



International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

NEWSLETTER

Section of Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons

December 2003

Number 57

From the Editor: Important Newsletter Changes

Starting with the next issue, the LSDP Newsletter will have a new editor. While I have very much enjoyed editing this important communication tool for the last six years, the time has come to pass the editorial pen or – perhaps better – keyboard to another member of the Standing Committee. Margaret Forrest from Scotland comes to us with a long and distinguished career as a health and medical information librarian. She has been involved for many years with the Library Association/CILIP Special Interest Groups, including the Health Libraries Group and CILIP's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Panel. Margaret also comes with excellent qualifications for the job of editor, having edited the newsletter of the Health Libraries Group since 1996. So don't be surprised if you see some content or format changes, as Margaret puts her personal mark on this publication. I wish her much enjoyment and good luck!

Another major change is that print copies will no longer be mailed to individuals, organizations, or institutions which are not members of the LSDP Section. And only Section members who specifically request a paper copy (by contacting the editor) will receive a mailed paper copy.

This change in policy is necessary because of the high costs of postage. It is anticipated that reducing the availability of print copies will have little negative impact, since the full text of the newsletter is available on the LSDP Section page on the IFLA web site: <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s9/slsdp.htm>

As I say goodbye to our readers, I wish my friends and IFLA colleagues many rewarding and exciting experiences as members of this large international family. I thank you for your inspiration, support, and friendship.

Vibeke Lehmann



Vibeke Lehmann

Report on the First World Library and Information Congress and the 69th IFLA General Conference and Council in Berlin, August 1 - 9, 2003

By Vibeke Lehmann, LSDP Secretary and Information Coordinator

General Impressions

More than 4,500 participants from 133 countries attended the Congress whose theme was "**Access Point Library: Media – Information – Culture.**" This theme was symbolically reflected in the Congress logo representing the well-known Brandenburg Gate. Freedom and equity of access to information and freedom of expression were also pervasive sub-themes throughout the Congress. Very dramatic and moving was the account by Jean-Pierre Arnoult of the destruction and looting of Iraqi libraries and archives. Mr. Arnoult was the only librarian who participated in UNESCO's mission to assess the effects of the war on Iraq's cultural heritage. In its closing session, the IFLA Council passed a resolution urging governments

to help restore the libraries and the information infrastructure.

There was also lively debate on the impact of anti-terrorism legislation being introduced around the world which often impedes free access to information. The Council also passed a resolution calling for the repeal of such measures which, in the name of national security, violate fundamental human rights to privacy and unhampered access to information.

Several presentations and sessions focused on strategies to get the broadest possible involvement of libraries and national library associations in the formulation of policy statements to be developed by the upcoming first World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) which will take place in Geneva in December 2003.

Delegates participated in 234 meetings and 35 workshops. They

heard 486 speakers and presenters in the spacious, well appointed and (luckily) air-conditioned Berlin International Conference Center (ICC). Very few delegates came prepared for the unprecedented heat wave which hit most of central Europe for several weeks during August. Even so, the delegates eagerly joined the many library visits and the cultural and social events, which the Berlin Organizing Committee had arranged: receptions, evenings with music & dance, boat trips on the Spree River, and sightseeing in the reunited and vibrant city of Berlin.

LSDP Open Session: "Planning and Implementing Library Services to Prisoners: Accepting the Challenge and Making It Happen"

Five speakers from the United States, Italy, Germany, and Brazil, highlighted the unique reading and informa-

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tion needs presented by incarcerated persons. They explained how they worked with government and library agencies to establish and maintain the needed library services and collections – often facing enormous political, economic, and social obstacles. Their success stories, however, were inspiring, and they provided information on available resources that provide guidelines, standards, and justification for prison library services.

The session had simultaneous interpretation and had an audience of 60 to 75 persons. After the program, several members of the audience met with the speakers for a lively discussion and the sharing of information on the status of prison library services in their respective countries.

