Editorial  
Participate, Learn, Empathize and Re-envision Futures: The intriguing experiences of attending IFLA World Library and Information Congress 2021  
*Arjun Sanyal*  

Working Internationally for Libraries Conference  
*Eleanor Winterbottom*  

Working Internationally for Libraries Conference: One World, One Library Network  
*Ligia Novillo*  

Working Internationally for Libraries Conference: Self Service Opening - what we can learn from Danish Public Libraries  
*Richard Lynch*  

Book Review: Conversations with the World’s Leading Orchestra and Opera Librarians.  

CILIP ILIG Business  

Dates for your Diary  

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Editorial

Thank you for downloading this issue of CILIP International Library and Information Group’s Focus journal.

We’re showcasing online conferences in this issue. The ongoing, turbulent global menace wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic meant library conference proceedings mostly continued to be conducted on an online-only basis during 2021. As summarised in this issue, the general lack of physical gathering didn’t impede the sharing of insights from around the global library landscape, nor hamper the passion for library and information-related projects across borders.

The International Federation of Library and Information Associations & Institutions (IFLA) moved their World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) entirely online for the first time. This enabled our Alan Hopkinson Award Winner, Arjun
Sanyal from Himachal Pradesh in India, to attend an IFLA WLIC conference for the first time and he enthuses about his experience in this issue.

The circumstances also enabled CILIP ILIG to collaborate with CILIP’s Working Internationally project and Arts Council England, amongst many others, to put on the inaugural Working Internationally for Libraries event. As an attendee myself, I could certainly rave on at some length about how valuable and inspiring this conference was… but instead I’ve decided to gather contributions from other participants who kindly offered to write up their own experiences. Thanks go to Eleanor Winterbottom and Ligia Novillo, as well as to Richard Lynch who spoke at the conference, for sharing their perspectives on the event.

I’d also like to personally thank everyone at CILIP who helped to put this event together, including our own outgoing CILIP ILIG Chair Jamie Finch (Lesley Pitman will be taking over as Chair from 2022), I enjoyed the experience and thought it fantastic that such amazing content could be provided completely free of charge to all attendees. Video from the conference can also be accessed freely on CILIP’s Vimeo channel: https://vimeo.com/user39467289

I would also highly recommend a read of John Vincent article in the October/November issue CILIP’s Information Professional journal (pages 38-41) which summarises the talk he gave at the Conference on Connecting Libraries and Refugee Communities.

Those who attended the online conferences featured in this issue have highlighted key benefits of conferencing from home. These are varied; from the convenience of tuning in from anywhere, to the reduced expense and environmental impact… and of course the excitement of never knowing when a speaker’s pet might pop up on the screen! There are naturally drawbacks to consider too, not least the fact participants’ time zones will not always be conducive to convenient attendance and inevitably a necessity for stable internet access. For me, the most important aspect of remote conferencing though is the fact it gives those who would not otherwise get the chance to be involved – it helps to make the sector more open and democratic which can surely only ever be a good thing.

As the year draws to a close, the COVID pandemic has continued to have a huge impact globally. Whilst the picture worldwide is still a mixed and uncertain one,
2021 has started to provide some idea as to what the post-pandemic world might look like. IFLA WLIC is set to be a ‘hybrid’ conference in 2022, mixing the best of both worlds. My intention is still to physically be there for this one but - through volunteering at the event - I also hope to enable as many others to be part of the experience as I can.

In the meantime I hope wherever you are reading this, you and yours are keeping safe and well. I also wish everyone a restful holidays and a Happy New Year 2022!

Philip Segall, Editor
“The profound and widespread transformations brought about by ICTs have caused a huge conceptual deficit. We clearly need philosophy to be on board and engaged, for the task ahead are serious......We need philosophy to improve the economic, social, and political dynamics of information......In short, we need a philosophy of information as a philosophy of our time for our time.”

Luciano Floridi, The Fourth Revolution, 2014

“The future cannot be predicted, but futures can be invented.”

Dennis Gabor, Inventing the Future, 1963

Antecedents: How it all began
Professional development is my consuming passion as it is my firm conviction that, professionally-speaking, nothing comes out of nothing unless we strive to build upon our skills or credentials of our own accord. As someone who fervently believes in the concept of libraries as a tool for furthering the idea of social development, I have long dreamt of attending the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions’ (IFLA) World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) to not only learn but also share my thoughts on how we can rethink the agenda of libraries in terms of the idea of engendering social justice. In fact, attending an IFLA WLIC is not just an enriching learning experience but also one that enables oneself to refine upon one’s perspectives as a library professional by being in the thick of an intriguing milieu of librarians and information professionals.

