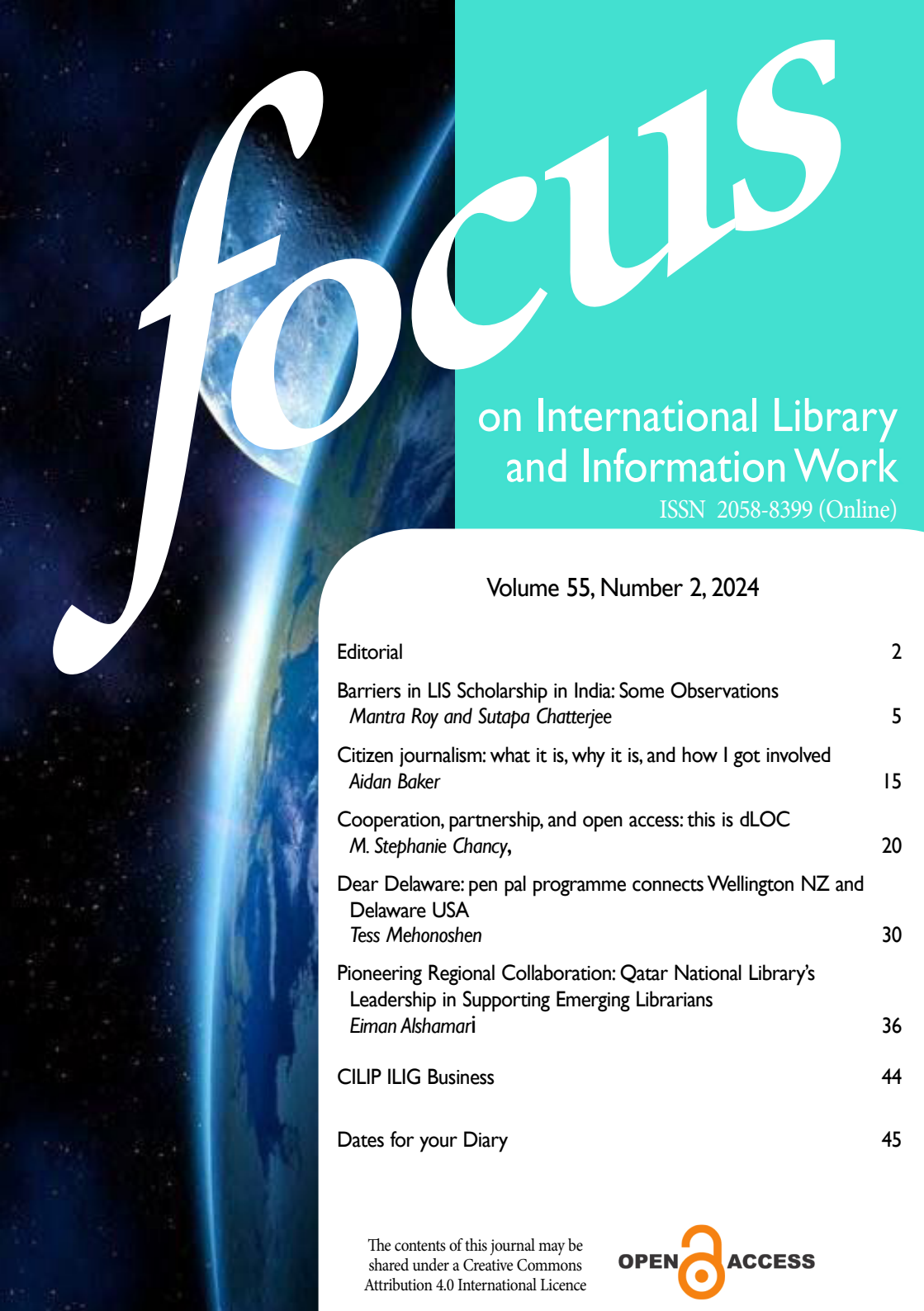




focus

on International Library and Information Work

ISSN 2058-8399 (Online)

Volume 55, Number 2, 2024

Editorial	2
Barriers in LIS Scholarship in India: Some Observations <i>Mantra Roy and Sutapa Chatterjee</i>	5
Citizen journalism: what it is, why it is, and how I got involved <i>Aidan Baker</i>	15
Cooperation, partnership, and open access: this is dLOC <i>M. Stephanie Chancy,</i>	20
Dear Delaware: pen pal programme connects Wellington NZ and Delaware USA <i>Tess Mehonoshen</i>	30
Pioneering Regional Collaboration: Qatar National Library's Leadership in Supporting Emerging Librarians <i>Eiman Alshamari</i>	36
CILIP ILIG Business	44
Dates for your Diary	45



ILIG

International Library
& Information Group

Editorial



Thank you for downloading the latest issue of CILIP International Library and Information Group's *Focus* journal.

It is with great sadness that we at CILIP ILIG need to share with you the news of the passing of Ian Stringer, an important contributor to ILIG, to the international mobile libraries community and the wider libraries and information sector for a great

many years. A future issue will be dedicated to him and his legacy, and until then, we would like to share with you this selection of his contributions to *Focus*, linked below:

[52\(2\) 2023: Finding Utopia in Belgium](#)

[49\(3\) 2018: "The Library is the New Gym and Your Librarian is Your New Trainer!" Eurodis Seminar 2018 Reaching New Audiences - Sharing Strategies](#)

[48\(2\) 2017: The Miracle of Brides-les-Bains](#)

[46\(3\) 2015: From Bremen Town to Fisherman's Wharf](#)

[45\(3\) 2014: Falkenberg Fandango](#)



I am pleased to offer to you in this publication five articles across a range of global and international library issues. Firstly, we have a piece from Mantra Roy and Sutapa Chatterjee that summarises their important research into the barriers that scholars in the Library and Information Science field face in India. As the most populous country in the Global South that delivers a large number of LIS degrees and hosts a large number of academic libraries, just 4.5% of LIS research is published from this country. The article explores the reasons why this is the case, including Open Access support, training considerations and time and funding constraints.

Next, we have a follow up piece from our previous ILIG event on the 29th Feb 24 that featured Aidan Baker discussing Citizen Journalism. This piece is a summary of the event, where Aidan discusses his involvement with the Bylines Network and the importance of Citizen Journalism in general.

A further article is presented by M Stephanie Chancy that discusses the creation of the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC). dLOC provides details of special collections and resources both from and about the Caribbean, wherever they are held, and includes legal documents, maps and newspapers. With strong partnerships between institutions in the Caribbean and the United States, the digital library was created and continues today despite an earthquake in 2010 in Haiti which is described in the article.

Our penultimate article this issue is from Tess Mehonoshen who explains in detail a pen pal programme between libraries in Wellington, New Zealand and Delaware, USA. Public librarians in these areas carefully planned and executed a handwritten letters exchange between their respective library users, which lead to a high amount of positive feedback. The piece shares exactly how this was achieved, so that you can hopefully feel inspired to consider arranging a similar program too.

Finally, this issue contains a piece from Eiman Alshamari who discusses a major training initiative for Emerging Librarians offered by Qatar National Library in partnership with IFLA (the International Federation of Library Associations). Offered to the whole Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, this five day training opportunity covered a wide range of areas including: technological innovations, conservation, digitisation, reader development programmes and academic libraries. I hope you enjoy reading all about the content of the training and what was learned there.

We continue to welcome contributions at any time to this journal, in keeping with our scope of showcasing links to internationally based libraries, the excellent work completed within them and their innovations and developments. Please get in touch at the following address if you would like to submit your writing: iligfocus@cilip.org.uk

Wherever you are reading from, I hope you enjoy reading the last issue of 2024.

Joanne Fitzpatrick, Editor



Ian Stringer
3 February 1948 - 8 September 2024

Focus on International Library and Information Work is published by the International Library and Information Group (ILIG) of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP).