The papers presented were:

Vibeke Lehmann (USA):

"Planning and Implementing Prison Libraries: Strategies and Resources." The speaker provided information on the current IFLA/LSDP project to revise the 1995 *Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners*. She summarized information obtained through an international survey on the status of prison libraries worldwide and offered specific suggestions to library professionals, library organizations and agencies that wish to develop such services at the local or national levels. The speaker highlighted publications from the professional literature that describe the prison library situation in various countries. She recommended using existing guidelines as models for developing similar documents in countries which are trying to establish library services to incarcerated persons. An extensive bibliography was distributed. The full text of the paper is available at http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/papers/175-E_Lehmann.pdf

Emanuela Costanzo (Italy):

"ABC and the Italian Prison Libraries." The presentation described how "ABC" – the Italian Association of Prison Libraries – was formed in the year 2000. The speaker described the research and collaboration of many librarians that led to the establishment of ABC. Since the Italian legal system

does not provide for the management and financial support of prison libraries, a small group of librarians and dedicated volunteers decided to form a mutual support network and to work as advocates for the improvement and expansion of library services to prisoners. Some of their most significant accomplishments were described, and the author also discussed the problems and prejudices encountered by the ABC pioneers. The speaker emphasized that ABC is an official unit within the AIB (Italian Library Association) and it is striving to achieve a higher profile at the international level and is interested in working with IFLA to promote professionalism in prison library service. The full text of the paper is available at <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/papers/052e-Costanzo.pdf>

Maria Angela Barlotti (Italy):

"Prison Libraries in Italy." The speaker described a project called "Libraries Conquer Communities," which aims to promote social and cultural inclusiveness among all citizens, including those inside prison communities. She talked about how cooperative service agreements had been achieved between the cities of Ravenna, Forlì, Rimini and the Ministry of Law and Justice, the regional Istituto Beni Culturali, and the Province of Ravenna. The main objectives of the agreement is 1) to establish a line of communication between the prison libraries and the library network on the outside; 2) to provide the same level and quality of service to the prison libraries as provided in the free community; and 3) to heighten the awareness in the outside community of the reading and library needs of incarcerated offenders. The speaker discussed the similarities between the prison libraries and libraries in the free community in relationship to service roles, library materials, programs, and technology. She showed how the prisoners contribute to the selection of materials and the building of the collections. Finally she explained how the three prison libraries obtain library materials through donations from publishers, other libraries, private citizens, and funding from the Ministry of Justice. An outline of the presentation is available at <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/papers/127e-Barlotti.pdf>

Gerhard Peschers (Germany):

"Bibliotheksarbeit im Justizvollzug in Deutschland am Beispiel Nordrhein-Westfalens - Gefangenenbibliotheken als Portale begrenzter Freiheit zur sinnvollen Freizeitgestaltung für Inhaftierte."

The speaker gave a PowerPoint presentation of his original paper, illustrating the structure of the criminal justice system in Germany and the authority allocated to the 16 "Bundesländer," including the provision of library services within individual prisons. The speaker explained the fundamental principles on which these services are based: re-socialization/reintegration of the offender and safety of the community. The prisoner is guaranteed the right to read and access to books and information. The presenter went on to talk about the staffing of the prison libraries and the qualifications of the professional library staff. In Nordrhein-Westfalen, Mr. Peschers is one of two professional librarians who coordinate a total of 62 libraries in 53 institutions with a total collection of 240,000 items for 19,000 inmates. He went into more details on how the librarians work with other institution employees and inmate library workers to provide a wide range of services and materials through automated circulation systems, online catalogs, and cooperation with the public libraries. Mr. Peschers also compared the situation of the prison libraries in Germany with those libraries he had seen in Russia, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, and Nicaragua. The full text of the paper is available at <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/papers/023g-Peschers.pdf>

Ludmila Popow Mayrink da Costa (Brazil):

"Library Services to Prisoners in the State of Rio de Janeiro." The speaker gave a brief overview of the many geographical, historical, economic, and social factors that contribute to a high illiteracy and poverty rate in Brazil. She linked these factors to the causes of criminal behavior and discussed some well known studies that deal with crime and punishment in Brazil. She informed the audience about the preparatory work carried

