually, the RBMS Conference features numerous sessions of interest to persons working in galleries, libraries, archives, museums, and special collections (GLAMS). Session formats include lightning talks, poster sessions, discussion sessions, seminars, panels, and workshops. Topics of interest include linked data, book history, DEI, donor relations, archives, cataloging, collection development, and special collections.

Participants may attend in-person or virtually. To learn more about the RBMS 2023 Conference and to register, please visit: https://web.event.com/event/b791062e-3515-4046-a752-1d4265488923/summary

NEW PUBLICATIONS IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES


THE 51ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF ARLIS/NA (ART LIBRARIES OF NORTH AMERICA)

Julia Gelfand

The 51st annual conference of ARLIS/NA (Art Libraries of North America) took place April 18-21, 2023 in Mexico City. Considering the multinational composition of ARLIS/NA and taking the opportunity to look ahead to celebrate the promise and possibilities of the organization’s future, the theme “Transformacion” underscored the program and the many activities available in Mexico City. As the program announcement notes, “A UNESCO world heritage city and the oldest capital in the Americas, Mexico City embodies a vibrant, layered history marked by periods of growth and times of revolution. The urban design, art, and architecture of the city reveal the richness of influences alongside the ingenuity and creativity of its inhabitants. These layers are evident in the city today, with a renewed attention to its indigenous origins.” Nothing in this conference program planning led to any disappointments and nearly 450 members from Mexico, US, Canada and outside the Americas attended.

The conference program was rich in content reflecting a heavy dose of collection related themes for art collections and libraries; relationships between libraries and museums; role of artificial intelligence practices among the disciplines covered in art and design libraries; growing role of book art in library collections; changing roles in Special Collections for content from fine arts and related content; transformations with instruction and pedagogy in art history, studio art and design; new roles for oral histories, social media and podcasting for collections and services in art libraries; promoting Hispanic and South American artists in the diaspora; curating and increasing discovery for art content; an update on the Collaborative ART Archive (CARTA); documenting the craft movement, indigenous artists and identifying directions for diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility within art libraries and among art librarians.

There were several exciting plenary talks. The first one was delivered by Sol Henera, a highly respected contemporary art curator in Mexico. She addressed current challenges for artists in developing countries and observations of her recent work and exposure to many artists working in different media. She has curated numerous exhibitions including No-Grupo, of whom Sarah Minter and Melquiades Herrera have recently released their book through Alias Editorial. She was co-curator of MUCA Rome from 2003 to 2006. In 2010, she joined the Red de Conceptualismo del Sur and since 2011 she has been the curator of collections of contemporary art at the Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, MUAC, a visit many attendees made while at ARLIS.

The keynote program was delivered by Alejandro Cartagena, an internationally renowned award-winning photographer and visual artist from Monterrey, Mexico, also known as an editor, author, publisher, podcaster and one who captures life in Mexico that focuses on housing, development, transportation, and other social, urban and environmental issues in Mexico, but relevant worldwide. He entertained the audience with a chronology of his work, what inspires him and current and future projects he has in the pipeline. Following his presentation, the ARLIS honors were awarded:

- The George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award recognizes exemplary art publications and was given to "The Portable Universe / El Universo en tus Manos: Thought and Splendor of Indigenous Colombia (2022)
- The Melva J. Dwyer Award recognizes exceptional reference or research tools in Canadian art and architecture and was awarded to Qummut Qukiria! Art, Culture, and Sovereignty Across Inuit Nunaaqt and Sâpmi: Mobilizing the Circumpolar North (2022)
- The ARLIS/NA Worldwide Books Awards recognize outstanding work produced by ARLIS/NA Members. This year the recipients were Dana Satton Thompson for "Visual Literacy Today" and Courtney Stine for her article “Don't Use It to 'Let's Edit!': Using Wikipedia to Teach the ARLIS/NA Art, Architecture, and Design Information Competencies"
- The ARLIS/NA Applauds Award was given to Meredith Hale in recognition of her work on migrating organizational content to the Humanities Commons, and especially her efforts towards making ARLIS/NA video archives accessible through captioning work on the society’s Kaltura channel.
- The ARLIS/NA Distinguished Service Award was given this year to Dr. Marilyn Russell. This is the society’s highest honor and it recognizes exemplary service in art librarianship, visual resources curatorship, or related fields.
- Conference travel awards and student advancement awards were also announced.
One of the newest public libraries in Mexico City is the architectural achievement of the Biblioteca Vasconcelos, opened in 2003 as a priority of then President Fox. Described in the Architectural Review (January 7, 2019) as “Biblioteca Vasconcelos is not just a building for books, it is much more: garden, cultural space, presidential campaign, and territorial transformation. In the 12 years since its completion it has been closed for two, lived through three transitions in government and been managed by six federally appointed directors. Of the two million books promised for its collection, one-third have made it to the shelves. Of the 5,000 visitors it hoped to receive daily, only around 2,000 attend. It overspent its construction budget by 250 million pesos and runs on an annual budget of 13 million; far from what is required. As such it has a greenhouse the public cannot visit due to lack of staff, a café that was never built, and a botanic garden that is merely a garden. Even though still incomplete, the edges are beginning to tarnish and small cracks starting to appear. It is a building that in its short history has been called ‘the most important contemporary building in Mexico’, and a ‘white elephant’, in almost the same breath. But what is remarkable is that, where its ambitions founder, the building thrives in unexpected ways.” Still it is something to see whether you are a librarian or not. The economic and staffing challenges remain however the concept of a community space for all ages is quite impressive.