Editor: Joanne Fitzpatrick
Email: iligfocus@cilip.org.uk

ILIG on Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/13131232426

Associate Editors Sarah Brain, Aidan Baker

ILIG on Twitter: twitter.com/CILIP_ILIG

InDesign work by Gillian Harris

ILIG on YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/CILIPILIG

ILIG's Website: www.cilip.org.uk/ilig

ILIG's discussion list: lis-ilig@jiscmail.ac.uk

Front cover image courtesy of NASA



Barriers in LIS Scholarship in India: Some Observations

Mantra Roy and Sutapa Chatterjee

This article is a summary of:

Roy, M. & Chatterjee, S. (2024). Barriers in LIS Scholarship in India: Some Observations. *International Journal of Librarianship*, 8(4), 114-127. <https://doi.org/10.23974/ijol.2024.vol8.4.330>

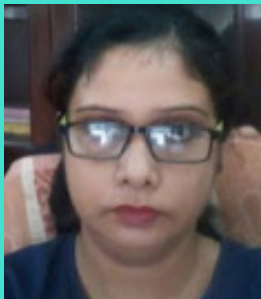
Introduction

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (part of the American Libraries Association (ALA)) report *Open and Equitable Scholarly Communications: Creating a More Inclusive Future* (hereafter, *Open and Equitable*), published in 2019, draws attention to underrepresented voices in scholarly communications. The issues of representation and diversity that *Open and Equitable* examines are critical to regions beyond the United States.

The first author, Roy, saw an opportunity to explore the reasons behind the lack of literature from India she had observed. In response to the *Open and Equitable's* call for research agendas for its Research and Scholarship Grant, Roy developed



Mantra Roy is the Community Engagement Librarian at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library at San Jose State University. Her research focuses on the Global South, scholarly communications and Open Access, collection management, Oral Histories, and DEI initiatives. She received her MLIS in 2015 and her PhD in American Literature in 2010.



Sutapa Chatterjee is a University Assistant Librarian (Senior Grade) at Presidency University, Kolkata, India. Her research focuses on Copyright, IPR, Copyright piracy, Plagiarism, and Digital Library and E-resources in academic libraries. She received her PhD in Library and Information Science in 2018.



Fig 1: a map showing the UNCTAD classifications of Global South and Global North

a project entitled “Global South Speaks: A Librarianship Perspective.” The premise for the project was to offer an opportunity to hear from librarians in India and expand the geographic reach of *Open and Equitable* to include people of different nations of origin in the scholarly communications system.

The study focused on responding to a key research question posed in *Open and Equitable*:

What are effective strategies for addressing biases against library science research being done or the work being produced in the Global South?

The ‘Global South’ includes regions across Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania that have mostly lower income countries that have been historically, culturally, and politically marginalised. Going beyond underdevelopment, ‘Global South’ encompasses a complex history of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and social and economic changes that contribute to vast inequalities around the world.

Why India?

1. India is the most populous country in the Global South with more than a billion people.
2. India is home to at least 300 LIS programs and more than 370 university libraries.

3. India is home to the oldest multidisciplinary public university in the entire South and South East Asian region, University of Calcutta, founded in 1857
4. Since 2006, academic librarians in India have been hired as tenure-track faculty members if they already have a PhD in LIS or are enrolled in PhD programs, thereby indicating research and publications as essential aspects of their professional lives.

However, only 4.59% of LIS research published globally comes from India (Pandita, Singh, and Baidwan, 2022). Why is there such a paucity of research publications in India that is accessible globally? Existing literature confirms that many LIS journals published in India are not indexed in the major scholarly publications databases Scopus and Web of Science, and research published in regional languages in India is not discoverable globally.

Research Questions

What role does Open Access play? Is there a lack of access to current scholarship? For context, India ranks 16th as an Open Access journal publishing country in the world, according to the Directory of Open Access Journals (see Barik and Jena, 2022).

What is the significance of publishing in academic English? Is writing academic English for Global North publications a problem in India? Latin American scholars such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos have critiqued the Eurocentric written system of knowledge as practiced by the current scholarly communications system (2016). English language as the primary language of scholarly communications is a hurdle for many countries in Latin America, Africa, Japan, and other parts of the Global South.

Are there other barriers?

Open Access in India

It's important to understand Open Access and the status of academic English writing in India before investigating other factors that may pose barriers to publications in LIS from India. The role of Open Access (OA) and Institutional Repositories (IRs) has been critical in the Global South in order to gain access to current research. Open Access publishing is also an effective strategy for addressing biases against research originating in the Global South.

There are two scenarios from the perspective of researchers in India:

1. If scholars have access to current scholarship through OA journals or IRs, they engage with the recent developments in their disciplines from around the world. Otherwise, by the time researchers in India publish their perspectives, scholars in the Global North have transitioned to newer stages of the research topic. Research in India becomes outdated at the point of publication, and publishers in the Global North will therefore not have much interest.
2. When researchers in India publish their research based on what they can access, their research shows gaps because more recent developments were inaccessible to them. Publishers may develop a bias against publications from India because of this.

For researchers in the Global North, OA research published in India and the Global South will benefit them by showcasing multiple perspectives and case studies in a variety of circumstances that can only enrich a research landscape.

Because of this, librarian perception of OA in India is valuable to the project. Through the first survey, the authors assess librarian faculty's perception of OA and the level of familiarity with and access to OA resources and repositories.

Training in Academic Writing and Research Productivity in India

The English language is a legacy of British colonialism in India. All documentation of governmental work, higher education, and most professional sectors is conducted in English. But the English language plays a complicated role in higher education. Although English language acquisition from elementary school possesses immense social, economic, and cultural capital in India, not all students have equal access to the language and linguistic culture. When they enter higher education institutes, the jump to having all instruction and examinations in English poses a serious challenge. Consequently, academic librarians who come from a wide range of educational backgrounds prior to their MLIS training have varying levels of ease with expressing themselves in English academic writing, thereby pointing to what has been identified as the 'hegemony' of English academic prose, as discussed above.

Methodology

The research design includes two online surveys, seven one-on-one interviews, and a group interview of 42 members.

Survey Findings

Open Access:

There is a need to bridge the gap between the Global North and South.

IRs are not available on all campuses

There are high Article Processing Charges (APCs), predatory journals, and no Open Access mandates.

50% of the respondents (n=64) recognize OA as a bridge across the chasm between research produced in the Global North and the Global South.

93.9% responders (n=120) selected 'Free access to current research published around the globe' as the definition of OA.

To the question 'Why is OA needed?', 53.1% (n=67) chose 'Decreases gap in research output between Global North and South'

Training in academic writing:

Academic prose in English is a challenge, as English is not the first language for most and there is not enough training available.

57.14% respondents (n=60) affirmed that they received training, 37.14% respondents (n=39) said they didn't receive any training.

40% of respondents (n=42) spend only 1-5 hours on research per week.

In 2015, mandatory coursework in academic writing was introduced.

Interview Findings

Limited time for research:

The librarians, most of whom are PhD holders and need to have active research agendas for promotion, receive salaries at par with other faculty members on campus. However, they are responsible for all administrative work at the library, beginning with book purchasing and processing to reviewing and submitting requests for facility maintenance. Time is a valuable resource that is just not available to most academic librarians. One of the interviewees shared that when she won a national grant, her university administration actively managed her funds but refused to relieve her of some of her duties for her to complete the project on time.

Limited funding:

The librarians' respective institutes are often prepared to give them 'leave of duty' to attend local, regional, national, and international conferences, however, employees are responsible for funding their own travel and accommodation. Owing to budget crises, librarians are often required to submit onerous paperwork to justify their attendance at conferences.

Limited access to current literature:

Two interviewees in individual sessions and ten participants of the 42-member group discussion noted that after they submitted their articles for review, other colleagues brought their attention to similar studies published in the USA at least one calendar year ago. The lack of access to current scholarship creates a legitimate sense of falling behind in the scholarly communications community.