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out by a small group of dedicated librarians to establish libraries within three prisons in Rio de Janeiro. These individuals had to use all their powers of persuasion with the prison authorities and governmental officials in order to present evidence of the connection between reading, education, and rehabilitation. The small libraries will be evaluated in the near future with an eye on expansion. The full text of paper is available at <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/papers/143e-Mayrink.pdf>

LSDP Standing Committee Meetings

During the Berlin conference, the Standing Committee held two meetings attended by 10 members and 7 guests. John Day, LSDP Chair, presided over the meetings. The primary topics of discussion were the changes to the conference planning process and schedule, preparation for the 2007 evaluation of the effectiveness of IFLA's sections, ongoing and future Section projects, finalization of the Section's 2004-2005 Strategic Action Plan, and the planning for the Section's 2004 Buenos Aires and 2005 Oslo programs. The Standing Committee also elected new officers, welcomed 4 new members, and said goodbye to 6 "old" members. The full minutes of the SC meetings can be found at <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s9/minutes/lstdp03b.htm>

If Helen Keller Lived North of the 49th: Canadian Library Services for People with Disabilities

by Rosemary Griebel

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Survival with some human dignity is possible only when the reality of others is respected.
~ Margaret Laurence

The history of disabilities is as old as humankind. Conversely, the history of library services to people with disabilities is recent and comparatively short. In fact, the majority of disability services in Canada and the United States have been developed only within the last 40 years, and were given impetus by the UN International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 and the International Decade of Disabled Persons from 1983 to 1993. This global focus on disabilities resulted in an international dialogue among library consumers and service providers, and a new awareness of the institutional and cultural dimensions of disability.

The cultural context of disabilities

In recent years the perception of disability as solely a medical or individual problem has been rejected, and disability is now considered within a cultural context. Certainly the development of library services has shown that the values and ideologies of a culture have a profound influence on the response to disabilities. In the

broadest sense, the key values in the United States can be said to be rugged individualism, capitalism and democracy. In comparison, Canada has been more influenced by British and European traditions, which, while espousing democratic values, take a more benign and comprehensive approach to health and social welfare.¹ In Canada, there are fewer extremes in the services available to people with disabilities than in the United States. This doesn't mean Canadian library services are better, but rather that they are more uniformly inadequate to meet the needs of a growing disabled population.

Legislation

One of the most significant catalysts in the development of library services for people with disabilities has been legislation. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was introduced, requiring American libraries to accommodate persons with disabilities through the removal of architectural barriers and the provision of accessible services, collections and equipment in a variety of formats.

Canada has taken a very different approach to disability law by entrenching Canadians' rights to equal treatment in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. When Section 15 of the Charter came into effect in 1985, Canada became the first industrialized nation to include in its constitution equal rights for people with disabilities:

15(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental and physical disability.²

Like the ADA, the Human Rights Act leaves considerable room for interpretation, particularly when determining to what degree a library will accommodate people with disabilities. The Canadian legislation often comes under criticism because it does not clearly articulate what is re-



Open Session speakers Gerhard Peschers, Emanuela Costanzo, Vibeke Lehmann, Angela Barlotti, Ludmila Mayrink da Costa

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Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Launches Digital Library

On November 12, 2003, the CNIB introduced its revolutionary new Digital Library Service portal which provides a world of information for more than 105,000 Canadians, both adults and children, who are blind or visually impaired.

The CNIB Digital Library provides access to thousands of books, daily newspapers, and magazines. The online library is the most advanced library of alternative formats in the world and a model for 175 international libraries producing alternative-format information. It also contains The Children's Discovery Portal, the world's first portal of its kind for children who are blind.

"For sighted people, technology makes access to information easier. For people like myself who are blind, it makes access possible," said Jim Sanders, president of The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). "The CNIB Digital Library will open up worlds of opportunity and knowledge. For example, I can now read a newspaper the same day it hits the newsstand. And the new service is particularly exciting for young CNIB clients, who will be able to visit a Web site that is just as much fun, attractive and informative as any other children's site."