The onset of the pandemic since 2020 has been a rather challenging time for libraries to rethink their mission and vision. In other words, it has been a baptism of fire for libraries. To my mind, the predicament faced by libraries, in the wake of this pandemic, is actually a candid reflection of the predicament encountered by society at large. So, while I was rather intrigued about attending the virtual IFLA WLIC 2021, I was not very sure how to go about it. Serendipitously (and yes, serendipity is an important aspect that has worked wonders for information professionals) I came across the 2021 Alan Hopkinson Award offered by CILIP International Library and Information Group (ILIG) and it seemed like a wonderful opportunity that could be the pathway to a wonderful journey. Soon I was working on my application, not having...
the slightest inkling of whether I would make it. But then, I could not believe my eyes when I received the notification email confirming me as the recipient of the award. It was an overwhelmingly joyous moment indeed for me, as the first Indian recipient of this award, I was soon busy drawing up plans regarding going about participating in this three-day virtual IFLA WLIC. So, before anything else, I want to convey my heartfelt gratitude to CILIP ILIG for this wonderful opportunity.

To put it candidly, IFLA WLIC is not your average library congress. It’s a rather vibrant milieu that spurs individuals towards making capital of their creative selves and, by way of this report, I seek to convey to those who, in the future, are keen on attending IFLA WLIC, as to what exactly IFLA WLIC is all about and how to go about participating in it. For those who are intrigued about getting an impression of how the congress went and the intensity of feverish enthusiasm and excitement underpinning the WLIC 2021, I would urge them strongly to check out the official Twitter page of IFLA WLIC 2021 https://twitter.com/iflawlic as well as my Twitter page @arjun_sanyal.

**Unravelling The Philosophy of IFLA WLIC 2021: Towards Halcyon Futures**

The theme of IFLA WLIC 2021 was propounded by the then IFLA President Christine Mackenzie - *Let’s work together* - and strived to further the idea that human societies are fundamentally interrelated in terms of their agenda. Hence, it is incumbent upon library professionals everywhere to foster a proper appreciation of the IFLA agenda and work towards the aim of halcyon futures globally. In fact, in her speech during the opening ceremony, Christine Mackenzie laid great stress on this idea of a sustainable future where it is imperative to give back to Mother Earth and, in this regard, she emphasized how the

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*IFLA General Secretary Gerald Leitner speaking about the importance of libraries for sustainable futures during the opening session of IFLA WLIC 2021*
Commitment for librarians is now greater than ever before to not only ensure fair and equitable access to information, but contemporaneously, to foster new social narratives. In fact, Gerald Leitner, the Secretary General of IFLA, further expatiated on Christine’s idea by underscoring the fact that, in order for libraries to deliver real-time enhanced services and for the library professionals to blaze a new trail for the field, there is a preponderant need for them to rise to the occasion at the grassroots level. He spoke about how they need to lay heads together to initiate new dialogue and collaborations (that will begat new best practices) and push the boundaries to embolden new ways of thinking for making capital of the power of information. This should be an all-round inclusive development imbued with the idea of empowerment as its byword.
In fact, empowerment was precisely also the idea that formed the nub of the speech delivered by the then IFLA President-Elect Barbara Lison (currently the IFLA President for 2021-23) at the Libraries Include Keynote session where she emphatically observed that, while inclusion forms the nub of the libraries’ agenda, particularly as per the vision laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda, no one should be denied the chance of holistic development and growth. Exclusion is very much baked into the social milieu. Most importantly, this challenge of battling the idea of exclusion now assumes a completely different dimension as we are now living in a digital era where threats jeopardize human existence in the form of misinformation, in its myriad forms, a hallmark of today’s post-truth era. Hence, library and informational professionals, need to rethink their professional practices and move to upend false narratives, paving the way for empowering discourse.

An Intriguing Learning Experience: The Key Takeaways
All of the conference sessions over the three days (17th-19th August, 2021) were actually based on six broad themes:

- **Libraries Innovate** - The need to foster library innovations to stay relevant in this fast-changing world
- **Libraries Include** - Libraries are a milieu which emboldens and fosters the idea of egalitarianism
- **Libraries Sustain** - Rethinking library services towards sustainable futures
- **Libraries Inspire** - Rethinking library programming to motivate individuals towards creative endeavours
- **Libraries Enable** - Rethinking library services with a view towards empowerment

Time and again, as the sessions commenced from the 17th of August, the discussions...
and deliberations were basically focused on the above-mentioned five themes, albeit in their myriad of manifestations or conceptualizations. Given the time constraints and space issues, I will broadly focus on the key learning points which appealed to me.