Limited training in academic writing:

In the individual interviews, all librarians said they receive minimum to no training in academic writing, especially as newcomers. It must be noted here that the interviewees were all senior librarians and had been in the profession for a while. Since 2015, PhD programs in LIS have offered a 'how to write' course for writing a dissertation and literature review. The results of the second survey include librarians who joined the profession around 2015 and said they received formal training. About 60 (57.14%) respondents affirmed that they received such training while 39 (37.14%) said they didn't.

Discussion

The first three findings from the interviews - limited access to current research, limited funding, and limited time for research - deserve attention from institutional policy makers and funding strategies as well as strong advocacy from librarian faculty. Only the fourth finding about training in academic writing falls within the scope of our discussion. The second survey responses also draw attention to the need for support and training in academic writing, as 39 (37.14%) said they didn't receive any formal training.

Training in Academic Writing and Research Productivity in India

Race MoChridhe has identified the English language as a hidden paywall. She gives the example of sub-Saharan Africa:

In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, Jaygbay (1998) has estimated that as much as half of the population is effectively excluded from academic discourse by the

inability to read English, French, or Portuguese at a sufficient level. The mastery needed to author academic prose being even greater than that required to read it, Pearce (2003) found that even advanced second-language speakers of English suffer from grammatical and diction errors that negatively impact their rates of acceptance for publication and hence their academic careers” (424).

In India, preparedness in writing for academic research and publication is a critical part of academic librarianship. In the second survey, the authors assessed the number of hours they devote to their research, their productivity, and the training they have received for writing.

Limitations

An online survey, an in-person workshop, and one-on-one interviews with librarians and LIS educators in India were scheduled in April 2020. But owing to COVID-19 closures, only the online survey was completed, and seven one-hour long individual interviews were conducted through Zoom in 2020. The digital divide in India and its associated problems such as lack of access to reliable internet access posed a challenge when Roy started scheduling interviews because data plans at home often could not support all family members, adult professionals and students, and their online/remote work and learning. Wider collection of data became impossible.

Conclusion

Further study can investigate if the global lower visibility of literature produced in India can be mitigated with training in writing for North American and European academic publications. Access to current scholarship through Open Access is also critical so that librarian faculty in India, and the Global South, can engage in scholarly communications simultaneously with colleagues in the Global North.

References

Alamelu, J., & Geetha, V. (2019). The Coverage of Library and Information Science Literature in Web of Science. *Asian Journal of Information Science and Technology*, 9(1), 81–85. <https://doi.org/10.51983/ajist-2019.9.1.2626>

Association of College and Research Libraries. Open and Equitable Scholarly Communications: Creating a More Inclusive Future. Prepared by Nancy Maron and Rebecca Kennison with Paul Bracke, Nathan Hall, Isaac Gilman, Kara Malenfant, Charlotte Roh, and Yasmeen Shorish. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.5860/acrl.1>

Asubiaro, T.V. & Badmus, O.M.(2020). "Collaboration clusters, interdisciplinarity, scope and subject classification of library and information science research from Africa: An analysis of Web of Science publications from 1996 to 2015." *Journal of librarianship and information science*, 52(4), 1169-1185. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000620907958>

Barik, N., & Jena, P. (2022). Current Status of Open Access Journals in India: A Bird's Eye View. *The Serials Librarian*, 83(3-4), 205-214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526X.2023.2183926>

Biegel, F. (2014). "Publishing from the periphery: Structural heterogeneity and segmented circuits. The evaluation of scientific publications for tenure in Argentina's CONICET." *Current Sociology*, 62(5), 743-765. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392114533977>

Bommanaboina, R. D., & Guduru, R. (2021). An Appraisal of Awareness and Perceptions of Prior Knowledge Strategies in Pre-writing: A Study of Undergraduate Engineering Students. *Language in India*, 21(7), 316-326.

De Sousa Santos, B. (2016). "Epistemologies of the South and the future." *From the European South 1: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, 17-29. <http://europeansouth.postcolonialitalia.it/journal/2016-1/3.2016-1.Santos.pdf>

Dhaygude, M. S., Lapsiya, N. D., & Chakraborty, D. (2022). "There is No App for That: Manifestations of the Digital Divides During COVID-19 School Closures in India." *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 6(CSCW2), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3555140>

Ismail, H., & Balasubramanian, V. (2021). Academic Writing in India: A Research Scholar's View. *International Journal of Nutrition, Pharmacology and Neurological Diseases*, 11(2), 105-107. https://doi.org/10.4103/ijnpnd.ijnpnd_12_21

Kanojia, N., & Verma, S. (2021). Exploring the Researcher' Perception and Adoption Technique of Open Access Journals in Central University Libraries of North India: A Survey. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 2021, 1-20.

Kumar, D.V. (2015). Citations to Indian LIS Journals in Selected International LIS Journals: An Analysis. *International Journal of Information Dissemination and Technology*, 5(4), 212-215.

Kumar, V., Balaji, B. & Monika. (2021). "Correlates of the national ranking of higher education institutions and funding of academic libraries: An empirical analysis." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 47(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102264>

M. N., & K, R. (2021). Tracing the Chequered History of the Academic Writing Course

in the University of Calicut. Sanglap : *Journal of Literary and Cultural Inquiry*, 7(1), 100–121.

Mahapatra, S. & Mishra, S. (2019). “Articulating Identities - the role of English language education in Indian universities.” *Teaching in higher education*, 24(3), 346-360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2018.1547277>

Misra, D. P. & Agarwal, V. (2019). “Open Access Publishing in India: Coverage, Relevance, and Future Perspectives.” *Journal of Korean Medical Science*, 34(27), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3346/jkms.2019.34.e180>

MoChridhe, R. (2019). “Linguistic equity as open access: Internationalizing the language of scholarly communication.” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 45(4), 423-427. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2019.02.006>

Nagarajan, R. (2021, July 3). “26% of school kids in English medium” *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/26-of-schoolkids-in-english-medium-nearly-60-in-delhi/articleshow/84082483.cms>

Nagpal, R., & Radhakrishnan, N. (2022). India and a historical perspective of open access. *Library Hi Tech News*, 39(4), 6–10. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LHTN-12-2021-0090>

Nazim, M., & Ashar, M. (2023). Factors influencing the adoption and use of open access scholarly communication among researchers in India. *Online Information Review*, 47(2), 259–282. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-05-2021-0265>

Open Access India: Advocating Open Access, Open Data and Open Education in India. (n.d.). <http://openaccessindia.org/>

Palla, I. A., Sheikh, A., & Baquee, A. (2022). Awareness, use and attitudes of the Indian higher educational institutions students about scholarly open access: an empirical analysis. *Library Management*, 43(6/7), 476–491. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LM-12-2021-0107>

Pandita, R., Singh, S., & Baidwan, K. (2022). India’s research contribution to world LIS literature: a study 2011–20. *Collection and Curation*, 41(4), 116–124. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CC-02-2021-0005>

Patra, S. K. (2014). Google Scholar-based citation analysis of Indian library and information science journals. *Annals of Library and Information Studies (ALIS)*, 61(3), 227–234.

Pradhan, & Chandrakar. (n.d.). Indian LIS literature in international journals with specific reference to SSCI database: A bibliometric study. *Library Philosophy and Practice*.