Attending ARLIS/NA is often known to be a full agenda of excellent programming and site visits and many optional tours but this conference, thanks to many generous sponsors and an exceptional planning effort likely exceeded all expectations and was among the best professional development experiences for any kind of librarian, art or not, as this author was among the latter and was so glad to attend. Mexico City is vibrant, full of life, color, exceptional cuisine and was a marvelous conference city.

The closing plenary session featured Dr. Barbara Mundy, professor of Latin American Art History at Tulane University, USA. “Her most recent book, The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City (2018), draws on Indigenous texts and representations to counter a colonialist historiography and to argue for the city’s nature as an Indigenous city through the sixteenth century. She captivated the audience with her current book project, "The Embodiment of the Word: European Book Culture and New World Manuscripts." Rather than considering Indigenous manuscripts as phenomena separate from European books, it situates native bookmakers in the midst of the new technological revolution brought about by the printing press. While Martin Luther’s innovations (and conflagrations) take up most of the oxygen in the history of print in the early sixteenth century, attracting less attention, but equally radical, was the Spanish crown’s use of the new technology to control, via standardization, governance, language, and history. The testing ground of this imperial project was the “Indies,” as their American territories were called, and it is within this context that her protagonists--Indigenous writers, painters and bookmakers--operated. With Dana Leibsohn, Mundy is the co-creator of Vistas: Visual Culture in Spanish America, 1520-1820 (https://vistas.ace.fordham.edu/). Digital projects are a fundamental part of her teaching practice.”

This conference stood out like few because of the incredible conference events, tours and opportunities that took attendees all over Mexico City to see museums, libraries, art collections, murals, parks, bookstores, craft centers, architectural masterpieces and other events, receptions at venues, many docent led like:

- Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada
- Museo Foro Valparaiso (Valparaiso Forum Museum)
- Museo del Estanquillo
- Chapultepec Park
- Anthropology Museum
- Tamayo Museum
- Museo de Arte Moderno
- Casa Luis Barragan
- Palacio de Bellas Artes
- Museo Mural Diego Rivera
- Museo Kaluz
- Museo de Arte Popular
- Museo Franz Meyer
- The Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) Library, Murals and Museo de Arte Contemporaneo (MUAC)
- MUNAL: Museo Nacional de Arte
- Casa Azul: Museo Frida Kahlo
- Biblioteca de México
- Casa Bosques Bookstore specializing on contemporary visual arts

As such it has a greenhouse the public cannot visit due to lack of staff, a café that was never built, and a botanic garden that is merely a garden. Even though still incomplete, the edges are beginning to tarnish and small cracks starting to appear. It is a building that in its short history has been called ‘the most important contemporary building in Mexico’, and a ‘white elephant’, in almost the same breath. But what is remarkable is that, where its ambitions founder, the building thrives in unexpected ways.” Still it is something to see whether you are a librarian or not. The economic and staffing challenges remain however the concept of a community space for all ages is quite impressive.

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Photo by J. Gefand taken 21 April 2023
COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF LIBRARIES HOLDS SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Shannon Brennan
Children’s Librarian
Bemis Public Library, Littleton, CO

The International Library and Cultural Exchange Interest Group (ILCE-IG) of the Colorado Association of Libraries grew from the American-Bulgarian Library Exchange Project (1996-2011), which sought to create connection and collaboration between American and Bulgarian Libraries. The ILCE-IG has extended its scope to encourage partnerships between Colorado libraries and libraries in other countries and to encourage outreach to city residents from other countries.

In early March, the second International Library Conference hosted by the Colorado Association of Libraries: International Libraries and Cultural Exchange Interest Group took place. This conference was co-hosted with the Colorado School of Mines. The purpose of this conference Better Together: The Power of Global Library Connections was to inspire and motivate participants to support and participate in international librarianship. The first day of the conference was virtual with over 100 attendees.

