

IFLA  
2010

Report of  
Conference from a  
Grantee's  
Perspective

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Report Submitted by:

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## **Introduction:**

As is the norm every year, IFLA held its annual World Library and Information Congress in Gothenburg, Sweden on 10th to 15th August 2010.

I am pleased to say that I received an email with a link to the IFLA Conference scholarship page. I applied and was awarded a grant to attend the 76th session, with a satellite meeting in Boras. Being a professional and practising Library and Information Manager, it is an understatement to say that I was excited to attend this international forum for the first time.

## **Satelite Meeting in Boras**

On Monday 9th August, I attended a satellite meeting in Boras, a town about thirty minutes drive from Landvetter Airport. The theme of the session was **The Global Librarian** organised at Hogskolan I Boras and it provided a great opportunity to meet some people behind the conference preparations as well as the other grantees who were coming from different parts of the world.

I was absolutely mesmerized by the Schanachie Tour: A Library Trip Across America presented by Erik Boekesteijn and Jaap Van de Deer, particularly by the "Library Investigation Bureau". It highlighted the need for librarians to be in touch with the changes taking place in the different communities and libraries and how important it is for us, as librarians to create fusion between these changes and the library. This means focusing on things which can be changed and identifying the core elements with which to incorporate the changes.

The presentation on school libraries: New way of doing things was another great opportunity at comparing the conventional way of running school libraries and the new contemporary libraries. As the presenter put it "new learners, new challenges", meaning that different approaches to learning need to be identified and implemented to cope with changes in technology, society and culture so that a library of the future is created.

It was also exciting to know about the IFLA programme aimed at fostering international exchange through its 'IFLA - Adopt a Student' project. There are many brilliant LIS students who cannot afford the opportunity to become IFLA members let alone attend the annual conferences. Winning sponsorship and being mentored by well established LIS professionals is a great way of linking the old and the new generations of librarians.

The closing keynote address delivered by the president of the Danish Union of Librarians who put a lot of emphasis on knowing the library patrons because they are the reason for the libraries existence. Many things stood out but most important of them was the stakeholders analysis and identifying how to close the generation gap as well

as membership relations management, all very critical areas if both the Librarian and Patrons are to have happy meaningful relations.

The satellite meeting was a nice warm up to the main conference, it was only unfortunate that the timing seemed abit constrained and one could not attend all the sessions. I was also lucky to be interviewed by the IFLA Web and IT Manager, and the article was later published on the IFLA conference site.



*From left to right: Jean Bosco (Burundi), Eva (Haiti), and Grace (Uganda) at Borås*

## **Main Conference**

The day before the main conference was to officially take off, I went on a library trip to Uddevalla, a town about 85km outside of Gothenburg. The township is also about three and half hour's drive from Norway. Lidia, the Librarian from Uddevalla cum tourist guide told us that over the course of history Uddevalla has changed nationality seven times depending on who won war at that time; Sweden, Norway or Denmark.

A visit was made to the main public library where we met Corine the Head Librarian and Connejjia, a retired Librarian who stayed on in the advisory position. We toured the different sections in the library including the children's library and the mobile library bus.



*In the mobile library bus with it's coordinator and some of the delegates*

Coming from a developing country and with an interest in disability issues, one thing which really stood out for me was the emphasis on including users, both children and adults, in the library by the presence of special collections which are brailled and in audio form.

We also visited the Uddevalla Museum and were shown around by Ms Elisabeth Corsander, the curator. It was recently redesigned under the theme 'emotions' and captured the live of Uddevalla over the years, such as furniture, clothing, livelihood, music and buildings.



*A section in the museum*

The general conference was officially opened on Wednesday 11th and President Ellen Tise gave a wonderful speech in which she emphasised the theme **Open access to Knowledge - promoting sustainable progress**. The former Secretary of the UN General Assembly who gave a keynote address reiterated this by pointing out that knowledge is key and if an individual has acquired it then the whole society has taken its first step towards acquiring knowledge. That the pursuit of knowledge is endless, particularly with the new technological and other trends.

The Newcomers Session which was very insightful for it provided tips on how to enjoy the conference and I got to learn for words in Swedish. It was also an opportunity to meet the other IFLA staff and the people who had been behind the preparations for the conference.

I am particularly interested in information and knowledge management and had opportunity to attend the major sessions outlined in the programme. I was particularly disappointed when the session for information management coordinators was cancelled because I had looked forward to interacting with professional in a similar line of work; i was particularly looking forward to benchmark best practices.

## **Conclusion**

Attending the IFLA conference was a great opportunity for me and I met a number of people with whom I hope to keep in touch and learn from. It also opened up my eyes to the ever changing nature of librarianship as we are called to adapt to the environment, particularly in light of new technologies. In addition, I am eagerly looking forward to taking on Simon's suggestion of contributing to the IFLA success stories webpage for I have a lot to share about the work of community libraries in Uganda.

Once again, I thank IFLA for giving me a chance to have more insight into the workings of library institutions and associations as well as the great feeling of comraderie that I witnessed at the conference. Indeed, Librarians are one mighty force.