Prieto-Gutiérrez, J. J., & Segado-Boj, F. (2019). Annals of Library and Information Studies: A Bibliometric Analysis of the Journal and a Comparison with the Top Library and Information Studies Journals in Asia and Worldwide (2011–2017). *The Serials Librarian* (Vol. 77, Issues 1–2, pp. 38–48). <https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526x.2019.1637387>

Sharma, H. (2020, July 20) “Share of kids in English medium steadily ups” *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/education/english-medium-schools-national-statistical-office-native-languages-6514045/>

Singh, K. P., Chander, H., & Shukla, A. (2018). Bibliometric Assessment of Library and Information Science Journals in India (1912–2016). *International Journal of Knowledge Content Development & Technology*, 8(3), 69–85. <https://doi.org/10.5865/IJKCT.2018.8.3.069>

Uzun, A. (2002). Library and information science research in developing countries and eastern European countries: A brief bibliometric perspective. *The International Information & Library Review*, 34(1), 21–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2002.10762561>

Vinay, K. D. (2015). Citations to Indian LIS Journals in Selected International LIS Journals: An Analysis. *International Journal of Information Dissemination and Technology*, 5(4), 212–215.



ILIG on Facebook and Twitter

If you're on Facebook, why don't you join us?

www.facebook.com/groups/13131232426

Make contact with librarians around the world and start networking!

@CILIP_ILIG

Follow us to get the latest updates on CILIP ILIG news and events, tweets from CILIP conference, news from CILIP and of international interest, and to communicate with us and let us know what you would like CILIP ILIG to do for you.

Citizen Journalism: what it is, why it is, and how I got involved

Aidan Baker, East Anglia bylines Writer and ILIG Co-Chair

Wikipedia places citizen journalism amid a plethora of terms -- community journalism, civic journalism, collaborative journalism, social journalism. *Citizen journalism* has overtones of civic responsibility and of doing it because it's a way of being civically responsible. It's become such a thing, even in this country, because of how regional media in this country has declined even over the last 15 or 16 years.

Fig.1 shows that on every metric, regional media statistics are down to about a third of what they were. This includes the number of firms that are active in

	2007	2022
Regional Media Owners	Trinity Mirror, Northcliffe, Yattendon Investment Trust, Guardian Media Group (regional holdings), Newsquest, CN Group, Isle of Wight County Press, Johnston Press	Reach, Newsquest, National World
Reach (& predecessor companies) revenue	£1134mn	£300mn
Reach (& predecessor companies) journalists	4050	1500
Newsquest (& predecessor companies) revenue	£636mn	£190mn
Newsquest (& predecessor companies) journalists	2242	608
National World (& predecessor companies) revenue	£608mn	£84mn
National World (& predecessor companies) journalists	2555	722

Fig 1. Decline of UK regional media. Source: Ponsford, Dominic. 'Colossal decline of UK regional media since 2007 revealed'. Press gazette, 15 February 2024. <https://bit.ly/3UTRR3g>

Area	Ownership
national newspaper market	DMG Media, News UK and Reach dominate 90%
online platforms used for access to news	10 of the top 15 UK platforms are owned by Meta, Google and X Corp (owner of X/Twitter)
video-on-demand subscriptions	Netflix, Amazon Prime and Disney account for 80%

Fig 2. Media ownership. Source: Chivers, Tom. *Who owns the UK media?* London: Media Reform Coalition, 2023

owning and operating, the amount of money that comes in as a result of their work, and the number of journalists employed in regional media. And see Fig. 2 for the national media:

- The newspaper market is dominated by just three huge organisations.
- Two-thirds of the online platforms used for news access are dominated by another three big corporations.

Video on-demand subscriptions are dominated by three huge corporations.

The bias of the mainstream media is pretty well known. *Telegraph, Mail, Sun, Express, Times* -- not exactly progressive...

I don't claim that citizen journalism itself has no axe to grind. For us in the Bylines Network, it's concern at the effects of Brexit.

Research scientist Mike Galsworthy (Fig. 3) founded an organisation called Scientists4EU. On his X bio, he puts that after his founding of Bylines Network . Bylines Network is associated with the newspaper *Byline times* -- separate from them, not controlled by them, but happy to share the name and market them and



Fig.3. Dr Mike Galsworthy

so on. The Bylines Network is a federation of regional online news outlets all over the country. Mike began this in 2020 with *Yorkshire bylines*, a not-for-profit citizen journalism outlet "aiming to publish well-written, fact-based articles and opinion pieces on subjects that are of interest to people in Yorkshire and beyond" (<https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/>). And there were, very quickly, others in various parts of England. *East Anglia bylines*'s patch is larger than the title implies. The coverage area is Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

I got involved through being an activist in Global Justice Now, an organisation campaigning on 'rich world / poor world' questions. I first heard of *East Anglia bylines* (EAB) when a member of Global Justice Cambridge passed on the news that EAB was to be set up and was seeking writers and editorial team members. I put my name forward. Having worked in an archaeological library, I offered to write about archaeology, and to interview archaeologists. I offered to interview poets as well. The website <https://www.placesofpoetry.org.uk/> includes a good many poems about places in East Anglia, many of them by living writers. And the third strand I offered was my interest in hymn tunes that are named after places. Thaxted in Essex gave its name to the tune used for the patriotic hymn 'I vow to thee, my country'. I said I could write about things like that, and the nascent publication took me on.

I've written about [hymn tunes](#) for EAB: 11 articles at the last count, concerning a similar number of tunes (some places have given their name to more than one tune). And I've done a lot of interviews, not all with poets. I've interviewed [an asylum seeker in Downham Market](#), and a [Heidelberg virologist](#) about how Germany's response to COVID worked -- not spectacularly but respectably -- better than the UK's. An article I wrote just after the [Russian invasion of Ukraine](#) quoted from the ILIG statement on the war quite extensively, and took a look at the response of libraries in East Anglia. This is one area where the work of *East Anglia bylines* touches libraries. We're able to interview librarians. And also some of my writing involves me in using libraries for my research -- Cambridge University Library often, others as necessary, e.g. the Essex Record Office for the story of the hymn tune 'Saffron Walden'.

Besides writing, I do some of the copy editing, proofreading and occasionally uploading. *East Anglia bylines* has a regional focus and an international focus. We've got a reasonable idea of the sort of thing we want. At our Tuesday editorial meetings by Zoom, we have quite animated discussions about what actually that means, and we end up with a decision as to whether we're going to commission an article pitch or not.

Since the thing that kick-started us was Brexit, we are much interested in the effects of Brexit on people and communities in East Anglia, and also how Brexit Britain looks from the EU. We have a series that publishes on Friday mornings entitled '[Our place in Europe](#)'. We flatter ourselves that publishing things like that does actually influence the rejoin movement, and that we're not simply hand-wringing.

We get noticed! Data for the week before the writing of this article shows that we had 5,449 total views during that time. We published twelve new articles in the week. Team member Peter Thurlow, who was a journalist with an East Anglian paper for a number of years, has got the knack of finding out stories we can run as 'exclusive' and sometimes see picked up by mainstream media afterwards.

Kate Moore, a member of the editorial team, went on a northern lights cruise last Christmas and got into an adventure when storm Pia hit her ship in the North Sea. She wrote about this for us, and media across the Atlantic asked to use it. Peter's stories about claims of election law breaches by council officials regarding voter ID, and by Conservative Party officials regarding postal vote applications, have had some traction in this country. We like to think that our impact on the mainstream media is that we're actually contributing to them.

We're regulated by the independent press standards organisation Impress <https://www.impressorg.com/>, which regulates a number of small local press outlets and progressive publications like *New internationalist* and *Skwawkbox*. Impress doesn't offer training, and we can't claim to have been through the National Council for the Training of Journalists procedure.

But we do succeed in getting ourselves trained by people who are willing to offer freelance training. An online session about defamation reminded me of the 23things self-teaching that librarians had been through. My experience as a librarian has been echoed quite a lot in my experience with *East Anglia bylines*, in terms of things like seeking images and the use of Creative Commons licenses, and copyright generally.

In the nature of things, we get a few X posts in our praise, and we get insulting X posts, and self-serving bias keeps me remembering the X posts in our praise, albeit not verbatim. We've been described as tuppenny journalists, or sometimes as a kind of Waitrose *Skwawkbox*. Not sure if that last one is a compliment or not.

