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Global Perspectives: Marking a Transition

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Column Title: Global Perspectives

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Column Editor's Note. *As the Column Title indicates, this column brings Global Perspectives to the Journal of Library Administration. Library administrators in different types of libraries share case studies, research, reports, or articles from a wide variety of geographic locations outside of North America. Prospective authors are invited to discuss possible future contributions with the column editor at anpresta@fiu.edu*

Column Title: Marking a Transition

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ABSTRACT. This issue of Journal of Library Administration marks a transition of editorship for “Global Perspectives.” This column will provide a retrospective of past contributions under the founding Editor, Jim Agee. It will look briefly at the landscape of libraries and library organizations worldwide from a variety of sources, and conclude with a call for future submissions, with updated and expanded parameters.

Keywords: international, libraries, librarianship, administration, services, facilities, technology, organizations

Marking a Transition

INTRODUCTION

This issue of *Journal of Library Administration* marks a transition for the “Global Perspectives” column. Since its introduction in February 2013, Jim Agee has guided and masterfully edited the column. He brought a well-informed perspective on libraries and librarianship from around the world, informed by his experience as a library director in the Caribbean, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia over the last decade. The inaugural column in February 2013 included this description of the column’s focus:

This “Global Perspectives” column will seek to expand those views as voices from across the globe contribute thoughts and ideas. One joy of librarianship, on a global scale, is to visit libraries in vastly different places. Whether economics, politics, education, culture, or other influences may cause a striking impression about a library, the administrative problems are often not new! What occasionally sparks attention, like little bits of magic, are the creative and unique solutions to these apparently widespread common problems. The hope for this column is to gather some of these sparks, to see if a burning discussion will result (Agee, 2013, p. 167).

RETROSPECTIVE

From its inception through Volume 57, Issue 1, “Global Perspectives” published authors hailed from 15 countries. Their contributions have included case studies, research reports, and project descriptions, drawn from academic, public, school, and special libraries, as well as from library science education.

While most of the submissions focused on an individual library, two of the columns documented cross-border perspectives or cooperation. The countries represented have included Chile, Australia, Timor-Leste, United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, India, Slovenia, Portugal, Georgia, Qatar, India, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan.

Jim Agee deserves a great deal of credit for providing a forum to share these rich and diverse perspectives from outside North America. Each of the columns represented a unique and local view, all with the common thread stated so well in the International Federation of Library Associations' Vision Statement:

We empower and inspire society by driving access to information, knowledge and culture for all, to support development, learning, creativity and innovation (IFLA, 2017).

The first guest-authored column to appear was “Library Challenges in Latin America: The Digital Context”, authored by Chloé Vicente, Library Director at Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez in Santiago, Chile. In the column, Ms. Vicente enumerated some of the challenges libraries in Latin America face as digital resources, and e-books in particular, proliferate. These included economic, technological, infrastructure (both physical and digital), and training considerations (Vicente, 2013, p. 359-368).

The next column, “Information Needs of a Young Nation: Rebuilding Library Services in Timor-Leste” documented the work of Libraries for Timor-Leste, an organization of volunteers from the Victorian Public Library Network, State Library of Victoria, and the University of Melbourne. Their efforts focused primarily on Timor-Leste’s national university library, Universidade Nacional Timór Lorosa’e (UNTL). The column provided an in-depth look at the collaboration, organized around these themes:

The geographic, socioeconomic, and historical perspective of the young nation;

A literature review which reveals shared challenges and opportunities for libraries in developing nations;

Development needs of UNTL;

Issues facing UNTL Library as it finds its voice in the development of a strong framework for building resources and services that will support teaching and research interests of students and academics;

IT infrastructure and recommendations for the proposed development of the library that is planned to open in 2017;

Partnerships and collaborations with Australian universities and the role of the Australian academic library consortium in the development of library management systems and relevant collections to support UNTL's teaching and learning programs;

The role, impact, and crucial support that not for profit organizations play in the rebuilding of Timor-Leste's library services and resources. (Coghlan & Robertson, 2014, p. 33-45).

The third column was coauthored by Benjamin Meunier (University College, London) and Olaf Eigenbrodt (Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, Hamburg). The column documented the shifts that have occurred in library building design, from traditional, top-down approaches to participatory design, involving input from multiple stakeholder groups. The authors pointed out “If participatory design leads to better communications, delivery of better design and a happier experience of constructing buildings for all involved, it is certainly worth trying to overcome the difficulties to initiate the process. (Meunier & Eigenbrodt, 2014, p. 217-232).

