

IFLA 2010, GOTHENBURG

This was my first ever trip outside my country for an event like IFLA. The experience was just overwhelming to say the least. I travelled by South African Airways to Johannesburg and through to London, Heathrow. I then got into Scandinavian Airlines to Gothenburg. On my way back I took the Frankfurt route through to South Africa and eventually home. I was nervous at first but it was reassuring to find the IFLA volunteers at the airport to give directions to the Congress venue and the hotel.

I was presenting a paper on the 107 session. Of course being a first timer, I was very nervous but thanks to my conveners, my paper went through quite well. The gathering was massive and this made me realise that librarians were very important people in the information society. I attended the session for Newcomers and this really helped me a lot in knowing how to get around and was happy to realise that a lot of other participants were a bit apprehensive just as I was. I also discovered that the majority of the first timers were also grantees just like I was. The other sessions I attended included the sessions 128 for Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning; Session 138 on Africa; Session 95 on Knowledge Management. I found these sessions to be very enlightening and educative.

I really appreciate the good work done by the IFLA ORGANISING COMMITTEE and the sponsors; otherwise, for me IFLA would have remained a big dream. I am also grateful to Josche Ouwerkerk for keeping me informed about the travel arrangements and everything about the conference. I was not too well physically but I managed to find my way around. I could not attend the Night Spots and library visits because of my illness and I am sure that had I been well, I would have enjoyed myself a lot. My ill health also made it impossible to network a lot but the few people I managed to talk to are already on my mailing list.

I managed to attend the caucus on Africa, Asia & Oceania and Latin America and the Caribbean on my first night in Gothenburg. It was good to see faces like that of Dr. Buhle Mbambo-Tata, who is regarded regionally as one of the gurus in Librarianship. This was also my chance to meet the President, Ellen Tise. I really felt that IFLA had really done well for me by enabling me to be at such a gathering. I would never have been able to get there on my own. I also managed to attend the Women Information and Libraries Special Interest Group which was held at the Gothenburg University Library. This gave me an insight into a whole lot of activities women librarians are undertaking for their communities. I really felt encouraged and challenged to come back home and make a difference both for the profession and the community I serve.

I also met the representative of the Dutch Federation of Library and Information Associations (FOBID) who made an effort to look for me at the congress even though she was also busy with the photo exhibition. I thank her for her kindness.

The exhibition by different product providers was quite exciting. I saw different publications, library utilities, machinery and different library software. I could only marvel at how library services could be offered easily through the use of different machinery and software. I realised that this is

something we, librarians of developing countries are missing. We lack the training and facilities to make library services more accessible.

This congress was an eye opener for me and one I would like to attend again in future. I am grateful to IFLA grants committee and the Dutch Federation of Library and Information Associations (FOBID) for this wonderful opportunity. This surely has changed my perspective about life and librarianship in particular. Prior to my trip, I had not been motivated at all because of the economic situation in Zimbabwe; I was beginning to think I had chosen a wrong career. Thanks to this funding because IFLA has opened my eyes and I am ready to tackle all challenges. IFLA made me realise that surely my chosen profession is a good one. Of course it was my first time but I really enjoyed the magnitude of people at the conference. I made friends from across the globe and felt even more motivated to pursue further studies in my profession. I also realised that there is a lot librarians can do for their societies and communities. I was also encouraged by the keynote address by H.E. Mr Jan Eliasson who said he also started out as a librarian. This made me realise that librarians were quite privileged people and could go out and make a difference in the community. It is my hope that IFLA will continue to get funding so that it can sponsor more people to attend these gatherings and promote librarianship across the globe especially in Africa where I believe a lot still needs to be done to raise awareness about library and information issues and increase access to information resources. My gratitude goes to the Dutch Federation of Library and Information Associations (FOBID) who through their funding have found a lost librarian in me. It is my sincere hope and prayer that more sponsors like FOBID will come forward to help the likes of us to attend and participate in these events. With this kind of sponsorship available to a lot of people especially from developing or economically marginalised countries, more can be done to improve the accessibility of information to communities.

Thank you.

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