In my opinion, the key takeaways were broadly the following:

- **Rethinking libraries as intellectual spaces to reinforce policymaking**
  
  Gone are the days when libraries used to be a sedate physical space stacked with books. Nowadays, the library is often thought of as a digital space that allows people...
to pursue a critical and a utilitarian engagement with information. However, equally important is the idea that librarians and information professionals are rethinking the library as an intellectual space. David Stokes spoke about this during his session, titled *Transforming current thinking into smart policy: the increasing role of libraries as intellectual hubs*. He talked about libraries being a blend of both the human and the digital aspect, with librarians needing to be a part of the negotiating

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**Maud Henry, Data Operator at the Bibliographic Information Agency, Royal Library of Belgium (KBR), presenting on the need to optimize use of bibliographic data for speedy cataloguing in the wake of the pandemic [Subtitles auto-generated]**

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**Research Libraries of the Future – a presentation by Dr Najmeh Shaghaei [Subtitles auto-generated]**
table with policymakers. Stokes further commented that, given the fact that libraries are now implementing different types of new technological tools and concepts, the task of librarians will be to provide feedback at the negotiating table and should try to engender collaboration. Personally speaking, I fully agree with Stokes that librarians need to be proactive in fostering collaborations with different stakeholders. Then again, I do not necessarily agree with the fact that the task of librarians at the negotiating table is limited to providing feedback. Feedback is indeed one of the tasks but also librarians can also push forth new ideas that they think can reinforce policymaking. For instance, it is a truism that globally libraries have actually blazed a trail, intellectually, with the idea of digital makerspaces and these have changed the perception of the libraries.

• **Library professionals need to be vocal advocates for their profession**
  The pandemic has come as a big jolt to those who are complacent, including politicians, academics and policymakers. One of the key things that occurred to me towards the end of this Congress is that, particularly in the wake of this terrible pandemic, one cardinal fact that has belatedly become patent is that human society generally - by being lulled into false notion that the highly-banded-about grand idea of a neoliberal social world order being the panacea for every conceivable issue that is amiss - has unwittingly ended up wreaking immeasurable damage to itself, the whole social realm, as well as setting the very notion of social justice at naught. It now occurs to me that we, as individuals globally, have become so complacent, by being firmly ensconced in our materialistic realms, that we have become bereft of the ability to empathize. Most importantly, we’ve become less able to think consciously for others with a view to making a positive difference. Now, in the wake of the disillusionment which this has instilled among the general populace, librarians must now realize that, as open-ended entities, libraries need to engage with the populations and communities in equal measure, just as they are been impacted by it. So, library professionals need to liaise with external stakeholders and be proactive in making their case. The narrative is primarily about rethinking the governance agenda for sustainable futures.

• **Enhanced digitization with reinforced data-driven techniques**
  In this age, when the concept of analytics has become ubiquitous, the importance of data-driven librarianship needs no emphasis. In fact, during the presentation on 17th August by Elizabeth Nash at the session titled **Transforming current thinking into smart policy: the increasing role of libraries as intellectual hubs**, she underscored the need for making capital of library data, as stored in repositories, databases and so on to support evidence-based practices. Similarly, this idea of the immense potential of data (which definitely must not be thought of as a number-crunching exercise) was thrashed out in intriguing detail on the 18th August session, titled **Can we create surveys that capture the hidden value of data**. This highlighted the importance of quantitative techniques in eliciting the value of library collections and services. In fact, librarians globally need to consciously make efforts...
to gather data relating their libraries’ various services and to preserve & analyze the datasets for better perspectives. This is ultimately to enhance library services and improve policymaking.

- **Empathy and the willingness to listen makes a big positive difference**
  The library serves the community, be it a local community or a community of users spanning geographical areas and boundaries. In this attention economy, one of the stumbling blocks to providing good service lies in the fact that quite often people do not have the willingness or patience to listen. This leads to misunderstandings between library professionals and their patrons/users. Library professionals, among other skills, must cultivate patience because nothing solves problems better than welcoming people with a disarming smile and lending an ear to their queries.

- **Rethinking the idea of innovation to exhibit resilience in the face of challenging situations**
  The library of today is still a not-for-profit organization but that does not detract from the fact that it needs to demonstrate resilience in the form of hard-nosed innovative strategies. The pandemic has brought in its wake the challenge of an “infodemic” where people are getting lost in a vortex of conspiracy theories. Moreover, there has also been widespread reductions in funding and increasing pressure on library staff to manage an increasingly distraught populace. In this regard, I was very taken by Najmeh Shaghaei’s awesome presentation on research libraries during the 19th August session titled *Libraries: Resilience, Commitment and Innovation* where
she talked about rethinking the idea of leadership to inspire resilience. She highlighted details of an international project at Southern Denmark University (SDU) involving library leaders from across Europe who shared their experiences of managing during the pandemic. Furthermore, one of the other cardinal aspects that has become rather apparent in the wake of the pandemic is the need for robust digital research infrastructures. It is indeed true that the pandemic has compelled us go digital as a matter of necessity, but alongside this, as Clifford Lynch from CNI (the Coalition for Networked Information) aptly observed, that itself has forced us to rethink issues regarding digital access like copyright, controlled digital lending and so on. The digital world as a murky terrain is fraught with access issues which are all the more exacerbated by the algorithms of deception.