Highlights from this day included an inspiring keynote from Dr. Jesús Lau, Professor at Universidad Veracruzana, Veracruz, Mexico emphasizing the importance of global connections. Colorado School of Mines has multiple international connections with universities and featured their Stem Partnership with the China University of Mining & Technology and the Nazarbayev University Library partnership in Kazakhstan. In addition, Leroy R. Allala, Sister Cities International President, spoke of his goal to make 500 sister city connections in Africa this year. Diana Price, Library Manager at Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library in Alexandria, VA, presented the current partnership with a sister library in Dundee, Scotland. Diana explained how her library has been holding virtual book-clubs for adults in both countries and are in the process of creating programs for children. In addition, Linda Tillson, Director of Flagstaff City-Coconino County Public Library and Kate Mapp, librarian from Park City Utah, presented about Park City Utah’s partnership with the Bimal Library in Nepal. Overall, it was amazing to see how much international interest and participation there was in this virtual conference.

The in-person conference, held the following day, featured a different inspiring keynote from Dr. Jesús Lau emphasizing the value of professional development opportunities through partnerships. The second day of the conference focused primarily on different Colorado international library partnerships at various degrees of involvement. The Patrick A. Lucero Branch of the Pueblo City-County Library District has a library partnership in Vietnam, where their Friends Foundation provides donations so the locals can buy books in their native languages. The Poudre River Library District (Ft. Collins) has a partnership in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua where the library was initially in need of a circulation system and Victor Zuniga, for Poudre River, established a platform and most recently added Koha – an open-source integrated library system.

Brianna Buljung from Colorado School of Mines presented about her experience as a Fulbright Scholar teaching in Taiwan during the pandemic. In addition, Janet Lee, Dean Emerita at Regis University, also spoke about her Fulbright experience in Axum, Ethiopia and her collaboration with the African Storybook Project encouraging the publication and use of stories written in first languages. Jamie LaRue, Garfield County (Colorado) Public Library District, described his experience with libraries in Bulgaria, Russia, and Norway highlighting the varying degrees of intellectual freedom around the world. Lastly, there was a presentation on Sister Cities International highlighting the activities and opportunities to collaborate with Denver Sister Cities. Overall, it was inspiring to see the drive to have library partnerships on a worldwide level and learn about various ways to be involved.

A post-conference reception was held at the spectacular Mines Museum of Earth Science among the vast array of gems, stones, Miss Colorado’s tiara, and moon rocks from Apollo 17. Special thanks to the ILCE-IG team, Carol E. Smith of Colorado School of Mines, the presenters, and participants.

More information can be found at ILCE website: https://ilceig.com/better-together-the-power-of-global-library-connections-welcome/
SELECTIVE UPCOMING INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY CONFERENCES, MEETINGS, BOOK FAIRS & EVENTS

Check out the Library Conference Planner for ongoing updates for USA & Canada and International Meetings

**JULY**
3-4 July 2023 – International Conference on Library Science, Prague, Czech Republic
5-7 July 2023 – LIBER 2023 Annual Conference, Budapest, Hungary
11-16 July 2023 – National Conference of African American Librarians, Indianapolis, IN, USA
19-22 June 2023 – Association of Jewish Libraries Conference, Virtual

**AUGUST**
3-4 August 2023 – International Conference on Library Science, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
3-4 August 2023 – International Conference on Digital Preservation, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
21-25 August 2023 – IFLA World Library and Information Congress, Rotterdam, Netherlands – Hybrid
24-25 August 2023 – International Conference on issues about Libraries, Moscow, Russia

**SEPTEMBER**
4-7 September 2023 – IATUL Seminar: Libraries as Transformers, Izmir, Turkey
13-15 September 2023 – ALPSP Annual Meeting & Awards, Manchester, UK

**OCTOBER**
8-10 October 2023 – Designing Libraries X, Tucson, AZ, USA
9-12 October 2023 – European Conference on Information Literacy, Krakow, Poland
18-22 October 2023 – Frankfurt Book Fair, Frankfurt, Germany
19-20 October 2023 – Eurasian Academic Libraries Conference, Astana, Kazakhstan
19-21 October 2023 – American Association of School Librarians, Tampa, FL.

23-26 October 2023 – SciDataCon 2023, Salzburg, Austria and virtually
24-25 October 2023 – International Conference of Indigenous Archives, Libraries and Museums, Oklahoma City, OK, USA

**NOVEMBER**
6-10 November 2023 – Charleston Conference, Charleston, SC, USA
7-9 November 2023 – Sharjah International Library Conference, Sharjah, UAE
13-14 November 2023 – International Grey Literature Conference, Amsteram, Netherlands
13-14 November 2023 – International Conference on Libraries and Civilization, Venice, Italy
13-16 November 2023 – Web Summit, Lisbon, Portugal
27-30 November 2023 – International Indigenous Librarians Forum, Honolulu, HI, USA

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL LEADS

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