What are our plans for the future? For me personally, the eastern counties have quite a few more tune-honoured places that I'm going to write about.

And we're always on the lookout for material. Have you anything for us? We run a political gossip column, which appears on Saturdays. It's called '[Pecksniff's diary](#)'. If you know of anything gossip worthy about politicians in East Anglia, we'd be happy to hear from you. And if you know of things happening in some other area of the UK, see bylinesnetwork.co.uk for which [Bylines Network](#) publication will be happy to hear from you.

And do you know of things worldwide or things in Europe that might feed into '[Our place in Europe](#)'? And our allied organisation [Byline times](#), which appears both in print and online, is keen to hear from all over the world!



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 ilifocus@cilip.org.uk

Articles should normally not have been previously published,
or be under consideration elsewhere.

Cooperation, partnership, and open access: this is dLOC

M. Stephanie Chancy, Ph.D.

The Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) is a co-operative of libraries, archives, and other institutions of memory and preservation that work together to provide open digital access to research resources from and about the Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora. Users around the world include scholars, students, teachers, and anyone with a desire to learn more about the Caribbean. dLOC.com charges no fees and does not ask that an account be created. Curiosity and an internet connection are the only requirements to use the available resources.

dLOC is often described as a collection of collections. The website holds individual partner collections as well as specialised ones. Of note are:

- the Caribbean Law collection which gives particular attention to Cuban and Haitian legal documents
- the Caribbean Map collection featuring examples from as early as the sixteenth century
- the Caribbean newspaper collection.

The latter constitutes the largest collection of digitised Caribbean newspapers available on a single platform. There are publications from nearly every Caribbean island, in a variety of languages, dating as far back as the late eighteenth century. For the partner institutions, especially some in the Caribbean, dLOC is not only a centralised access point, but also a digital archival repository helping to preserve and safeguard important Caribbean historical and cultural patrimony.



M. Stephanie Chancy is the Caribbean Partnerships Librarian, and Director of Operations for the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) at the University of Florida's George A. Smathers Libraries. She received her Ph.D. in History from Florida International University and her Masters of Arts and Bachelors of Science from the University of Miami. Stephanie's research focuses on Black Atlantic Material Cultures, especially the cultural and artistic exchanges between the Caribbean, Europe, and the United States. Stephanie taught U.S. History and Art History courses at the undergraduate level for over a decade, and, prior to her academic career she worked in non-profit arts administration.

The following provides a brief overview of dLOC's history, its mission and governing structure. It highlights the partnerships and initiatives undertaken in the Caribbean nation of Haiti as an example of the mission in action.



Fig. 1: Franz J.J. von Reilly, *Karte von Amerika: Nach D'Anville Und Pownall: Neu Verzeichnet* (Map of America: After D'Anville and Pownall: Newly Plotted), 1795, University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries, Caribbean Map Collection, Digital Library of the Caribbean, (<https://dloc.com/UF00073304/00001/citation>)

dLOC had its start 20 years ago with three librarians, an idea, and a professional conference. It was, however, slightly earlier, at the 2002 conference of the Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institutional Libraries (ACURIL), that the seeds of the idea for a centralised digital repository of Caribbean research materials were sown in the mind of dLOC's 'founding mother,' Judith Rogers, a librarian at the University of the Virgin Islands.¹ Two years later, during a working session at the 2004 ACURIL conference, Rogers and two colleagues,

Catherine Marsicek from Florida International University, and Erich Kesse from the University of Florida, put forth a proposal for “a co-operative digital library among partners in the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean,” that would give “users access to cultural, historical and research materials held in archives, libraries and private collections.”²

The idea was greeted with enthusiasm, and action to make such an entity a reality quickly followed. In July 2004, over the course of a two-day planning committee meeting, organised by ACURIL, a mission and governing structure were established. More importantly, the newly formed Digital Library of the Caribbean had nine founding partners – five from the Caribbean and four from the United States.³

20 years later, in 2024, dLOC has nearly 100 partners from the Caribbean, Canada, Europe, and the United States. There are two centres of operation:

- the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville, Florida, which serves as the administrative and technical hub
- Florida International University (FIU) in Miami, Florida, which serves as the outreach hub for South Florida’s large Caribbean diaspora community.

Moreover, the website, which received 373 views during its first month in 2006, had over 10m views at the end of October 2024. There has been much progress in the last two decades. dLOC’s mission, however, remains unchanged.

From the beginning, the mission has been to “protect, [to] ensure and encourage equitable access [to] valuable resources for the study of the Caribbean and the advancement of Caribbean studies.”⁴ The funding application from 2005, which provided the financing for dLOC in its early years reveals that like the mission, the organisation’s collective approach is also long-standing. The funding request was submitted “in consortium with” several U.S. based institutions, and the stated intention was “to cross borders and build collaboration among diverse institutions” with the goal of “sharing resources in a common space...”⁵

Conceived as a co-operative, dLOC and its partners work together forming a community of co-operation defined as one built “around shared principles” and goals while members of the co-operative remain autonomous.⁶ dLOC has a shared governance structure where all partners have an opportunity to take part in decision-making. Each partner has a vote in the general assembly and partner representatives elect members of the Executive Board. Executive Board members are all dLOC partners, and they vote on the admission of new partners and on any changes to the organisation’s by-laws.

N^o 10
Liberté.

Le Code de l'Égalité.

Le 22 Germinal an 6 de la République
Française, une et indivisible.

TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE,
Général en chef de l'Armée de Saint-Domingue,
Le Général de division Bertrand Agent particulier
du Gouvernement français à St. Domingue.

*Non postulé
le 22 Germinal
l'an 6 de la République*

Célestin Général et Agent

J'ai l'honneur de vous adresser le duplicata de la
lettre que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire
le 22 Germinal, et j'y ai annexé les arrêtés du
Directoire exécutif que je n'avais pas trouvé dans
le primat; ils ne peuvent vous donner une
satisfaction que je vous en aurais eue par
les Comités.

Agent à indiquer tous les Corps militaires
de cette Armée auxiliaire, je ne puis regretter
que je ne l'accomplisse à votre première demande.

Fig. 2:
Letter from Toussaint Louverture to the French Government 22 Germinal Year 6 (1797),
Archives Nationales d'Haïti Collection, Digital Library of the Caribbean (<https://dloc.com/CA00510256/00001/citation>)