The CNIB Digital Library offers a completely new reading experience for people who are blind or visually impaired. Currently, only 3% of published materials are available in an accessible format. Highlights include:

- Accessible. The CNIB Digital Library was designed from the outset to ensure it met the accessibility needs of people who are blind or visually impaired. It works with major adaptive technology products including screen reading programs and braille keyboards.
- Comprehensive and easy to use. Brings all of the Library's online services including the CNIB catalogue and digital repository of books into one unified, bilingual, Internet gateway.
- Vast repository. There are more than 10,000 audio, text, and braille titles available online for instant reading, including bestsellers

such as *Life of Pi* and *The Stone Diaries*. Clients can also search and order from a collection of more than 60,000 titles.

- Exciting new access. Clients can listen to a CNIB Library talking book (with human-voice narration) right from their computer simply by selecting a link for the title of that book.

- Newspapers, magazines, databases. The current editions of more than 40 daily, national, and community newspapers from across Canada are available. Full-text versions of thousands of magazines and databases such as the Encyclopedia Britannica Online are also available.

The Children's Discovery Portal is one of the most exciting parts of this digital transformation. For the first time children who are blind or visually impaired will be able to play online games, participate in online polls, get homework help, sample or read entire books online and chat with other children who are blind from across the country. For some this may be the first opportunity they have ever had to meet another child who is blind.

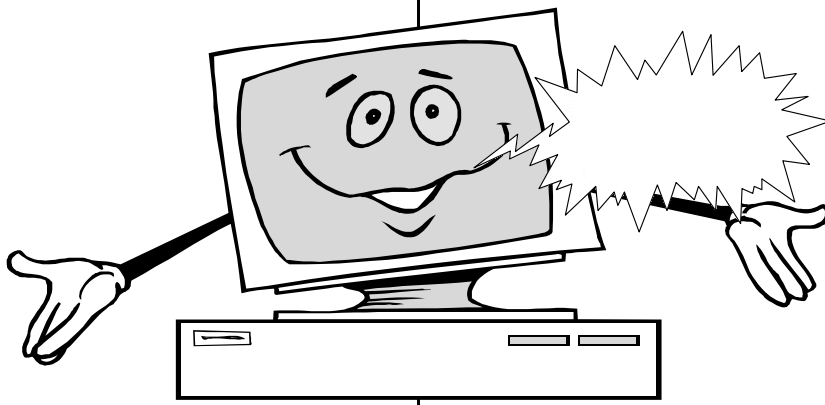
The CNIB Digital Library is the result of a bold venture to fully transform the CNIB Library's collection and production process to a digital library environment. The Library was relying on obsolete technology to reproduce materials. The collection was also at risk of being lost forever had it not been digitized. The transformation is being funded by That all may read..., an on-going \$33 million nationwide campaign. At the inauguration day, the Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Human Resources Development Canada, made

a surprise announcement that the Government of Canada would be contributing \$6 million towards the CNIB's digital library.

"This launch is only the beginning for The CNIB Digital Library. In order to complete this historic project, we need to reach our fundraising goal of \$33 million," said Frank Clegg, chair of That all may read... and president of Microsoft Canada. "Thanks to our donors, we are getting there. Everyone should be very proud of this incredible accomplishment, which will help to pave the way for equal access for all." Donations total \$19.4 million to date with Microsoft Canada as lead sponsor with a \$2.5 million commitment. The company also funded and led the development of the Children's Discovery Portal.

Microsoft Canada designed the platform architecture to manage the digital collection, incorporating an advanced digital access and storage system from OpenText Corporation. Since 1906, the CNIB Library for the Blind has been working to promote literacy and to ensure that Canadians who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind have equitable access to information, culture, and lifelong learning. The CNIB Library is one of the largest producers of alternative-format materials in the world and circulated 1.8 million items last year.

