

## **REPORT ON THE IFLA 2010 CONFERENCE – GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN**

By

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Attending an IFLA conference is every librarian's dream. Like many librarians out there, I harboured this dream until it was realised in 2007 when I attended my first IFLA conference in Durban, South Africa. One thing remained, to see myself making my first presentation before esteemed librarians at an IFLA conference. When the IFLA 2010 call for papers was made, I tried my luck. I knew that I would be competing against so many other good library practitioners, some with more useful, interesting and life changing stories to share.

My paper was titled **Open Access in Institutions of Higher Learning in Botswana** to be presented before the IFLA Africa section. It came as a shock mixed with excitement when I received a message that my paper was accepted because at the back of my mind I somehow did not expect to succeed judging by the number and experience of researchers who would likely be submitting abstracts for consideration. Then I realised that it is true that it is always best to try something before you dismiss it as impossible.

My luck got even better, following the acceptance of my paper I received financial support from IFLA to attend the conference. Initially, I thought I was not going to realise my dream as my employer was not able to sponsor my trip to Sweden and efforts that I made to source funding from different potential sponsors had born no fruits. I am grateful and will

forever be grateful to IFLA for the support; for making it possible for me to realise my potential as a scholar.

As for my experience of the conference and Gothenburg, let me start with my presentation. Writing the paper was the easy part, as the conference date drew nearer, it became clear to me just how major the exercise was for me. I was completely nervous such that every day in Gothenburg, as soon as the conference programme for the day I rushed to room to read my paper over and over again. I did not get to attend the IFLA night spots and relied on feedback from my friends to learn just how exiting the night spot activities were. This bore fruits as on the day of my presentation I was able to make a flawless presentation (*well at least that is how my audience felt about the presentation*).

The structure of the IFLA conference makes it a bit difficult for one to get full benefits out of the presentations. However, with the size of the conference, with hundreds of papers being presented and thousands of people in attendance it may not be possible to do it otherwise. I should think that maybe in the future one could invest in attending one of the pre-conference workshops where there is full focus on one topic and then for the conference pick interesting papers across the sessions. Notwithstanding the stress I had with anticipation of my presentation, I managed to attend some sessions and I would say I learnt a lot. Of particular interest to me were papers on advocacy for libraries, online information and knowledge management.

Further, my impressions of Gothenburg and probably reflective of the rest of Sweden is that it is a city filled with nice people (maybe it is because they speak English so fluently and it

was easy to communicate with everyone). It was quite easy getting around because people were helpful. I did not like the food very much, but of course I come from a land locked country and do not eat much fish. However the problem of food was muffled by the fact that IFLA arranged some nice accommodation for the grantees.

In conclusion I wish to note that with the level of IFLA experience that I have had, presenting a paper and getting the type of feedback that I received, I feel empowered to be of better service to the library profession in my country. The feedback that I received encouraged me to look more into the issue of Open Access, and I hope that I will continue work in the area with the view to help other librarians improve their service.

**Gothenburg marked a historical moment in my life as a librarian and as such it is a place I will never forget!!!**

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