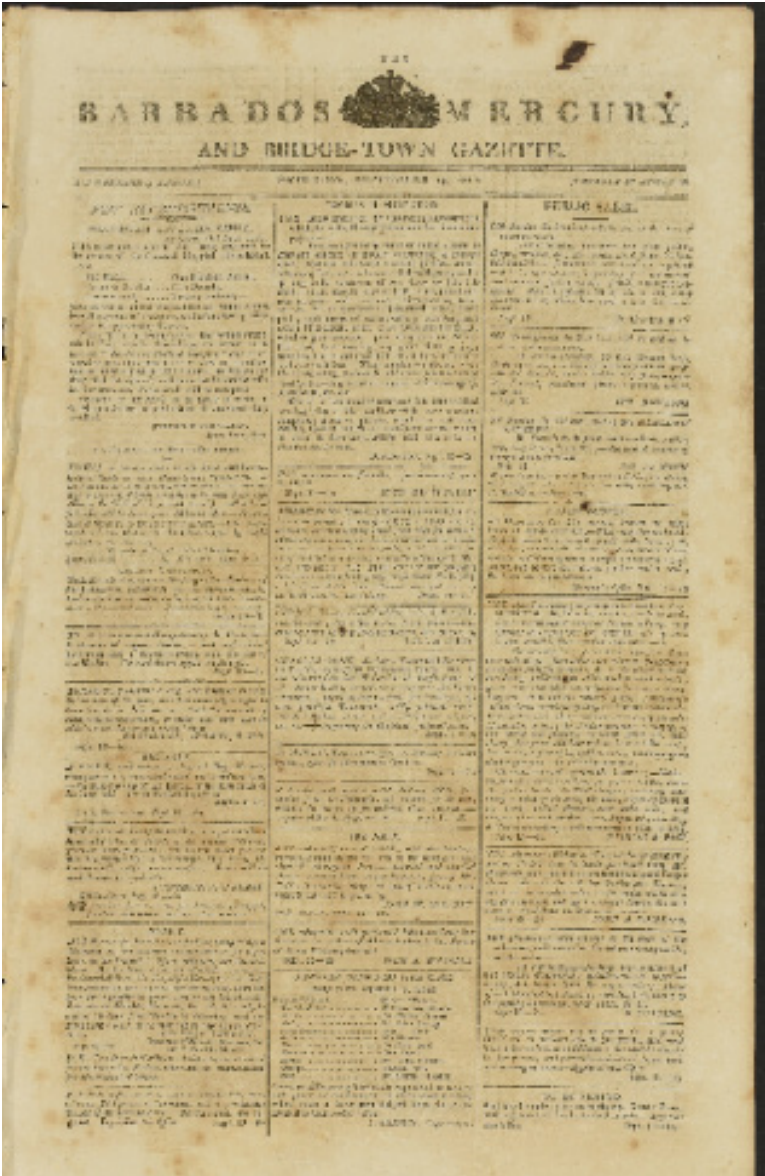


Fig. 3: Barbados Mercury and Bridge-Town Gazette, September 19, 1818, Barbados Archives Department, Caribbean Newspapers Collection, Digital Library of the Caribbean, (<https://dloc.com/AA00047511/01452/citation>)

dLOC's approach to collection development is post-custodial. Partners are not asked to transfer physical collections to either of the administrative institutions. Partners maintain control over their holdings, deciding what and how many items from their collections they share. Most significantly, neither the co-operative nor the operational hubs make any claims of ownership on anything that is uploaded to the dLOC platform. All records identify the partner and include a copyright, Creative Commons, or public domain statement. All requests for permission to use an item are referred to the owning partner. dLOC's shared governance and its post-custodial approach to collection development are foundational and contribute to strengthening relationships and trust with Caribbean partners.

Furthering trust building is seen in the direct work dLOC does with partners. The two institutional hubs conduct training sessions in digitisation best practices. Both UF and FIU have regularly hosted partners who worked with digitisation professionals. In the past, these professionals have also travelled to the Caribbean to work on site with partners. During and since COVID it has not been unusual for digitisation training to happen virtually. The Digitisation Services department at the University of Florida frequently offers guidance and advice on the purchase, setup, and operation of digitising equipment. Building and maintaining a robust digitisation training program of international partners was one of the goals enumerated in that first 2005 grant application. It remains an objective today. Similarly, assisting preservation efforts to the extent possible is also central to dLOC's mission.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate dLOC's mission and practice is to show these in action by highlighting the relationships and initiatives undertaken with partners in Haiti. These ties were first forged at dLOC's inception with the founding partner Les Archives Nationales d'Haïti (ANH). ANH has since been joined by seven other Haiti-based partners including Bibliothèque Nationale d'Haïti which became part of the dLOC collective in 2008. These partners contribute civil and state records, rich collections on the history of enslavement in the Caribbean, newspapers dating from the colonial era up to the 20th century, photographs of cultural sites, and documentation on religious practices. Haiti based partners are joined by organisations and institutions in the U.S., Canada, and Europe who also share their holdings pertaining to Haiti's history, culture, and art.

The Republic of Haiti has a long and storied history. It is the site of the only successful uprising by enslaved people, the first free Black Republic established in the Western Hemisphere, and the first independent nation governed by formerly enslaved people. Many of the documents that convey this history are housed in Haiti's archives, libraries, and cultural institutions. On Tuesday, January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the Republic. Over 200,000 people perished,

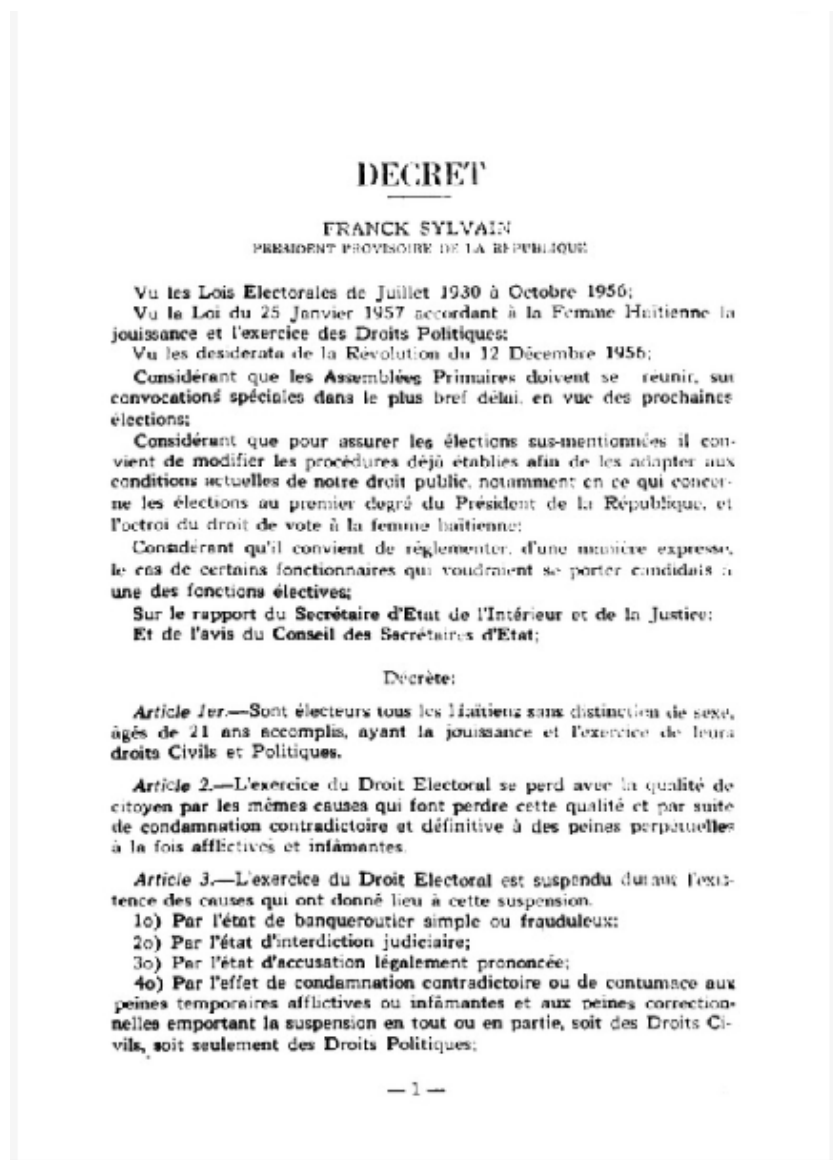


Fig. 4: Decret Electoral du 1er Mars 1957, Page 1 of 23, Law Library Microform Consortium, Caribbean Law Collection, Digital Library of the Caribbean, (<https://dloc.com/AA00021891/00001/citation>)

and 300,000 were injured. Haiti's irreplaceable historical and cultural patrimony was imperilled as the structures which housed them were damaged, some beyond repair. In response dLOC formed the Protecting Haitian Patrimony Initiative (PHPI), which builds upon the already strong and long-term partnerships in Haiti. dLOC's operational hub at Florida International University and then coordinator Brooke Wooldridge took the lead in implementing and coordinating PHPI. Wooldridge was joined by the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Centre, also at FIU, in organising the PHP initiative, with the goal of helping to safeguard and preserve holdings in Haiti's libraries and archives. Within a month of the earthquake, dLOC had people on the ground in Port-au-Prince assessing vulnerable libraries and archives. Working with leaders in Haiti's archives and libraries the following goals were prioritised:

1. Encourage communication across institutions working to assist Haiti's libraries,
2. Coordinate technical and in-kind assistance for Haiti's libraries.
3. Raise funds to support specific collection/archival recovery and preservation projects in Haiti.