To try out The CNIB Digital Library, one can visit the Library's Web site at www.cnib.ca/library or www.inca.ca/bibliotheque and select the "guest" option on the login screen. For more information, contact: Julia Morgan, Communications Coordinator, CNIB Library for the Blind, +(416) 480-7423, julia.morgan@cnib.ca



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quired to accommodate persons with disabilities. "Canada's regulatory basis is one of the best in the world in support of persons with disabilities. It is, however, unfavourable compared to the United States?. The ADA provides a well-used basis for legal action. In Canada, citizens have so far been slow to use the courts to ensure their Charter rights."³

Dr. Patricia Pardo, Director of the Disability Resource Centre at the University of Calgary in Alberta, offers a different perspective. She believes that although the two nations have taken very different approaches to legislation, ideally both will eventually create an inclusive community. "The advantage in the Canadian approach is that disability is couched within the rights for everyone. As a group, people with disabilities are not isolated or segregated. There is more room for interpretation, which allows for a more individual response. It's not unlike the Canadian mosaic approach to multiculturalism versus the American melting pot response."

Copyright

Canada's current copyright laws and exemptions as they apply to disabilities are strong compared with those of most other countries. The biggest issue, and it is one that transcends borders, is dealing with copyright reform in light of the new digital reality.

Paul Whitney, Chair of the Copyright Forum and Chair of the Council on Access to Information for Print-Disabled Canadians, says there is a real need to come up with an international agreement for the cross-border transfer of data. "Silos of information are being created with national legislation. Consequently, an already limited supply of accessible formats is being duplicated in each country at considerable expense." This, and the lack of government support for production in Canada, has limited the availability of accessible information and reading material.

Role of the National Library

In 1976, the National Library of Canada published the *Report from the Task Group on Library Service to the Handicapped*. This document stands as a touchstone with regard to both the progress and lack of progress in the development of dis-

ability services. The report recommended that a "coordinated national program of library service to the visually, physically and perceptually handicapped unable to use conventional print materials be undertaken as soon as possible."⁴ This program was to be developed in concert with service providers, including the CNIB, and with financial support from the provincial and federal governments.

Over a quarter of a century later, disability services continue to lack national coordination, support, and funding that is any way comparable to that of the Library of Congress's National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. In Canada the majority of books produced in alternative formats, and most support for the delivery of nationwide library service to people with print disabilities, comes from the CNIB, a private charity.

The encouraging news is that the National Librarian, Roch Carrier, has created a task force to address the need for inclusive public policy in providing access to information for print-disabled Canadians. In April 2003, the CNIB presented a position statement to the task force. The position statement makes it clear that "the best services to print-disabled populations around the world operate as a network of services in each country."⁵

Conclusion

As a profession, librarians are quick to embrace intellectual freedom, literacy and the need for balanced collections. Disability services respond to the same concept of equity, based on the premise that everyone has the right to information. In this global information age, we need to work across borders to secure the best possible library service for people with disabilities. As Helen Keller said, "When we do the best we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another."

Rosemary Griebel is a Customer Services Manager at Calgary Public Library. She can be contacted at Rosemary.Griebel@Calgarypubliclibrary.com.

¹ Gary L. Albrecht, "American Pragmatism, Sociology and the Development of Disability Studies," in *Disability Studies Today* (Cambridge, U.K.:

Polity Press; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), p. 32.

² Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Department of Justice Canada, 1982. Available at <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/jus-tice2000/113mile.html>.

³ National Library of Canada and Canadian National Institute for the Blind, *Fulfilling the Promise: Report of the Task Force on Access to Information for Print-Disabled Canadians* (Ottawa, 2000), p. 10. See www.nlc-bnc.ca/accessinfo.

⁴ National Library of Canada, Task Group on Library Service to the Handicapped (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1976).

⁵ CNIB Position Statement on Nationwide Accessible Library Service. See www.nlc-bnc.ca/accessinfo

New Standing Committee Member

Obianuju Mollel (Canada)



I have had the good fortune of working in a variety of library settings, both in North America and Africa. I've worked in public, school, academic, and special libraries. Equity and access to information have been one of my foremost concerns throughout my library career. Whether one is providing public library services to non-traditional library users, or school and academic library services to persons with disabilities, the need is great and so are the rewards, when barriers to access are overcome.