Disaster planning and recovery is never far from librarians' minds, particularly in regions prone to natural disasters. The column, which appeared in Volume 54, Issue 5, was co-authored by Shiho Suzuki and Taro Miura, related the efforts of thirteen librarians in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident. Their stories were shared through an award-winning poster presented at the annual conference of World Library and Information Congress (WLIC)/The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in Singapore, 2013, and are further recounted in the column (Suzuki & Miura, 2014, p. 403-412).

Achala Munigal (Osmania University, Hyderabad, India) explored the use of Twitter by librarians in India. Through a survey, Munigal determined that librarians were using Twitter for self-promotion, institutional promotion, and sharing of library-related news. Munigal concluded that librarians as opposed to libraries are active on Twitter, that Twitter could be more widely used for SDI and alert services, and that many of the accounts have a very small number of followers (Munigal, 2014, p. 590-608).

"Spatial Analysis of the Public Library Network in Slovenia", by Vlast Vodeb and Gorazd Vodeb detailed the development of a geodatabase and geoprocessing tool to analyze the placement and accessibility of public library services across over 1,000 service points nationwide. Use of the tool and findings were made available to library administrators to inform planning of new services and locations, and to assist in advocacy efforts. (Vodeb & Vodeb, 2015, p. 202-220).

Tatiana Sanches (Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa) documented a comprehensive study of four Portuguese academic libraries, to create an overview of administrative structures, resources, and user instruction practices. The study found that

traditional administrative structures may be impeding libraries as they face economic pressures and strive to meet the evolving needs of their users. (Sanches, 2015, p. 376-393).

The final column of 2015, “Libraries in Georgia in 2004-2015” by Irakli Garibashvili (National Scientific Library, Tbilisi, Georgia) reported on libraries and librarianship, and the changes that have occurred in the Post-Soviet era. Following an overview of library demographics, information was provided on standards, library and information science education, and adoption of digital and open source tools and resources. The author credited the Georgian Library Association for its work in leading the effort to establish common strategies and vision to advance libraries and develop new partnerships and collaborations (Garibashvili, 2015, p. 549-561).

The next column took readers to Qatar. Written by Katia Medawar (Qatar National Library) and Myrna Tabet (Qatar University), “Libraries in the State of Qatar: Current Situation and Future Outlook” The column provided an overview of libraries by type, described their respective roles, and looked at statistical data. A SWOT analysis identified cultural challenges and other limitations to library development. The formation of the Qatar National Library represented a major step forward in the advancing libraries and librarianship in the country (Medawar & Tabet, 2016, p. 52-73).

Library services to the visually impaired was the focus of a column by Shilpi Verma and Mega Arora (Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, India). “Role of the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped in the Dissemination of Information to Visually Impaired People.” The column began with definitions of definitions of visual impairment, along with data on the prevalence of visual impairments in the Indian population. The formation and services of

the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped were described in detail (Verma & Arora, 2016, p. 285-294).

“Teaching Information Literacy Courses in The Context of Library and Information Science Education in Bulgaria: Challenges and Innovative Approaches” was authored by Marina Encheva (State University of Library Studies and Information Technology, Sofia, Bulgaria). The column explored the use of active learning strategies and game-based teaching models in the transformation of information literacy training for library and information science students at the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies. (Encheva, 2016, p. 595-602).

The final column of 2016 took readers to Kazakhstan with a piece authored by Madina Kairatbekkyzy (Nazarbayev University Library, Astana, Kazakhstan). In “Research Impact of Kazakhstan: Informational Problems and Barriers” readers learned about the state of publication by Kazakhstani researchers in internationally recognized scientific publications, and the problems that libraries in Kazakhstan and other developing countries face in providing access to the international body of scientific literature (Kairatbekkyzy, 2016, p. 845-853).

In “Library Book Theft and Audits in University Libraries of Pakistan” Muhammad Yousuf Ali reported on the results of a survey of Pakistani universities and other degree granting institutions belonging to the Higher Education Commission (HEC). The survey elicited responses regarding shelving practices, security measures used, loss rates, and write-off policies. The author concluded that the libraries would benefit from wider use of technological security measures, and that there is a need for uniformity of policies across the HEC institutions. (Ali, 2017, p. 87-98).