- **The idea of the Green Library**
  The Green Library is one of the latest ideas that is quickly gaining currency globally. In fact, the more we speak of sustainable futures and the realization of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the more pronounced the idea of green libraries has become. The onset of the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of protecting the natural milieu. In this regard, green libraries can also themselves be valuable in gaining widespread appreciation as to why we must conserve nature. In fact, during the 19th August session titled **Green Libraries and Sustainable Practices for the Long-Term Future**, one of the key points that appealed to me was the fact that green libraries not only enable us to empathize with the green agenda but also that we as library professionals have a role; we must strive towards exploring innovations like green information literacy and enabling Citizen Science initiatives within the green library milieu.

**Concluding Thoughts: The road ahead**

Besides being an intriguing and an enriching learning experience, the Congress afforded the opportunity to network with colleagues globally. I was fortunate enough to interact virtually with colleagues like IFLA’s Environment, Sustainability and Libraries Special Interest Group (ENSULIB) Secretary Petra Hauke, Anaïs Basse from Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Hannes Lowagie from the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) and many others. I had really a whale of a time meeting these people virtually. Post-conference, the interactions are going on and this has made me aware of the one very important thing that we library professionals, globally, must heed for the times to come: we exist because this planet exists and so it is incumbent upon us to refine our professional perspectives, time and again, to empathize and strive for sustainable futures for ourselves and for posterity. In fact, currently, I am trying to explore some library projects, focusing on social justice and the green agenda, with other libraries. In conclusion, once again, a big thank you to those wonderful souls at CILIP ILIG for the award that made my dream come true.
Although the recent COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it many negative changes and hardship for a lot of people, I think it is important to remember some of the positive opportunities that have arisen from it as well. Technology has been invaluable to us as a way of keeping in touch with our colleagues and loved ones and enabled us to keep society moving as much as possible. For me, it also meant I received an invitation to attend CILIP’s Working Internationally for Libraries conference. Unlike in previous years where the conference had been held in person amongst a select number of people, it was now being presented virtually, which gave more people like me the wonderful opportunity to get involved.

Joining the conference was easy; we were each given a login by CILIP and clear instructions on how to access the event. Whilst waiting for the conference to start we were treated to a slideshow of all the different libraries around the world that were being represented that day, ranging from public libraries in the UK to mobile community libraries in Africa. We were given some great introductory talks by Paul J. Corney and Darren Henley about why it is so important for libraries to work together internationally, and the vital role public libraries have played before and during the pandemic.

Then it was on to the Building Bridges Projects. Listening to the presenters talk about these projects and what they had achieved was truly inspiring. I had never considered that a library in the United Kingdom (UK) could team up with another library across the globe to create something new, innovative and exciting. My favourite by far was the partnership between Redbridge library in the UK and PKV Vanitha Library and The Quilon Library in Kerala, India. Taking note of the fact that the Indian community makes up most of the migrant population in Redbridge, they decided to create an...
international partnership that would benefit people both in the UK and Kerala, in the form of Come and Code, where mentors from both countries would take online workshops and teach children coding and IT skills. I thought this was such a creative idea, as it showed clearly how libraries across the modern world can work together, even in times of hardship, to teach one another and build stronger connections using technology.

Redbridge Central Library has partnered with PVD Vanitha Library (named in honour of politician Shri. P K Vasudevan Nair) and The Quilon Library in Kerala, India.
By far one of the most interesting presentations was given by Andreas Mittrowann, a strategy consultant for libraries in Germany. Andreas was an animated speaker, optimistic about the future and the roles that libraries will play in it. His focus was on digital participation, and how actively engaging with our library users in terms of technological advancement is one of the keys ways the library service can achieve success and a strong place within the community. Andreas helped us to look at the positive ways in which the pandemic had given libraries the opportunity to take a closer inspection at the relationship they had with their users and look at what they could do to improve it, using both digital and non-digital methods. We looked at the result of using focus groups and surveys, and the simple but effective tool of post-it notes on a pinboard, which Andreas then showed could also be achieved digitally with online tools such as Etherpad and Mindmeister to connect to the public on a wider scale – something which was incredibly important during the pandemic. The key point that I personally took away from Andreas’s presentation was not the word ‘digital’ but the word ‘participation’, in that it is vital for libraries to get their users as involved as possible with decisions about the library service, and that we must always be creative and innovative when thinking of ways to reach as many of the public as possible.

Among the many wonderful speakers and presentations we had the opportunity to listen to, there were two speakers that really stood out for me and changed the way that I felt about the connections between public libraries and people. John Vincent’s presentation on Connecting Public Libraries with Refugee Communities,
and Vickery Bowles talk on Welcoming Newcomers were not only inspirational and uplifting but were incredibly helpful in providing us with practical ideas of ways that we can help refugees and newcomers in our own libraries. In his talk, John enlightened us to the many problems that newcomers to the UK face when arriving in the country, especially the ordeals faced by asylum seekers and refugees, and how organisations like City of Sanctuary and Libraries of Sanctuary work to make their arrivals easier and as welcoming as possible. Though the talks were separate, Vickery’s presentation excellently tied into John’s talk, as she showed us the many ways in which public libraries in Canada help newcomers by ensuring they have access to important information and services that will help them to settle in the country. Alongside this, Vickery stressed the importance of how public libraries can support newcomers and the general community through providing access to educational opportunities, language classes and job skills workshops. I had not considered the amount that public libraries can do for people who are new to the country, and when the time came for us to feedback on the conference and talk about what we had taken from it, I was eager to discuss the topics that John and Vickery had bought up and brainstorm how we could implement some of these ideas in our own libraries.

