



IFLA Annual Conference
August 13-18, 2011
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Impressions and Context

This was my final year as the ACRL STS representative to the IFLA Science and Technologies Libraries Standing Committee. I have chaired the committee for the past two years. That has been a fascinating exposure to the workings of the grand bureaucracy of IFLA that gets work done, but sometimes in circuitous ways. The Standing Committee is responsible for planning annual conference sessions, satellite workshops and field trips, suggesting and implementing projects, and communicating issues and resources to the Section's members. This year's conference was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico with the library of "Libraries beyond Libraries." Given the geographic location, we focused our session on changing roles of science librarians as we thought it would address concerns of colleagues in this part of the world as well as beyond.

As usual, the conference took on the flavor of the hosting country. Even though Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the US, it is very different from the mainland. It's Caribbean with a decidedly Spanish history both of which are reflected in the cuisine, the architecture, the culture and the language. Our hosts were friendly and helpful, the weather hot with noon rainstorms, and the conference program a mix of geographically focused content and universal issues.

For me, the primary reason to be involved with IFLA is to remind myself that the US is only one part of a large library community. Too often, we get mired down in our own institution or limit our perspective to what our local/national colleagues are doing. IFLA provides a forum to see how others throughout the world are addressing shared challenges. It also takes a lead on persistent issues such as copyright and fair access to information throughout the world.



From the University of Puerto Rico Library (photo by Ray Schwartz)

Plenary Speakers

Not everyone enjoyed getting up early and to the conference venue by 8:30. Those who did were rewarded with varied talks by noted scholars and humanists. I made it two of the three sessions. Monday Trevor Clarke, Assistant Director General of WIPO's Culture and Creative Industries Sector, discussed the current state of library copyright. WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization - <http://www.wipo.int/portal/index.html.en>) is a specialized unit of the United Nations charged with creating a balanced approach to intellectual property rights worldwide. Mr. Clarke, an engineer from Barbados, covered the history of copyright succinctly and then outline the challenges WIPO faces with 21st century development. He understands the library community's need for clarity on exceptions and limitations as well as the increasing tension between private and public interests. He ended by noting that we cannot have a system meant to encourage learning that hampers that and in particular is 'harsh on libraries.'

Wednesday's plenary was completely different. Dr. Luis Molina-Casanova is a noted Puerto Rican film scholar and film maker. His comments lauded the importance of archival and library collection to his work as sources of material that he never saw on tv growing up or was ever taught in school. Images, stories and music all fuel his work and libraries are his sources. He also made the point that change is inevitable and necessary; books and libraries are changing, and the cinema is as well. The second half of his talk was a tour through his cinematic career from an incredible use of historic still photographs and period music in *Boleto de Ida* (about railroad development in Puerto Rico) to his docu-dramas about waiting out a hurricane and the agony of the sugar cane industry. His sense of humor is evident in *La Gaugua Aerea* and *La Sueno del Regreso*, both films about airplane travel. One addresses Puerto Ricans emigrating to New York and thither New Yorkers returning to Puerto Rico. He left the audience with a deeper understanding of Puerto Rican life, history and culture.

Highlights of the Sessions

The following are a few of the points and topics that I found most interesting or pervasive. They are in chronological order.

Jan Siames, Kunsthistorisches Institut, demonstrated a way his library is working to retrieve images without words

(<http://conference.ifla.org/sites/default/files/files/papers/ifla77/79-simane-en.pdf>). Our current search tools for the visual world are limited as we describe everything verbally. His showed a pilot project using drawings of coats of arms. Each image was segmented so a researcher can select a yellow shield from the display rather than typing in the words. I'm not sure if it's scalable, but it's an interesting perspective on searching beyond words.

Copyright isn't for everyone, but Ruth Okedjii, University of Minnesota Law School, provided an excellent overview of the legal, structural and policy challenges for libraries in the digital age. The TRIPS agreement (1994) focused on trade and unauthorized dissemination of music and videos. It did not mention libraries, so we have been trying to get into the mix ever since. She made the case that libraries need to come out of the shadows and develop our approach to niche copyright and a specific treaty on library exemptions.

There were lots of interesting posters. I enjoyed one from the University of Adolfo Ibanez where they are taking a pro-active approach with textbook publishers to lease access. For the cyclists, the Cycling for Libraries inaugural trip this past year was a grand success. They visited libraries on their route from Copenhagen to Berlin, selecting the ones off the beaten trail and perhaps in need of a boost. There are plans for next year. <http://www.cyclingforlibraries.org/> Clem Guthro, Colby College, gave his entire staff iPads in April and has seen an incredible uptick in their appreciation of technology. University of British Columbia is doing a solid set of workshops primarily aimed at transfer and graduate students. They have good partnerships and topics that go beyond the usual. These are just a few of the many good ideas.