While I was an undergradu-

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Special Service for the Deaf in the Municipal Library at the "Forum Metropolitano" (Metropolitan Forum)

By Elena Pernas & Cristina Ameijeiras

Background

This article describes the early development of a new library service for deaf people in the city of Corunna (A Coruña), Galicia, Spain. Corunna has a population of approximately 250,000. Its public library network comprises six libraries: two specialist libraries (the Local Studies Library and the Children & Young Persons Library) and four community libraries.

The Public Library Authority of Corunna and the Federation of Associations for the Deaf in Galicia (FAXPG) are working together on a project to create a Deaf Community Resource Centre. The Centre will be located in one of Corunna's community libraries which is housed in a multi-purpose building, the Forum Metropolitano, together with other public service agencies: a police station, a municipal registry, a youth information centre, cinemas, a public auditorium, and an information technology room. With all these facilities under one roof, the Forum naturally attracts a wide cross-section of the public, including members of the deaf community.

The aims of the Deaf Community Resource Centre are: 1) to eliminate communication barriers encountered by deaf people who use public libraries; and 2) to contribute to a better public understanding of, and sensitivity to, the social, cultural and linguistic realities of life as experienced by people with impaired hearing.

The importance of library staff awareness of deaf issues, culture and communication needs are recognized and appropriate training made available. The participation and involvement of deaf library users in this training is being encouraged.

Service Development

The plan is for the **Deaf Community Resource Centre** to provide information on a wide range of deaf issues in a variety of formats: printed, audiovisual and electronic. There will be information on hearing, deaf culture, learning sign language and the use of technology in commu-

nication. Materials will include graded reading books, subtitled videos and a selection of Internet resources. If locating appropriate material proves difficult, we will endeavour to publish our own, e.g., books in sign language format. Communication with deaf users will be enhanced with access to DTS to enable the sending and receiving of mobile telephone text messages.

Promoting the Service

We intend to place our Resource Centre in a prominent central location that will catch the eye of people entering the library. The aim is to create an attractive and well sign-posted space. The library's existing system of signs will also be improved and adapted to help the deaf community to make better use of existing services and resources and, at the same time, to promote a better understanding of the deaf community's needs among other library users.

To promote the new Service, information sessions will be held at locations known to be regular meeting places for members of the deaf community. These sessions, which will be provided by a librarian accompanied by a sign-language interpreter, will encourage visits to the library and the use of all its services. The sessions will be tailored to different age groups: children, teenagers, and adults. We hope to use these visits, in conjunction with questionnaires, to better meet the needs and expectations of the deaf community.

Some of the promotional activities we envision include: bibliographic displays, sign-language plays, film series, reading clubs and storytelling for the deaf, computer literacy courses, etc. All the usual library events will have a sign-language interpreter present, and the city's Learning Centre for the Deaf has been invited to conduct some of its activities at the library.

Currently working on this project are: two members of the Co-ordination Department of the Public Library Service, the librarian in charge of the Service, two representatives from FAXPG, an official sign-language interpreter (on a one-year retainer as part of a job-creation scheme), and various trainee inter-

preters from one of the city's learning centres. We hope that deaf people will also participate in a volunteer programme and that, in the not too distant future, a deaf person will be appointed to head the Service. We consider it essential that this initiative receive the support and enthusiastic co-operation of the various institutions and bodies that provide and develop services for the deaf community. The ultimate goal is to meet the needs and raise the expectations of deaf persons who use the public library service of the city of Corunna.

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I graduated at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, I volunteered with Disabled Students Services, reading books on tape for visually impaired students. After graduation, and while working in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, I again volunteered to read book for visually impaired students.

As a reference librarian at Cushing/Whitney Medical Library at Yale University, I chaired the Accessibility Resource Network, a committee charged with providing persons with disabilities equitable access to the vast resources of the University Libraries. The Network included librarians and public service staff representing the many libraries across the Yale campus. While chairing the Network, I learned that raising awareness and advocacy for enhanced services for persons with disabilities requires perseverance, determination, and a desire to effect change. Progress takes time. The wheels for improved access have been set in motion through the efforts of the Network.

I look forward to the next three years and to meeting my LSDP colleagues.