It was a great privilege to be a part of CILIP’s Working Internationally for Libraries Conference. Listening to all the different stories, from the Come and Code workshops in Kerala, to the partnership between Book Aid International and Sierra Leone to provide resources for libraries during the pandemic, was...
incredibly motivating for me; enough so that it now means I am currently on a CILIP approved apprenticeship working toward a Library, Information and Archive Services (LIAS) qualification, so that I can do more for our libraries in the future.

Working as a public library assistant during COVID-19 opened my eyes to just how much the library service is valued amongst our community. For those who do not have access to the internet at home, or even for those who are without a home, the library serves is a fundamental point of connection. They are safe spaces for those suffering domestic abuse, one of the first points of contact for newcomers, and they are social spaces for new parents, students, the elderly and so many more. I want to thank everyone who was part of this conference, for inviting me and inspiring me to take my career in libraries to the next level, and I look forward to seeing the library service grow and thrive in the future.

Notes for contributors to Focus

Articles for publication in Focus are always welcome. Focus is not peer-reviewed, and articles are primarily intended to keep readers (who are professionals from a variety of different types of library and information services) informed about what is going on in the international library and information world, to introduce new ideas and programmes, report on activities and experiences, etc., rather than be ‘academic treatises’.

Articles are normally between 1,500 and 2,000 words, though can be a little longer if necessary. The inclusion of references and URLs/links to further information is valuable, as are relevant photos (640 × 480 at 300dpi), if appropriate.

Focus is usually produced twice a year, with publication normally happening in July and December. Copy deadlines are typically at the end of May and October.

Please email material for consideration to the editor at iligfocus@cilip.org.uk. Articles should normally not have been previously published, or be under consideration elsewhere.
‘One World, One Library Network’

Ligia Novillo

My experience as a participant in this one day virtual conference organised by CILIP was unique. Unlike any other international conference I’ve participated in, this was different due to the current global circumstances with the pandemic. Using technology to facilitate this conference allowed me to participate along with other library and information professionals from around the world.

The organisers were able to provide virtual sessions, where the participant has been given the choice to select the sessions in advance. Once my scheduled sessions of thirty minutes finished, automatically, I was linked to the next session of my choice. CILIP’s President Paul Corney described this experience as “jumping from one stratosphere to another”. I thought this new way of organising virtual conferences was innovative, using the available technology to its full potential. It was splendid!

Conference Theme

The theme of this conference - ‘One World, One Library Network’ Working Internationally for Libraries - highlighted the challenges faced by libraries in the current global climate, stressing issues such as intellectual freedom, technology changes, and the need for library advocacy at all levels. However what really came through during the sessions was the spirit of collaboration, partnership and the demonstration of how librarians have been a driving force in creating valuable connections with users during the pandemic.

This particularly resonated with me in my current library information and management role at a law library. I am keen to explore new ways of improving the relationship between members of my organisation and the library service. This strong need became even more apparent during the pandemic; it became more relevant to our users that the library service focuses more on digital resources - a crucial asset during the lockdown.

During the event I felt inspired and energised listening to the sessions where the speakers explained their fantastic collaborative projects, demonstrating how they made a difference. This was especially the case in new emerging...
communities, where creative projects aimed to support and integrate communities through the designing of library services adapted to local needs. I felt proud to be part of the information profession, for its resilience, commitment, and innovation in highlighting the importance and value library services have at the heart of communities.

There were several sessions and workshops, but I will focus on a few talks I found particularly interesting. A topic that linked most sessions was collaboration between public libraries on international library projects carried out in different countries, across Africa, India, Middle East, Europe, the United States and Canada. The keynote speech addressed the importance of working across international boundaries; libraries displaying their creativity and seeing this through are championed by public libraries, promoting art and culture. By creating new partnerships to carry out with other libraries around the world “we can learn from each other”.

Projects
Central to this work are the ongoing projects such as Building Bridges. The first case study from this project highlighted the partnership between Redbridge libraries in the United Kingdom (UK) with Kerala libraries India. Oldham libraries’ partnership with Cologne, Hamburg and Bremen libraries, Germany was also featured, as well as Barnet libraries’ project partnering with Copenhagen libraries in Denmark. Each of these projects demonstrates remarkable collaborative work taking place to change, adapt and innovate library services, with a focus on developing services according to user needs in their local communities and new emerging communities.
One example from the Building Bridges project in Kerala, India is the ‘Come and Code’ digital games and videos training for children carried out in two public libraries. During the lockdown, seventy children were mentored by digital experts during Saturday sessions, successfully creating video games by the end. This project helped children in the area by encouraging and supporting their creativity and connecting them with other children, exchanging knowledge and ideas across borders. This all helped in building a close relationship, in keeping with the “One World, One Library Network” motto of the Conference.