One of the most interesting sessions I attended had nothing to do with libraries. The Law Libraries Section invited two professors from the University of Puerto Rico Law School to discuss the political and constitutional status of this unincorporated US territory. Efred Rivera-Ramos and Jose Julian Alvarez-Gonzales provided a rich look at the history and current status of Puerto Rico. They had no expectations that people would know much about Puerto Rico, which in my case is true. I knew where it was because of flying there and a little of the history after touring around Old San Juan for an afternoon. I came away with a deeper understanding of the issues and challenges around statehood/independence/status quo. Dr. Rivera emphasized the need for economic viability, political dignity and culture integrity while Dr. Alvarez cautioned that progress was difficult due to the Puerto Ricans' fear of persecution, economic disaster and themselves. This session is one reason I like IFLA – you have the opportunity to learn about a place and people.



University of Puerto Rico (photo by Ray Schwartz)

The Science and Technology Libraries Session focused on how librarians are adopting to changing roles. Heather Todd, University of Queensland, gave a convincing presentation about how to insert the libraries into the research enterprise of the university. Liz Pagan and Julia Velez, University of Puerto Rico used Google Analytics to examine the usage of their two web sites to see if they would provide better content, and navigation to their different user groups. Shubha Nagarkar, Pune University, was not able to attend so I presented her talk about a system she has developed to provide personalized information to bioinformaticians Michael Fosmire, Purdue University, is using the teaching focus of the Engineering College at Purdue to integrate information literacy into the design process all students must work through. Finally, Kim Parker, HINARI, discussed three programs where libraries are teaching their visiting international scholars and students how to use HINARI, AGORA and OARE so they will continue to have adequate access to current scientific research upon returning to their home institutions I had the pleasure of having lunch with Kin as well as there is some interest in a similar product aimed at engineering and technology. This is something the STL Standing Committee will continue to explore.

<http://conference.ifla.org/sites/default/files/files/papers/ifla77/111-todd-en.pdf>

<http://conference.ifla.org/sites/default/files/files/papers/ifla77/111-velez-en.pdf>

<http://conference.ifla.org/sites/default/files/files/papers/ifla77/111-nagarkar-en.pdf>

<http://conference.ifla.org/sites/default/files/files/papers/ifla77/111-fosmire-en.pdf>

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The STL Section Committee had a no-host dinner on evening. Ray Schwartz, a former committee member, memorialized the evening which was enlivened by menu advice and insight into local politics by our Puerto Rican speakers, Julia Velez and Liz Pagan.



Casita Miramar – site of the STL Section Dinner (photo by Ray Schwartz)

The Academic Libraries Section do a Hot Topics session with shorter, thought provoking talks followed by discussion. I enjoyed Jarmo Saarti, University of Eastern Finland, as he discussed personnel management and in particular blending baby-boomers with born digitals. He encouraged us to forget useful work (?) habits and promote the good one. Klaus Ceynowa, Bavarian State Library, highlighted the pervasive theme – mobile technology. He reminded us that if our libraries don't have a mobile app, we will cut off users. I was a little concerned with the future of augmented reality but know that it is coming if not already here.

I attended various session on space planning – another common theme. Heather Todd (standing in for Keith Webster), University of Queensland, reviewed the evolution of spaces from the collection-centric to the connected learning experience. She shared how they delved into what students wanted and how they spent their time in the libraries. Julia Velez, University of Puerto Rico, presented a good poster on the design process at her library, especially noting in conversation the potential disconnect between architects and users. The Library Building Section had a variety of talks focused on sustainability. So, we saw several examples of recycling buildings into libraries. Petra Hauke, Humboldt University, Berlin) and Klaus Werner (Free University of Berlin) are working with their library school students to address the issue of sustainability throughout libraries including the recycling approach Wang Xuan, Zhangzhou Library, presented a fantastic example of a new, massive library that will be a model for reduced energy consumption in public buildings in China Karen Kealy, University of Melbourne, showed how they were working with architects to reduce the space needed for a library remodel while focusing on energy consumption. She also had some great slides of different branch libraries that reflected the feel of the users

<http://conference.ifla.org/sites/default/files/files/papers/ifla77/197-webster-en.pdf>

<http://conference.ifla.org/sites/default/files/files/papers/ifla77/196-hauke-en.pdf>

<http://conference.ifla.org/sites/default/files/files/papers/ifla77/196-wang-en.pdf>

<http://conference.ifla.org/sites/default/files/files/papers/ifla77/196-kealy-en.pdf>



University of Puerto Rico (photo by Ray Schwartz)