Award for Northumbria University (UK) Research Project

On the 10th October 2003, Sue Childs, Research Associate in the Information Management Research Institute (IMRI) and Dr. Graham Walton from Learning Resources and Research Fellow in the Institute at Northumbria University were at London City Hall to receive an award from the National Information Forum. The award was for the guidelines and the web site from the research project "Judge: web sites for health" (www.judgehealth.org.uk). The National Information Forum (www.nif.org.uk) works to ensure that disabled people and others disadvantaged in gaining access to information get the information they need, when they need it, in an appropriate form. The 'Getting the Message Across Awards' are made on an annual basis and acknowledge excellence and imagination in the provision of information to disabled people and others severely disadvantaged by lack of appropriate information.

The City Hall provided an attractive location on the opposite side of the Thames to the Tower of London with the ceremony being hosted by Jenny Jones, Deputy Mayor of London. The awards themselves were presented by the London MEP, Jean Lambert. IMRI was presented with a plaque acknowledging the work and its achievements, and in true award ceremony style 'thank you' speeches were made and photographs were taken. The Judge Project has developed guidelines to help health support groups make informed decisions on the large quantity of health information on the Internet and also to help support groups produce good quality Web sites.

Graham Walton: More information on the JUDGE project

How can the health consumer be empowered to judge the quality of the information they find on the Internet? The Internet is now a major source of health information. However, there are concerns that some of this information is inaccurate, misleading or even dangerous.

The role of support groups and the information and help they provide to the health consumer need to be widely advertised. Many support groups have their own Web sites. It is

vital that these Web sites contain good quality information and are well designed. The Judge Project has developed guidelines to help people with these two issues. These guidelines are available free on the Web. There are two sets of guidelines:

- to help health consumers make their own way through the large quantity of information on the Internet and to judge the quality of the sites they find
Judge: Web Sites for Health. Consumer Guidelines
- to help support groups produce good quality Web sites
Judge: Web Sites for Health. Support Group Guidelines

The Judge Project was developed in partnership between Contact a Family, the national charity dedicated to helping families who care for children with any disability or special need, and the Information Management Research Institute (IMRI), School of Informatics, Northumbria University. The project was supported by the Health Foundation. The development and dissemination of the guidelines Web site has been carried out in collaboration with the Centre for Health Information Quality (CHIQ). CHIQ, originally set up by the NHS Executive, "works with information producers and providers to raise standards in the production of consumer health information".

Sue Childs, Research Associate at IMRI, was the researcher on the project and wrote the guidelines and designed the Web site. Graham Walton, Research Fellow at IMRI, and Diane Barnett, Information Officer at Contact a Family, were joint project managers.

The project Steering Group consisted of representatives from: Alzheimer's Society; Centre for Health Information Quality (CHIQ); National electronic Library for Health (NeLH); National Information Forum; OMNI: Organising Medical Networked Information; Patient UK.

The guidelines were produced by obtaining the views of health consumers and support group members and workers:

- on quality issues and concerns about health information on the

Internet

- on any help they needed
- on the draft guidelines to ensure the content was what they wanted.

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Danish National Strategy for Library Services to Disabled Persons

In 2002 a number of persons from the Danish library community decided to develop a proposal for a National Strategy for Library Services to Disabled Persons that would urge politicians and library authorities to find ways to improve services to disadvantaged library users.

The group published a report with recommendations which was handed over to the Danish Library Authorities and the Danish Parliament. Among the many recommendations was the establishment of a National Internet Portal.

In the spring of 2003 and coinciding with the European Year of the Handicapped, the Ministry of Culture granted the funding for the National Internet Portal. The Danish Library for the Blind, which already has expertise in this area, took on the responsibility for implementing the Portal which will give all print handicapped persons unprecedented access to existing and future digital texts. A working group representing the broad interests all types of libraries is providing assistance to the Library for the Blind during the implementation process.