The focus of Building Bridges project 2 - partnership between Oldham Libraries and libraries in Germany – was serving new communities. This inspiring initiative started with information professionals working in these library services who were “keen to share knowledge, experience and - where appropriate - services to help us to shape and improve library services to… emerging communities”. Therefore collaboration focused on refugees from Syria and Romania. For example, it was shown that Greater Manchester has similar patterns of immigration to some cities in Germany, including Bremen, Cologne and Hamburg, with high numbers of arrivals from Syria and Romania.

Toronto Public Libraries (TPL) conducted a “Welcoming Newcomers” project aimed at refugees from Syria, providing services and information to help them settle in Toronto. This included overseeing each step of their journey during their arrival in the city; helping them with services and information related to immigration matters, accommodation and getting Toronto’s public library cards as a first call.

Vickery Bowles, TPL Librarian, explained that public libraries could make a difference and that providing services to new communities could not be ignored. Therefore, the TPL library network felt they had to set up this project. Out of 100 TPL libraries, fifteen were allocated for Syrian refugees, providing an information service on settlement, language, education, employment and training skills. They helped to introduce them to their new life, making sure they were welcomed to Toronto as their new home.

**Self service opening programme**

Richard Lynch, Acquisition Team manager at Barnet public libraries, presented on the Building Bridges project 3, a collaboration between Barnet Libraries, UK and Copenhagen Libraries in Denmark. This collaborative work started with 2016 self-service opening programmes, the aim of which was to expand library opening times in Barnet libraries through self-service access during unstaffed hours. Copenhagen public libraries had already established this kind of service successfully, expanding this project to a twenty-four hour library service access including Sundays. This
programme focused on four areas, including customer training on how to use the self-service machines, the presence of security guards to ensure safety on the premises, CCTV monitoring and building design & maintenance.

This presentation surprised me as these were changes at my local public library in Barnet where I live, a north London suburb. I knew of the bold decision that Barnet libraries had taken by introducing the self-service machines. This also led to the closure of several branches at the time, something which local library users opposed without success. This also led to a reduced staff service and - in some of the smaller libraries - volunteers taking charge of the service with reduced opening times.

**Digital Technology**
The session by Andreas Mittrowann, Strategic Consultant on “Digital Participation as a key to library success” was particularly relevant to my current role. The presentation focused on the opportunity to revitalise public libraries, with participation from users providing valuable feedback on the kind of service their local library should provide - meeting the demands of the library service and being creative at the same time. I am keen to explore ways to improve digital services, so that my library will be in a position to provide tools and expertise to help service users.
In addition to existing methods, such as user surveys, the speaker highlighted alternative methods of digital participation, for instance vivid focus groups, interactive feedback covering the experiences of participants and the active involvement of citizens before the introduction of new digital services. Andreas used an interactive presentation during the session, incorporating an example where we were asked to do an instant test using our smart phones. We were invited to use a code to participate in a www.menti.com activity, answering the question “what do you think is the greatest strength of your library?”. Instantly answers from the audience appeared. However I was too slow to access the website, by the time I succeeded the test was over!

**Workshops**

In order to broaden my knowledge of the information profession, I included presentations in my schedule and workshops that were less relevant to my experience. For example, the workshop on the background of the Bibliobus mobile library service from Switzerland was of interest to me. Julie Greub talked about her success in persuading her town to buy a new vehicle for a mobile library service, using different ways to raise the money, such as sponsorship and crowd funding. I have never stopped to reflect on the role of mobile library services in small communities and discovering such initiatives to develop new emerging libraries was enlightening for me.

Listening to the sessions and to the voices of 200 librarians and information professionals across several countries, in this one-day virtual international conference,
My question to you:
What needs to be changed most urgently in your library’s facilities?

- We need a new and greener building!
- More quite rooms!
- More toilets
- New books
- More power points for charging
- More non fiction audio books on CD for users with VI
- We need a better, more welcoming physical environment
- Facilities for teenagers: Pads for loan
- More
- We need the libraries to be more accessible
- Events reopen the toilets!
- Parking space!
- A better location with more visibility within our local community
- More space... meeting rooms

Menti exercise from the Digital Participation session, inviting participants to give their responses helped to ensure that this event organised by CILIP achieved what it set out to do. It was particularly interesting to see the range of collaborative projects executed in partnership between countries, as is the new trend, enhancing a new vision for public libraries’ role in the 21st century as truly innovative, combining digital technology and research to shape the future of public library services.