In the Continuing Professional Development Section session, Maxine Schmidt, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, (and ARCL STS representative to IFLA) described her highly successful Science Boot Camp. She proposed it as a model that work with many disciplines and is a method to get librarians unfamiliar with a subject or discipline educated. She and her colleagues bring in scientists to discuss their fields picking ones that are of particular interest to the university system and the state. She emphasizes to the speakers that that the audience packed with “educated non-specialist” and that brings the content to the right level. For more information, refer to the: <http://guides.library.umass.edu/BootCamp2011>

Not many academic librarians go to a session on children’s services but I was intrigued by the title – “Change: Are the Children our Teachers?” I didn’t get an answer but was intrigued by the tension between traditional reading and new formats. The session organizers (Annie Everall, (Derbyshire County Council, and Ingrid Bon, Biblioservice Gelderland, Netherlands) encouraged us to make reading ‘cool’ by using technology and giving them physical as well as virtual spaces in which to read. They also reminded us to give people opportunities to talk about and share reading. I think this translates into the academic setting as well. They also showed a brief clip of an animated picture book and told us that a child who interacts with this book may learn five to six words in 30 minutes versus two to three words in a day if they live in a verbally distressed household. The most notable speaker in the session was Gonzalo Oyarzun, Public Libraries System of Chile, who spoke to the notion that barbarians do not read, or so we think. He suggested that we are wringing our hands because we do not appreciate new ways of reading and new readers. In Chile, people are reading more because there are more schools, students, books, libraries and internet access. Technology transforms reading but does not destroy it.



University of Puerto Rico (photo by Ray Schwartz)

IFLA and ACRL's STS

I have been the ACRL STS representative for the past four years. Maxine Schmidt, our other representative, is in the midst of her term and Marty Kesselman just started his term. I've enjoyed the opportunity to see how other libraries and librarians approach our shared issues. It has also been a challenge trying to make things happen such as a more active web presence and projects that help all science and technology libraries. The following is how I see the interests and activities of IFLA dovetailing with the STS Strategic Plan and, consequently why the Section should continue to support our representatives. Unfortunately, IFLA conferences are expensive given the international venues. The benefits of having ALA members actively involved suggest ongoing support for our STS representatives.

- Value of academic libraries: IFLA speaks generally to the value of all libraries. From this perspective, I find a compelling message that we are part of the continuum of learning and of the social fabric of our communities. The outgoing IFLA president, Ellen Tise, travelled worldwide promoting Access to Information as a democratic right with the libraries as a critical hub. Ingrid Parent, the current IFLA president, will focus on libraries as a force for change. Showing the value of our work places as a potential force for change in the academy.
- Student learning: US librarians benefit from hearing how other cultures approach teaching, especially introduction of new technology into the classroom and institution. Our European colleagues are often far ahead of us in terms of digital collection and user interfaces. This year's conference included much discussion of evolving physical and virtual learning environments. This provided insight into how we can do it better at home.

- Research and Scholarly Environment: IFLA's tireless work on copyright cannot be underestimated. We operate in a global environment and need clarity about the laws that govern how we can share information. The upcoming WIPO workshop will benefit all of us. IFLA's other core activity on freedom of access to information reveals to my US colleagues and me that great disparity of access. We complain of stagnant budget, but at least we have one. Protecting the freedom of information is our global concern.

Reminders of Key IFLA Resources and Upcoming Events

IFLA's work with copyright and intellectual property at the international level is stellar. In April, IFLA released a draft treaty addressing library exceptions and limitations for considering by WIPO. A three day session is planned in October with WIPO and members of the library community to discuss the treaty and hopefully to move forward on adoption. <http://www.ifla.org/en/publications/draft-treaty-on-copyright-exceptions-and-limitations-for-libraries-and-archives>

The STL Section with Anthi Katsirikou as editor published a book in the IFLA Publication Series entitled *Open Access to STM Information: Trends, Models and Strategies for Libraries*. It is the workshop proceedings from the Section's satellite workshop held in 2011 in Chania, Crete. My foreword to the book is available from OSU's ScholarsArchive. <http://hdl.handle.net/1957/22842>

Next year's conference will be held in Helsinki, Finland – August 11-17, 2012. The theme is “Libraries Now! Inspiring...surprising...empowering.” Start planning now! There are many satellite workshop already planned that cover a plethora of topics. It should be a great conference and the Finns are looking forward to hosting their colleagues. The STL section plans on a session addressing data – who owns it and how should science libraries be involved. Our preliminary conversation at our committee meeting suggested that it could be a lively discussion as we heard from different approaches from colleagues in China, Sweden and the US. Watch for the call for papers on the IFLA website. These are compiled on a single page making it easy to monitor. Most have a date for submission of January. <http://conference.ifla.org/ifla78>

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Looking back at El Yunque (Drawing by Janet Webster)