



IFLA Annual Conference
August 9-15, 2010
Gothenburg, Sweden

The International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) held its annual conference in [Gothenburg, Sweden](#) August 9th through 15th. As a section chair, I needed to attend various leadership and organizational meetings on the first two days and then the sessions began. This was my first year and conference as chair of the Science and Technology Libraries Section. The learning curve was quite steep throughout the year, but we put together a good session and had two productive committee meetings during the week. Memorable impressions of the conference include the plenary speakers, the pride of the Swedish librarians in their institutions and country (and their humor), the easy nature of the city, and the breadth of topics addressed throughout the conference.

Plenary Speakers

(A video of the each talk is noted after the following descriptions.)

(August 11) Jan Eliason, former president of the UN General Assembly, spoke of the power of words. Throughout his diplomatic career, words were critical in mediation and conflict resolution. He described the world of diplomacy as an exercise of respect and the misuse of words as contempt for humanity. Words are tools and actions as illustrated by negotiations in the Sudan in 2004 that morphed a ceasefire (a word/concept unacceptable to one side) to humanitarian corridors. He reminded us that access to knowledge is unfairly distributed, and without human rights, peace and development are jeopardized if not impossible to achieve. (<http://vimeo.com/14082113>)

(August 12) Henning Mankell, renowned Swedish author, titled his talk, "Being able to read and write: a question of dignity." Mankell lives in both Sweden and Madagascar, learning from each environment and community. He suggests that we have to learn to read and write to become human beings, that identity is tied to literacy. He illustrated this with a story about street children in Madagascar that he befriended for several years, tracking their progress, or lack of it, off the streets. He was a compelling speaker because of his humility and genuine passion for the power of literacy.)(<http://vimeo.com/14087506>)

(August 13) Hans Rosling, a public health researcher, urged us to "upgrade our world view: If President Bush could do it, we can too." He demonstrated how ignorance relates to preconceived notions of the world, and consequently can

generate unfounded approaches to world problems. He described how world use of energy relates to both environmental and social challenges. Without electricity, people cannot read, clean house, do homework or work after dark. When Rosling was a boy, his family got a washing machine; that freed his mother's time so she could take him to the library. His web site is thought-provoking: <http://www.gapminder.org/>. (<http://vimeo.com/14121881>)

(August 14) Sture Allen, a member of the Swedish Academy, described the history of the Nobel Prize and then focused on the on the selection process for the Literature Prize. Of course, he couldn't give inside detail, but related that in a typical year, 200 nominations are received and these are winnowed down to 15 then 5 before the final selection. Everything is secret about the prize for fifty years. He suggested reading the pithy, often poetic summaries of the winner's accomplishments that are one sentence. Allen closed his talk with the final words from William Golding's acceptance speech that is truly hilarious and revealing of the plight of the laureate and his reading ability. (<http://vimeo.com/14244770>)

Highlights of the Sessions

The **Statistics and Evaluation Section** often hosts an interesting mix of speakers. I enjoyed hearing Ulrich Herb (Saarland University, Germany) discuss alternative impact measure for OA documents. He presented an excellent overview of the pitfalls and challenges, and made me feel that we are all struggling. Interesting examples and efforts he shared include: <http://logec.repec.org/>, <http://www.ifabc.org/>, and <http://www.mesur.org/MESUR.html>. He also suggested reading this 2005 article in *Information Processing and Management: Toward alternative metrics of journal impact: A comparison of download and citation data* v.41 (6): 1419-1440 by Johan Bollen, Herbert Van de Sompel, Joan A. Smith, Rick Luce.

At the same session Lisa Hinchcliffe from ACRL introduced the valuing academic libraries project. It sounds intriguing but there is nothing to report at this time. It might be worth monitoring as the concept of valuing services surfaced throughout the IFLA Congress.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/issues/value/futures.cfm>.

Two speakers at the Agricultural Libraries Special Interest Group were interesting. Shamin Renwick (University of the West Indies) described the challenge of providing information to farmers in Trinidad and Tobago. Liangzhi Yu (Nankai University, China) presented her research on the information worlds of Chinese farmers. Her concept of the information world of individuals provides intriguing ideas for designing services. The world is different than the need and recognizing this difference could increase access to useful agricultural information.

Michael Gomez (Los Angeles Public Library System) challenges his audience to consider creativity as the most important trait for today's librarians and libraries.

His library system has changed its focus from cultural and recreation to education and has three goals: investing in new readers, helping students succeed, and building the virtual library. He urges us to nurture new visionary leaders who can engage many voices and perspectives and translate old norms into new ways of functioning.

I always try to go to one session by the Knowledge Management Section as I am still trying to figure out what it is. Margareta Nelke (Sweden) gave a lovely keynote on leadership and knowledge management in which she explained how an organization can use what it knows and doesn't know to flourish. Ann Louise de Boer (University of Pretoria, South Africa) spoke in the same session but focused on multidisciplinary collaboration as a form of applied knowledge management. At the University, a large multidisciplinary group is researching student thinking and how that should shape integration of information literacy across the curriculum. The concept they are attempting to instill in all is "whole brain teaching for whole brain learning." This ongoing study is producing interesting publications and findings.