The whole experience for me was inspiring and refreshing. Listening to the different sessions expanded my knowledge and taught me that there will always be something new to learn. It provided an opportunity for me to gain an insight into issues I wasn’t aware of affecting different public libraries around the world. In order to solve these issues, the fantastic pioneers (library and information professionals) came up with such innovative projects collaborating with partner countries; they recognised the need to work together “leaning from each other” and to build the future of public libraries as one voice.
Self service Opening – what can we learn from Danish public libraries?

Richard Lynch

Richard Lynch from Barnet Libraries was one of the presenters at the Working Internationally for Libraries conference:

“It was a great opportunity for us to show off our work and everything we had learned from working with Danish libraries. I felt proud of the small team we had put together to work on this project. I also felt incredibly grateful to our colleagues in Denmark for their time, effort and insight and for helping us see this project through. A highlight of the conference for me was the talk on Toronto libraries’ work welcoming Syrian refugees, which was inspiring and I hope we can echo the sentiment to welcoming refugees in to the community with libraries here in England.”

Below is a summary of the talk he gave at the conference about one of the Building Bridges projects which were spotlighted at the event.

In early 2020, Barnet Libraries were informed of their successful application to run an international Building Bridges project. The aim was to work with Danish public libraries to learn about their experience with self-service opening and produce ideas on best practice.

We define self-service opening according to how it works in Barnet Libraries. It allows registered customers to use the library when there are no staff scheduled to be on site. It requires technology to operate the doors during unstaffed periods. Self-service opening hours can be wraparound hours, at the beginning or end of the day to extend opening hours, or whole days. Finally, it provides the opportunity for people to use the library during periods when it would otherwise be closed.

There was a huge increase in unstaffed opening hours in England between 2016 and 2019, and while it is not yet back at pre-pandemic levels, we don’t see it disappearing. Numerous
reports were published around 5-6 years ago, but nothing more recently, so for those looking to extend opening hours currently - or who are thinking about self-service options - there is not much advice available.

We chose to collaborate with Danish libraries because they were early self-service adopters. “Open libraries”, as they are called in Denmark, began to appear in the early 2010s as a way to extend the service offer. We partnered with Copenhagen libraries due to their numerous libraries, diverse community and high footfall. We also worked with Allerød libraries, which were pointed out as of interest to us because they have a 24-hour library. Barnet Libraries have extensive self-service opening hours, so we were keen to see what we could find out.

This is a wide subject area, so we focussed on four specific themes – safeguarding and security, building maintenance and design, customer training (meaning getting customers to help themselves and understand how to use the technology) and partnerships. Our initial plans to collate research with a visit to Danish libraries were scuppered by the pandemic, so we instead worked through a series of video calls and online research. We put together a small team here in Barnet who were mostly from front-line roles.
There is a slightly different approach to safeguarding and security between the Danish libraries and Barnet. Although incidents in Barnet are low, the Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) system is fully monitored to make customers and staff feel safe, whereas CCTV in Danish libraries was unmonitored. Either way, it’s clear that we must make customers feel safe for them to want to keep coming back. CCTV and security guards are therefore important to consider carefully for self-service opening. Lighting and building design were also mentioned by staff from the Danish libraries as deterrents against antisocial behaviour. In Blagarden library in Copenhagen they aim to positively influence customer behaviour by creating a warm, welcoming, and inspirational space. Copenhagen librarians also mentioned the importance of using open spaces, lighting, and low shelving to encourage customers to explore the library during self-service opening. They also have a principle that their libraries should have a synergy between interior and exterior to create an inviting feel for passers-by, calling it a memorable welcome.

We discussed the merits of building maintenance with Allerød library staff. They mentioned that their toilets specifically had been recently renovated and now felt
The interior of Blågårdens Bibliotek in Nørrebro, Copenhagen (photo by Stine Lorentzen, extracted with permission from Københavns Kommune [2019])
more homely, which they felt had reduced antisocial behaviour and encouraged visitors to keep them in good condition. They also mentioned they spend considerable amounts on the upkeep of the building because it creates a positive and lasting impression on the customers and helps them to want to keep visiting.

For customers to be able to help themselves we discussed the importance of leaflet, poster and sign design. This can be challenging due to libraries’ complicated timetables, opening hours, whereas joining information needs to be simple, clear, and attractive. We also discovered there are some interesting uses of technology in Denmark to help customers with self-service opening. In Copenhagen, they have live video linked self-service kiosks, so if a customer has a query they can speak directly via video to the libraries’ own customer service centre on the kiosk. We also heard about their detailed stock map, which uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags to accurately map the stock on the shelves. Staff and customers can pinpoint exactly where books are on the shelves in real time. They explained how they used it to monitor how well experimental displays and stock placement was performing, and that it also meant customers can easily find stock in larger branches.

We also talked about partnerships and how they are central to maximising library usage. By targeting partner-led events to run during the evenings in self-service opening times, when the library may otherwise be quiet, footfall can be increased.
The Danish libraries both mentioned that this can also help to reduce antisocial behaviour. Allerød and Copenhagen libraries had extensive partnerships with local organisations to run events, talks, walks and all the types of events you might expect from a public library service. What was interesting is how they have realised the potential of these partnerships, and kept the library busy and buzzing during self-service opening, late into the evening.