Conference for Hospital Librarians in Kassel, Germany June, 2003

By Brigitta Hayn, Librarian, Charité
Hospital, Berlin

The main theme of this conference, organised by Section 8 of the German Library Association, was the corporate identity of hospital libraries and their future development. Over 80 hospital librarians participated in the conference, which took place in the "Evangelische Akademie in Hofgeismar" near Kassel. A keynote speaker was Dieter Blaßkiewitz, Director of Administration at the Elisabeth Hospital in Leipzig and Chair of the German Hospital Corporation. Mr. Blaßkiewitz's presentation focused on the question, "Do libraries have a stake in the future of hospitals?". He proposed that the library should be the cultural and informative heart of the hospital, providing a meeting place for patients and employees and supporting learning resources for the professional development of hospital staff.

On the second day of the conference, Meinhard Motzko from Bremen presented the paper, "Public relations (PR) in patients libraries – cooperate identity in the hospitals overall picture." This was followed by group discussions on practical examples of PR in hospital libraries. Consumer health information was the topic of a presentation by Susanne Amberg from the Franziskus Hospital in Münster.

The theme of the final day was audio books and the motto, "Those who can't read, may listen." Dr. Francois von Menxel described Germany's audio book libraries for blind people. This was followed by an opportunity to listen to new audio books for young adults from the public library of Leipzig, presented by Robert Elstner. Birgit Schlauß from Münster then gave a brief overview of audio books.

The conference was well organised and informative and had excellent speakers; it gave the participants plenty of ideas to take home and use in their own libraries.

NEW TITLES & USEFUL RESOURCES

A Guide to Making Documents Accessible to People Who are Blind or Visually Impaired

<http://www.acb.org/accessible-formats.html>

The American Council of the Blind (ACB), the leading membership organization of people who are blind and visually impaired in the United States, announced the publication of a comprehensive guide for producing reading materials in accessible formats. "ACB is very pleased to publish this easy-to-use guidebook for people who need to make printed materials accessible to those of us who don't read conventional print," said Christopher Gray, president of the blindness organization. "We know that people want to do the right thing and to provide reading matter like telephone bills, conference materials, and bank statements in formats that are accessible. This guide will make it easier, faster, and less expensive to provide materials in Braille, large print, and via electronic media, and that's good news for everyone." A grant from AT&T allowed ACB to develop the publication, which can be purchased, at cost (\$2.50/copy) in print, large print, audiocassette, or Braille from the Council, and read online or downloaded free from the organization's web site at <http://www.acb.org> in print or as a Braille file for access with a device that enables a refreshable Braille display. The guide also contains links to other blindness organizations where readers can find additional resources concerning Braille, large print, audible formats on tape and CD, as well as electronic and online publishing guidance to assure accessibility.

A Guide to Making Documents Accessible to People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired was written by Jennifer Sutton. "We have covered the principle ways people can make their materials accessible, as well as providing guidance about which particular formats may be most appropriate for specific purposes," says Sutton.

Although many people who have little or no contact with blind and visually impaired individuals may think of Braille as the only, or the best, accessible format for every document, the guide points out that there are no one-size-fits-all solutions that can be applied to every document type or every blind or visually impaired reader. For example, "There are many people who are classified as legally blind who may prefer audio formats, or large print, or publication on the web, and ACB's guidebook can help a billing department, conferencing service, or government agency to sort out all the options and get the job done easily, and quickly," says Christopher Gray.

National Federation of the Blind (USA) Offers Nonvisual Accessibility Web Application Certification

From NFB web site (www.nfb.org): Working with members of the technology community, the National Federation of the Blind has developed a rigorous procedure by which Web sites and applications that have made special efforts to be accessible to the blind can be identified and recognized. Our mission in the NFB is to integrate the blind into society on a basis of equality. Ensuring full access to information technology and resources is a vital piece of that mission. NFB has a better grasp of the consumer point of view of blindness accessibility than any other entity in the United States. Not only is it in our best interest to maintain the integrity of our standards for certification, but we are also in the best position of any organization to determine usability of applications and Web sites by the blind.

Newsletter of the IFLA Section of Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons

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Layout and design provided as a community service training project by the staff and inmate workers of Valleyview School Desktop Publishing.
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Deadline for Issue 58 is May 15, 2004. Submit items for this issue to the new editor:

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