The Academic Libraries Section puts together a session on hot topics that can be enlightening although it is often quite variable in degree. Jim Neal (Columbia University) spoke of radical collaboration that seem radical merely because of the stature of the partners. Deborah Shorey (Imperial College London) ranted about the big journal deals describing them as a "ludicrous business model." Few would argue with her. Andrew Inman (University of New South Wales) described his library's program that measures the impact of research for the university. Questions included whether this was library work and how sustainable such a program is. Several libraries have recently started programs for measuring impact of research and often these are embedded in the scholarly communication unit. He suggested this article: Drummond, Robyn, and Richard Wartho. "RIMS: THE RESEARCH IMPACT MEASUREMENT SERVICE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES." *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 40, no. 2 (June 2009): 76-87.

The new Environmental Sustainability and Libraries Special Interest Group has a full slate of papers presented by younger librarians who were passionate about the topic. Unfortunately, I didn't learn much new but did see great pictures of a green storage building at the University of Berlin and heard a strong quote in the context of literacy is fundamental to sustainable societies. "The librarian has to be a catalyst, a leader in the charge and not a follower. It is necessary to get a clear vision of what is a library within society, to extract the essence of its mission and translate it into the local context." (Michele Battisti)

I enjoyed the Asia and Oceania Section presentations in part for the variety of approaches and projects. But I am fascinated by the differences in graphic design between the US and Asia. We just approach web design differently.

The Information Technology Section was focused on the semantic web, another concept that is a little blurry to me. Bernard Vatant (Mondeca, France) described in

such a way that even I can now see where it fits. The internet is a network of computers; the web is a network of resources on those computers; the semantic web is a network of concepts about those resources. He talked more about a road map for semantic web migration and need for hierarchies that make sense. He suggested this resource: <http://www.w3.org/standards/semanticweb/>

Last but not least, the Science and Technology Libraries Section hosted five papers in the last time slot on the last day. But I think they provided an interesting variety of perspective on measuring the impact of open science. (I would think this as I chair this section and helped select the papers!) Sergey Parinov (Russian Academy of Sciences) described his project, Socionet, that is aimed to be a better tool for sharing publications and assessing their impact. His efforts to provide more transparency in how science is communicated and funded are impressive. Andreas Strotmann (University of Alberta, Canada) illustrated the differences in the intellectual structure of open access and traditional research publications using the field of stem cell research. The patterns are subtle but real. The open access arena tends to less technology and more science while the traditional is more biotechnical and applied. His research approach could be used in other fields and provides fodder for the argument that open access adds breadth and balance to fields of research. Angela Repanovici (Transilvanie University, Romania) used the freely available software, Publish or Perish (<http://www.harzing.com/pop.htm>), to assess the productivity of faculty members at her institution. She showed that those who were perceived as most productive by the administration using traditional measure were not the best at sharing their research through publishing and were not as influential as many perceived as less important in the faculty hierarchy. Karin Henning (Gothenburg University), a member of the newly formed Digital Services unit, presented the unit's work on measuring use and impact of doctoral theses. They suggest that download data and citation information make a stronger case for usage. They also remarked that publicity is a key factor in usage; the best doctoral theses are selected and promoted, and this marketing shows in the usage. Visibility is important! Finally, Jill Lagerstrom ((Space Telescope Science Institute, USA) related the impact of open data to proprietary data using the Hubble Space Telescope data as an example. Her study was straight forward and showed that astronomy provides a model for other disciplines considering open data.

Reminders of Key IFLA Resources

I would be remiss if I did not point out some of the essential resources that IFLA provides.

- Copyright tools:
 - The Committee on Copyright and Legal Matters maintains an excellent web site in multiple languages. www.ifla.org/en/clm
 - Copyright Watch is a joint project of the Electronic Information for Library, Electronic Frontier Foundation, IFLA and others. It provides

a real time tool for looking at copyright laws in countries throughout the world. <http://www.copyright-watch.org/>

- Open Access
 - A resolution was referred to the IFLA Professional Committee requesting that IFLA sign the Berlin Declaration, produce a white paper clarifying IFLA's position and strategy concerning Open Access and that the President's Working Group for Open Access be commissioned to prepare the white paper.
 - The current IFLA position on Open Access is available. <http://tiny.cc/e3t84>
 - The Science and Technology Libraries Section co-hosted a satellite conference on open access to scientific information in Chania, Crete, The participants developed a statement that was shared with the IFLA staff. <http://www.ifla-sat-chania.com/home.html>
 - A one-day satellite workshop on Open Access was held on August 9th. Many of the presentations are available online. <http://tiny.cc/qmzff>

As with many complex conferences, there is more than one person can take it. The concurrent sessions and mandatory meetings for Section chairs limited what I could take in. I always learn something even if it is simply validating that my own library is doing innovative things. Measuring the impact of what we do and preparing our profession for new challenges were recurring themes this year. Most of the papers presented are available at the IFLA web site (<http://www.ifla.org/en/ifla76/>). I encourage you to browse the sections of interest. Next year's conference is in Puerto Rico, August 13-18. Start planning now!

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