In the months following the earthquake thousands of dollars were raised through donations and grants. Computers and archival boxes were provided to institutions in Haiti. Most significantly, trainings were offered to partners in Haiti, an endeavour which continues today. When possible Haitian technicians come to the United States and work with digitisation professionals at the University of Florida, and in the past at Florida International University as well. Prior to Covid and the current political upheaval, dLOC digitisation experts travelled to Haiti to deliver equipment, assist in their set-up, and conduct trainings on site.

dLOC also continues to provide support with grant applications. The latter may entail guiding partner organisations to potential funding sources, providing letters of support, advising on equipment purchases, and when asked, proofreading a grant application and offering suggestions for making it stronger. Moreover, when European- and U.S.-based scholars apply for grants to work in Haiti, or anywhere in the Caribbean, the dLOC administrative team, when asked, co-ordinates with them, offers advice, and provides a home for the digitised records for use by the user community. The PHP initiative resulted in thousands of documents being digitally preserved and made available on dloc.com.

dLOC recognises the significance of cultural patrimony, whether that consists of historical documents or artifacts, scientific findings or archaeological discoveries, newspapers or literature, the visual arts or cultural practices. These provide the evidence for myriad stories from different perspectives. A reality one cannot set aside is that outside the region many narratives that exist about Haiti and the

Caribbean are unflattering. One of the surest ways to move beyond the negative and tell different, more positive stories about the region is to make research resources available. Through its work with partners and affiliates, including undertaking initiatives such as Protecting Haitian Patrimony, and by making digitised research resources freely available, the Digital Library of the Caribbean not only expands the traditional narratives that exist about the Caribbean it helps change who tells those stories and how these are conveyed.

To learn more about the Digital Library of the Caribbean, please visit the [Program](#) site,. Direct general inquiries to, dloc@uflib.ufl.edu. To explore the resources on the site please go to dloc.com, where something new awaits with every click.



Fig. 5: StoryMap Showing where dLOC partners are located, 2024

References

1. Perry Collins and Hadassah St. Hubert, "The Digital Library of the Caribbean: At the Crossroads of Caribbean Memory and Sustainability," in *archipelagos a journal of Caribbean digital praxis*, issue 6, May 2022, <https://archipelagosjournal.org/issue06/special-editor-intro.html>, accessed November 1, 2024.
2. "Digital Library of the Caribbean: A Working Group – A Model of Success, Introduction and Governance, Technical Implementation," ACURIL XXXIV Proceedings, <https://uwispace.sta.uwi.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2139/12799/ACURIL%20proceedings%202004.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, accessed, October 30, 2024.
3. The nine founding partners are: Archives Nationales d'Haïti, Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM), Florida International University, Fundacion Global Democracia y Desarrollo (FUNGLODE), National Library of Jamaica, Universidad de Oriente Venezuela, University of Central Florida, University of Florida, University of the Virgin Islands.
4. "Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) TICFIA Grant Proposal," U.S. Department of Education Application for Grants under the Technological Innovation and Cooperation for Foreign Information Access (TICFIA), <https://dloc.com/FI04071904/00001/images>, accessed April 2024.
5. *ibid.*
6. Karla L. Strieb, "Collaboration the Master Key to Unlocking Twenty-First Century Library Collections," in *Shared Collections: Collaborative Stewardship*, edited by Dawn Hale, (American Library Association, 2016), 4.



Dear Delaware: Pen Pal Programme Connects Wellington NZ and Delaware USA

Tess Mehonoshen

In early 2023, out of the blue, an email sparked an ongoing international partnership between 10 Libraries in Delaware and the 12 branches of Wellington City Libraries. Our 'Dear Delaware' pen pal programme has been running for about 18 months now, and has a total of around 600 participants who write letters. The letters travel over 14,000 kilometres (8,700 miles) around the globe..

Our participants are enthusiastic about the programme, and it's proved popular among all age groups. Upon launching we quickly discovered that a lot of kids had never written a letter before, and had no idea of what a pen pal was. Parents are thrilled to see their child put so much effort and care into their letters. It gives the children an opportunity to practice their writing skills and learn while making a new friend - trading stories of kiwis and coyotes. Adults have enjoyed the nostalgia of having a pen pal. Being able to connect with someone slowly without instant digital technology allows a different way of getting to know them. The patience required by the process is sometimes a bit of a learning curve. But nothing beats the feeling of receiving handwritten mail!

Planning and structure

I worked closely with my counterpart in Delaware, Robin. We took our time to plan and exchange ideas with consideration of our population sizes and differing structures of the library networks. Being very responsive and open-minded from the get-go made for a positive discussion as we setup the programme, to ensure it would work smoothly on both sides of the globe.

We agreed that some elements we could figure out as we went on. But we were totally aligned from the beginning on the terms for children's participation, as well as our obligations around sharing participants' details to match pen pals safely. We settled on a library-to-library format, where all participants pick up and drop off their letters to their local library. We then centralise the letters and send them in one bulk



Tess Mehonoshen is an Adult Specialist at Wellington City Libraries. Tess coordinates 'Dear Delaware' and Kakano Seed Library, and also organises library events, new services and online content.



Fig. 1: The Program's Graphic

package. This ensures no personal addresses are shared and no cost is incurred for participants..

At the beginning we allowed a month to promote the programme to the public and register participants, offering paper registration forms in branches and an online version for ages 16+ only. Lots of our libraries made creative displays and crafted mailboxes for the desk. See the photos accompanying this article.

We did not expect the success of the initial uptake. During the launch period, we regularly compared our registration numbers to ensure the demand for the programme was aligning, and that neither side would result in a long wait list. We kept a close eye on the age ranges of children registering, so we could pair them within a two-year age bracket. And we set up a dedicated staff member at each branch. We liaise directly with these people, and they play an integral role in ensuring everything runs smoothly.



Fig. 2: Display at Arapaki Library, Wellington City Libraries



Fig. 3: Display at Te Awe Library, Wellington City Libraries

Pairing pen pals

For children, we focus on pairing by age first, and for adults we look at finding common interests. The initial round of pairing hundreds of pen pals was quite an undertaking and Robin volunteered for the task. We continually receive customer feedback saying how pleased someone is with their pen pal and everything they have in common. Clearly Robin is talented in this area.

We use a shared Google spreadsheet where the pairing and any changes are easily noted, which is particularly useful given the substantial difference in time zones. We also keep independent spreadsheets of participants' full information and contact emails, as we only share participant details that are pertinent to the pairing process (name, age, interests and library branch).

Maintenance and costs

We slightly underestimated how much time the programme would need for

ongoing administration work. It's structured to be as simple as possible at the branch level. Robin and I handle all the customer notifications. We also keep a detailed letter log of the mail coming and going each round, meaning that we can check-in with those who haven't written in a while and re-pair their pen pal if need be.

We don't set our deadline schedules in advance, as unexpected delays often occur. We take it 'round-by-round' and only notify customers of the next deadline with their letter collection email. Most letters are eagerly collected from the library within the first few days. We allow a two-week window for customers to pick up a letter and write a reply that they then return to one of the branches. After the deadline the letters are all centralised from the branches using our transit systems and readied for the international courier delivery.

The main cost of the programme, aside from administrative staff time, is the international postage fees, which are essential. A large box usually costs somewhere around \$100-150, and in Delaware the 'Friends of the Library' community group kindly covers this ongoing cost.

