

## **Report about the IFLA experience**

**IFLA 2010 – Goteborg, Sweden**

**By**

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### **Introduction**

A few months ago, a colleague spoke to me about the opportunity of receiving a grant from IFLA to be able to participate in the **76<sup>th</sup> IFLA General Conference and Assembly**. The first thing that I did was to read about the activity and I was very impressed about all the information and by the possibility it represents to meet other people from hundreds of countries. Also, I recognized the importance of this organization to my profession and the great experience that it would be for me to participate in such an activity. I only needed this first impression, and immediately I decided to apply for the grant and, as a result, I just had the opportunity to participate in an amazing activity that will be a valuable part of my professional growth from now on. Through this report I will present some information about the different conferences that I attended and what I was able to learn.

### **First stop: Boras**

Once I arrived to Goteborg, I took a bus to Boras, where I stayed at the First Grand Hotel and the next day was scheduled to participate in the conference titled **The Global Librarian**, at the University of Boras. Here I include some of the information that I considered important and pertinent for my work and professional development.

**9:30 am – after a brief welcome message, the keynote speakers were presented “The Shanachies” Erik Boekjestein and Jaap Van De Geer.**

This was my first time knowing about this couple of professionals. They dedicate their time to a library road trip across America to identify best practices in libraries and collect different interviews and storytelling about the different libraries. The videos of their visits are available through their web site (<http://www.vimeo.com/shanachietour>). Some videos of interviews conducted to different librarians from different places (Chicago, New York, Baltimore, Jamaica, Australia, Canada, and others) were presented as part of their presentation. It was interesting to learn about what other librarians do on their librarians and how they use creativity and innovation to attract their users.



*Me (second from right to left) with other IFLA Grantees*

**11:00 am – Do the cross-over: new librarian’s views from three countries: Barbados, Romania, and Eastern Europe.**

With the presentation titled “Caribbean Next Generation Academic Librarian”, Jessica C. Lewis from The University of West Indies talked about the situation in the English speaking Caribbean (Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobacco). She conducted a survey to identify what librarians are doing right now in West Indies. She defined what the **Next Generation Librarians** are, and I was able to identify myself as a next generation librarian. **Strengths of these librarians are:**

- Proactive
- Are Marketing Saavy
- Innovative
- Adaptable
- Are more connected to students

I can say that I consider that I have all these qualities.

- They search for professional development
- They are locally involved

**In terms of weakness, the following were identified:**

- They do not want to administer
- There is no leadership
- No development of administration or leadership skills
- There are few opportunities for professional development

**Opportunities for Next Generation Librarians:**

- Passion for the profession
- Independent opportunities for professional development
- They would recommend this profession to others

**Threads:**

- Recruitment and retention
- They are willing to go and search for new opportunities
- Budget problems

I do not agree with the lack of leadership, what I think is that, since we are young (when compared with librarians that are in key positions) we, the next generation librarians, do not have the years of experience that supports the idea of been seen as a leader.

After this presentation, **Megan O'Connor, Program Coordinator for IREX Global Libraries, presented the topic “Reconsidering Librarianship for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Eastern European Perspectives”**

Two projects were presented: Biblionet and Bibliomist. Both projects work to provide technological equipments to libraries, offer training to librarians, advocacy (to support national associations), and government support (so they can understand the importance of public libraries. This organization is an example of the resources that are available to develop new services and resources to our users and develop innovative libraries like the ones our users needs. I was able to learn that there are many possibilities for my library and that I can look for new resources and support from different organizations.

In the afternoon, there were two rounds of presentations. The first one titled “Catch me if you can: the challenges of becoming a truly mobile, real-time librarian”, and the second one titled “Extremely globalized and incredibly connected: How new librarian’s communities stay organized in today’s world”. After these presentations, the closing keynote was offered by Pernille Drost, President of the Danish Union of Librarians. The title of the presentation was “How library associations and library decision makers could work things out to retain, meet expectations, and needs, and involve new members in their work”. For me, this keynote was pertinent, since some challenges that were presented have been discussed in my workplace for some while. Specifically, many of my colleagues are unsatisfied with the current library associations in PR, and we are not participating in their local activities. I think that the solutions that were presented to meet the expectations of new members are important to consider. Some of the solutions that were discussed are: tell what the members are going to obtain, talk with clear goals and with effective communication skills, and very important

is the fact that it is necessary to keep all the information transparent and available to their members. If the library associations start to look of what new members want and how they should offer professional development, they will succeed with retention and the recruitment of new members.