Challenges and learning

- Challenges
  - Pandemic made collecting research more difficult
  - No library websites had normal opening information
  - No one was operating self-service opening
  - One original partner fell through
- Learning
  - Gave us and our partners a great opportunity for introspection
  - Learning about library design, signposting
- What’s next?
  - These ideas will inform the design of two new libraries in Barnet
  - Will also inform funding bids to upgrade libraries

Some of the challenges and learning opportunities for Richard and his team at Barnet Libraries. (Slide taken from the Working Internationally for Libraries Conference.)

It was challenging to run this project during the early stages of the pandemic, but ultimately it has been rewarding. It offered the rare opportunity for introspection of our own services, and the Danish libraries both echoed this. Some of the key learnings for us were around design. One frontline member of staff who worked on this project mentioned that it was interesting learning about how to signpost customers to different areas of the library, making it easier for customers to help themselves. We are also using some of the findings from this project to inform the design of two new library building projects.

Image references
Book Review


Conversations with the World’s Leading Orchestra and Opera Librarians is a well-structured and organized guide to the various niche careers in music librarianship based on qualitative interviews with librarians employed at some of the most famous musical institutions. Patrick Lo did a wonderful job of conducting 17 detailed and lengthy interviews that highlighted the commonalities and differences of each individual’s career. What was very interesting was the common path that brought each individual into the world of performance music librarianship. Most individuals had a background in music or came from a musical family, like Ronald Whitaker, who worked with the Cleveland Orchestra. Whitaker comes from a family of musicians and has over 40 years of experience as a musical librarian. His professional career included various positions at the Metropolitan Opera (MET), Boston, and Minnesota Opera House. However, there was an exception - Benjamin Gould of the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra who was an accountant before assuming the role of music librarian.

The book vividly represents the daily and nightly tasks, the travels, and of course the background scenes of performance music librarianship that are hidden from the spectators. Each interview gives an inside view of the exciting careers of librarians. In the same breath, it details the painstaking tasks of ensuring that every item necessary for the success of the performance is where it should be at the required time. These statements echoed throughout the book. Rachel Daliot and Tal Rockman of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra stressed the need for meticulous planning that left room for last-minute changes to the program. Likewise, the interview with Robert Sutherland, Chief Librarian at the MET highlights the need for precise planning, specifically when touring and performing in opera houses abroad, which bring their own complexities. Robert made it clear that the challenges were
no small feat; for instance adapting to each theater stage and the backstage, which is difficult when the stage is smaller than the orchestra.

The book is primarily targeted towards students and those interested in the work of performance music librarianship. I should state that though this book is written for those seeking a career in the field - anyone curious about what happens backstage may wish to read it. I also recommend this book to those who are musical librarians. The detailed interviews revealed the challenges encountered and the solutions employed to ensure each performance's success. The book, though not intended as such, will serve as a how-to guide for musical librarians.

I must admit that I was unaware of these niche fields in musical librarianship. After reading the book, I developed a renewed appreciation for librarians and music. I was also truly excited - after many months of lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic – when the MET opened its doors on September 27 with a performance of Terence Blanchard's “Fire Shut Up in My Bones”. I am still pondering how the librarians navigated the background scenes during the pandemic.

Avis Holder, Librarian
(Former CILIP Anthony Thompson Award winner)
CILIP ILIG Informals

In September, representatives from the Lebanon Library Association and the ASSABIL Association (information here: https://assabil.com/who-are-we/) hosted an inspiring and engrossing Informal event explaining how they managed to support the swift restoration of severely damaged libraries following the blast which rocked Beirut on 4 August 2020. Watch the recording via the link below:

'Rebuilding Beirut's libraries' - https://youtu.be/dyGNg4Rxw0Q

We also hosted a joint Informal with CILIP’s UK eInformation Group in October, when David Ball (Chair of UKeiG) talked about his work in developing a generic model which will enable CILIP to support projects in partnership with funders, multinational agencies and individual countries. You can watch David's talk and the discussion which followed here:

'Partnerships with Global South Countries: Developing a Generic Model' - https://youtu.be/kkQjz3Qc4Ul
Libraries and Museums of Sanctuary in Scotland
11 March 2022

Join CILIP Scotland (CILIPS) to learn more about the vital contribution Libraries & Museums of Sanctuary make, and how your own library service can get involved in becoming a Library of Sanctuary.


IFLA World Library and Information Congress 2022
26-29 July 2022

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions 87th Annual General Conference and Assembly – Dublin, Ireland IFLA’s World Library and Information Congress. Keep up to date with the latest via the IFLA website: https://www.ifla.org/news/were-back-wlic-to-be-in-dublin-ireland-in-2022/

Keep an eye on the CILIP ILIG Events page on the CILIP website for further listings and booking information: https://bit.ly/2zC2TQq