

# IFLA conference – first timer views

AUGUST saw hundreds of library and information professionals head to Helsinki for the 78th IFLA General Conference and Assembly. Among those attending were two first-timers from very different backgrounds. Doug Knock, Library & Knowledge Services Health Manager for South London Healthcare NHS Trust, was the recipient of a CILIP grant allowing him to attend the congress. Yulia Kashpruk was another first-timer to attend, after she was awarded a grant from the Aspire Award for librarians from developing economic countries.

Doug said: ‘The Congress theme was “Libraries Now – Inspiring, Surprising, Empowering” and when I caught the flight back after five days in Helsinki I have no doubt that I felt inspired, somewhat empowered and I had certainly been surprised by the scale of the conference and the passion and enthusiasm for libraries which seemed to transcend different cultures and languages.’

Praising the atmosphere and warm welcome from Finnish information professionals Doug added: ‘My personal highlights included a relaxed, informal and friendly UK Caucus chaired by CILIP President Phil Bradley which extended the British Olympic spirit to Helsinki, and from what I heard afterwards, was the envy of other Caucuses. My attendance was epitomised by participating in a break-out discussion group as part of a session entitled “Strategies for Library Associations: include new professionals now!” where participants included new professionals and seasoned veterans from Japan, Holland, Germany, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Argentina, Latvia and the UK. I even found time to look round the stunning National Library of Finland, have a brief day-trip to Tallinn (where the Estonian National Library was closed for refurbishment!) and

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Doug Knock

met the IFLA President-elect, Sinikka Sipilä.’

Doug spoke about his experience at this month’s International Library & Information Group Informal, which was due to be recorded and uploaded to YouTube.

## Sharing best practice

Yulia, who works at the Ukraine’s Vinnystia Regional Scientific Library, has also had the opportunity to share her experiences with colleagues and at the International Forum for Young Librarians in Luhansk. She said the conference was a chance for her to look at best practice happening in libraries at the moment, providing inspiration for Yulia in her current role.

She said: ‘Echoing the conference theme, this was really inspiring, surprising and empowering for me as a first timer. As an active member of the Ukrainian Library Association (ULA) I participated in a number of sessions around building better library communities, open access, multilingualism, and forming new library professional networks worldwide. It was really relevant to assist in presenting our

innovative project “Building a Strong Library Association in Ukraine” on a poster session.”

She found the session on e-books particularly interesting and relevant as the library world increasingly moves to an e-lending model. Finding relevant sessions that related to her own work was another plus for Yulia, who added: ‘For me it was most rewarding to visit some of the sessions on building modern library space. We have been successful with ideas of designing good library space in Ukraine and

have made contacts with German library architects and librarians engaged in this research (Dr Klaus Werner, a representative of Philological Library in Berlin).

‘IFLA offers a space for everyone and for every creative idea... One of the best things about being an IFLA participant is the opportunity to meet with a wonderful international community of librarians and their associations. I have witnessed how inspiring, even surprising, and invariably empowering, libraries worldwide can be.’



Yulia Kashpruk at the IFLA General Conference and Assembly in Helsinki