***President of University of Boras offering a brief message in the cafeteria***

### **Last Stop: Goteborg**

Once we finished our day in Boras, we took a bus straight to Goteborg, where a new learning experience was awaiting. During our way, we received the 1500SEK for expenses, and that made me really happy!



### **Me receiving the money for expenses from Fiona**

Once we arrived to Goteborg, the learning experience began. Here I am going to briefly describe the activities in which I participated and some comments about my impressions.

### **Tuesday, August 10**

Visit to the Goteborg Public City Library – I was amazed by the excellent building and all the resources that are available at this library, of special interest was the Parliamentary collection, and how they gather parliamentarians to talk with the community every other month. Definitely this is something that is not usual in other libraries. Also, I was amazed by the rich collection of audiovisual resources and of resources that are available for people with visual impairments and learning disabilities.

## **Wednesday, August 11**

Opening Session – What a Blast! First, the keynote speaker was excellent, very motivating and with a message that was appropriate for congress. Then, ABBA, this was excellent! I know ABBA, although I was born in the late 70', and it was great!

Newcomers Session – I decided to go to this session because I wanted to receive some tips in terms of how was the best way to attend this event and participate in all the activities. I knew that, may be, I was not going to be able to participate in all the activities that I wanted but, at least, I wanted to receive all the best I could. This session helped me to identify the best way to organize the activities and to not be afraid to meet other people and share knowledge.

Exhibition opening - I was very excited about the exhibition opening since I was going to be able to participate in a booth from IFLA Puerto Rico. During the four days of the exhibition, I was able to spend some time in the booth, meet many participants and promote IFLA 2011 in Puerto Rico. Also, I was able to read all the posters from the poster session, they were all very interesting and some of them very creative. I hope that next year I will be able to present a poster.

## **Thursdays, August 12**

Social Science Libraries with Information Literacy – through this presentation, different aspects of information literacy were discussed. First, the importance of understanding statistics and what is data literacy. Then, the library director of the library of Universidad Carlos III from Madrid discussed his experience at that university and how they work to develop the information skills of their students. After that, a professor from Berkeley University explained how a web-based software can be used to promote data literacy. From this last presentation, it was interesting to learn how professors are working to teach this type of literacy in students.

ALP with FAIFE – through this presentation, different projects were presented: a project in the Philippines, another in Nigeria, one in Palestine and a last one in India. From these presentations I were about the many possibilities there are to develop different projects and the efforts that are made around the world to teach about Internet, access to information and the development of information skills.

## **Friday, August 13**

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – it was very interesting to learn about the projects that have been developed around the world thanks to this foundation.

Update session in Haiti – the Ark project was presented and the efforts that are made to restore the libraries were explained. I was able to learn about what we can do and how to help. Now I can share this information with my colleagues and promote these efforts so there are more people helping Haiti.

Latin America and the Caribbean – for me this was one of the most interesting presentations of the entire event. Publications of Latin America were discussed, then some exceptions of the Copyright law were described and how they affect libraries. The information that was provided was very useful and I hope to share it with my colleagues.

Dance Night – WOW! I danced like a crazy teenager for two hours, and I had a lot of fun learning on how other people dance in their countries.

## **Saturday, August 14**

Academic and Research Libraries- from this presentation I learned from the 2CUL project that was presented. Today it is difficult in my country to establish collaboration between different institutions and this project is an example of how two different and separate institutions can collaborate with only one goal in mind, provide excellent services with a low budget.

## **Final reflection**

Many other pages can be written about my experience in IFLA 2010. This experience has enriched not only my professional knowledge, but also my personal view of other countries, other professionals, and other institutions. Sometimes we limit our knowledge to a geographic region, and through activities like this is when we can learn about what is outside, far from our country. I know that next year I will be working hard, since it is my island, Puerto Rico. But I also know that I will seek to participate each year and continue to share ideas and knowledge, while interacting with colleagues from the rest of the world.