LIBRARIES AND ORGANIZATIONS WORLDWIDE

Representation from fifteen countries in “Global Perspectives” during its four years of existence is a very impressive start. It is my intention to broaden and extend this reach as the new Column Editor. As I embark on this endeavor, I thought it would be helpful to look at some relevant sources of data on libraries worldwide.

A recent check of IFLA’s website states that the organization’s membership is representative of 140 countries. Its Facebook page has 32,000+ “likes”, and its Twitter page has 17,000+ followers. (IFLA, 2016).

The OCLC *Global Library Statistics* (2017) project has gathered data on libraries in 237 countries. The data collected includes number of libraries by type, expenditures, staffing, population served, and volume counts. In total, for the 237 countries, the data shows 1,411,740 libraries of all types, serving a cumulative population of 1,314,364,163.

The American Library Association’s (ALA) International Relations Office, in cooperation with IFLA’s Management of Library Associations Section, maintains a directory of *Library Associations Around the World* (ALA, 2017). The directory lists 23 organizations in the International category. These organizations span national boundaries, with membership spanning multiple countries. Further, the directory lists 122 national associations from 69 different countries.

LOOKING FORWARD

Looking forward, “Global Perspectives” will continue the focus it has had from the beginning, and will continue to welcome submissions from libraries of all types outside of North America. The original call for contributions suggested these topic areas to potential authors:

Staff, Programs, Collections, Buildings, Professionals (associations, professional development, and collaboration), Cultures, Government, and Participation. These topic areas clearly remain relevant and timely.

Drawing on my own experience, collaboration across types of libraries, regions, and national boundaries is increasingly an imperative as libraries worldwide face expanding needs for resources and services, often in a climate of flat or declining budgets. Submissions documenting collaborative efforts are strongly encouraged. International library organizations are often important catalysts for collaborative efforts, and therefore submissions from these organizations are also welcome. Of particular interest from the organizational perspective would be accounts of how technology has enabled the work of the organization as it seeks to build collaboration among its members.

Of particular interest to me are collaborative efforts to build rich, robust, and sustainable digital collections. Most readers are no doubt familiar with Europeana. This impressive collection of more than 54 million books, documents, images, videos, and more is the result of work and contributions by nearly 200 libraries, museums, archives, and galleries from nearly every country in Europe and beyond. Though perhaps not as large in scope or membership, there are countless other collaborative, digital efforts underway in all corners of the world. Is your library or organization active in such an effort? “Global Perspectives” is your opportunity to highlight that work.

Another topic garnering much current interest is assessment in libraries. Libraries of all types and in all places face the reality that traditional counts of inputs and outputs are no longer sufficient. Increasingly we are asked to quantify the return on investment to funders, and to document the impact we have on our community of users. How is your library addressing these

or similar requirements? Are there libraries against which you benchmark your library, by either choice or requirement? Are state, regional, or national governing bodies imposing new requirements? Again, “Global Perspectives” is your opportunity to showcase that work.

Open access (OA) publishing in both the journal and textbook realms is also a very timely topic. Does your library rely heavily on OA materials? What challenges do you face in managing orderly and reliable access for your users? Are you part of an institution or country that has an OA mandate for authors? Have there been financial implications for your library’s budget as a result? If you are affiliated with an academic institution, does your library have a role in promoting adoption of, or creation, OA textbooks? Again, “Global Perspectives” is your opportunity to showcase that work.

Does your library participate in a consortium? Does the consortium focus on licensing of digital content? If so, what benefits has your library realized? Does the consortium provide centralized services and/or infrastructure; for example, a centrally run integrated library system, interlibrary loan, or e-content management services? What benefits and obstacles have you encountered?

These suggested topics are merely that. If space allowed the list and examples could be far longer. Do not look at these suggestions as limiting, but rather as idea generators for you to consider what pressing topics are foremost in your mind, the minds of your users, and the governing bodies to which you report.

In keeping with the past, authors from outside North America are strongly encouraged to share their experience. In addition, the call for participation will be broadened to include North

American authors if the scope of the programs or activities described is primarily outside North America. As noted above, transnational collaboration is of particular interest.

“Global Perspectives” will continue to appear four times per year, in the odd-numbered issues. Submissions are not peer-reviewed, but are reviewed and selected by the column editor. Library administrators, managers, librarians, and professionals who would like to contribute to the column are invited to contact Anne Prestamo at: anpresta@fiu.edu. Manuscript guidelines and submission timelines will be sent with further instruction for authors.

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