Fun suggestions

For participants who might be feeling stuck or out of ideas of what to write about we also include an optional writing prompt each round, with a suggestion on a different topic to dive into. We've also included an additional Christmas/Holiday card exchange for participants at the end of the year. We post this in addition to the usual letter rounds.

We are considering a 'staff-only' subset registration for a Librarian-to-Librarian exchange. We have several staff members already connecting with fellow librarians and sharing ideas around programming, best practices, and the day-to-day differences of library life.

Get started!

Due to the success we've had with our partnership and interest from other libraries, Robin has set up a private Facebook group to help connect Librarians who are wanting to start their own pen pal programmes

Please feel free to join the group '[Worldwide Library Pen Pal Connections](#)' on Facebook to get started or email me directly at: tess.mehonoshen@wcc.govt.nz



Fig 4: Display at Te Mahānga Karori Library, Wellington City Libraries

Pioneering Regional Collaboration: Qatar National Library's Leadership in Supporting Emerging Librarians

Eiman Alshamari

Qatar National Library (QNL) hosted the transformative “Emerging Librarians” training program, welcoming students from Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, for a groundbreaking five-day initiative which underscored QNL’s position as a pioneer in librarianship across the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. The July 2024 event exemplified QNL’s commitment to fostering regional collaboration, professional development, and innovation.



Eiman Alshamari is a PhD researcher in Libraries and Information Sciences at Sheffield University, with a research focus on the role of libraries in societal development and sustainability. In 2022, she represented Sheffield University at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 27) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, where she contributed to discussions on the pivotal role of libraries in advancing climate action and environmental sustainability. Her presentation emphasized how libraries can serve as community hubs for climate education, awareness, and advocacy, aligning with global efforts to address the climate crisis through

knowledge sharing and public engagement. Currently, Eiman serves as the Acting Manager of National collection at Qatar National Library (QNL), where she has led over 70 research and life-skills workshops, empowering young people and fostering a culture of learning and environmental consciousness. In addition to her newly appointed role as the Manager of IFLA’s MENA Regional Office, she leads initiatives focused on the development of libraries across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Eiman has also worked on more than four research-funded projects in various social studies fields and oral history, showcasing her multidisciplinary expertise. She was a standing committee member of the MetLib Section at IFLA from 2018 to 2023 and has presented her research at leading conferences such as IFLA, the New Librarians Summit (NLS), and National Libraries Now (2021). Eiman holds a Master’s in Library and Information Studies from UCL-Q, where she was awarded the prestigious 2017 UCL Academic Excellence Award, presented by HH Sheikha Hind, and the 2016 Platinum Medal in the Education Excellence Day (EED), awarded by HH Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. She is the author of Samuel Smiles Road, a self-help book, and has been recognized for her contributions to libraries and education.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6526-550X>

As the first International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Regional Office in MENA, QNL is a leader in integrating global library standards into the unique cultural and operational contexts of the region. Having formalised its partnership with IFLA in December 2024, this collaboration solidifies QNL's role as a hub for capacity building and knowledge exchange. The Emerging Librarians program serves as a testament to this vision, combining heritage preservation, technological innovation and community engagement in a single comprehensive initiative.

Laying the Foundations: Detailed Planning and Collaboration

The success of the Emerging Librarians program began with months of careful planning, collaboration and a vision for bridging gaps in regional librarianship. In collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate of Oman, QNL initiated the planning process with a virtual consultation led by Professor Khaleesa Al-Barashdi. The discussions revolved around identifying the participants' academic and professional aspirations. Through this dialogue, the program objectives were established:

- Provide participants with exposure to QNL's advanced library systems and cutting-edge technologies.
- Foster hands-on experience in heritage preservation and community-oriented initiatives.
- Facilitate engagement with external cultural and academic institutions for broader insights.

QNL crafted a comprehensive internal plan that encompassed every aspect of the program, ensuring its seamless execution and alignment with learning objectives. This plan included meticulous logistical arrangements, such as coordinating accommodation, transportation and meals for participants. Additionally, a detailed session schedule was developed to balance theoretical learning with hands-on practical experience.

This blueprint was shaped under the guidance and leadership of Ms. Abeer Al-Kuwari, Director of the National Collection and Special Initiatives at QNL, who provided strategic direction to align the program with the library's broader vision of regional capacity building. Ms. Eiman Alshamari, Manager of the IFLA MENA Regional Office, played a key role in designing and coordinating the program's objectives, ensuring they addressed the specific needs of emerging

librarians. Tasneem Dari, an Information Services Librarian in the Research and Learning Department at QNL, contributed her expertise in curating content and managing the operational elements of the sessions, ensuring participants had access to the most relevant and impactful learning experiences.

The collaborative efforts of these leaders and their teams enabled QNL to address every detail with precision. Contingency plans were established to handle any unforeseen challenges, reflecting QNL's proactive and adaptable approach to program management. This high level of preparation not only demonstrated QNL's commitment to excellence but also set a new benchmark for professional training programs in the region.



Mobilising QNL's Resources

The program brought together various departments within QNL, whose collaborative efforts ensured its success by combining theoretical learning with real-world applications. Central to this was the IFLA Preservation and Conservation (PAC) Regional Centre in QNL, which provided participants with hands-recovery planning—critical practices for safeguarding cultural heritage across the MENA region.

QNL's Innovation Stations – free-to-use facilities featuring musical instruments, a photographic studio and range of technology – demonstrated how libraries

can act as hubs of creativity, offering access to cutting-edge tools such as 3D printers and virtual reality systems, inspiring participants to reimagine libraries as centres for technological engagement. The Children's Library showcased QNL's commitment to inclusivity with its sensory-friendly spaces and storytelling programs fostering literacy and creativity in young learners. Finally, Access Services offered participants a behind-the-scenes look at the daily operations of a world-class library, emphasising the importance of user-centred approaches in creating seamless and inclusive library experiences. Together, these departments illustrated how QNL integrates preservation, technology and community engagement to redefine the role of libraries in the modern era.

Immersive Learning at QNL

The five-day program offered participants an unparalleled experience in modern librarianship. It combined in-depth theoretical knowledge with practical exposure to QNL's state-of-the-art facilities and broader library ecosystem.

Day 1: Orientation and Heritage Preservation

The first day began with an engaging orientation session, where participants were introduced to QNL's mission and dual role as a national library and the IFLA MENA Regional Office.

- *Exploring QNL Innovation Stations*
The Innovation Stations offered participants a first-hand look at how libraries can transform into creative and technological hubs. Tools like 3D printers and multimedia equipment sparked ideas for similar initiatives in Oman.
- *Heritage Library and Conservation Lab*
The visit to the Heritage Library showcased QNL's commitment to preserving rare and significant historical collections, including manuscripts related to Oman. At the Conservation Lab, participants observed intricate preservation techniques, such as de-acidification and manuscript stabilisation, designed to protect fragile materials for future generations.

One participant said: "Witnessing the intersection of history and innovation at QNL's Heritage Library was inspiring. The dedication to preservation here is truly world-class."

Day 2: Exploring Qatar's Cultural Institutions

The second day included visits to two of Qatar's most significant cultural institutions:

- *National Archives of Qatar*: Participants gained insights into archival practices and methodologies for preserving national history. They explored advanced cataloguing systems and techniques for maintaining public access to historical records.
- *Museum of Islamic Art Library*: This visit highlighted the integration of libraries into cultural institutions, demonstrating how libraries enhance museum operations by supporting scholarly research and visitor engagement.
- Returning to QNL, participants explored the Children's Library, where interactive storytelling sessions and sensory-friendly spaces illustrated how libraries can nurture young learners.

Day 3: Digital Transformation and Community Engagement

Day three focused on QNL's leadership in digital innovation and its efforts to foster a culture of reading across Qatar.

- *Digitisation Lab*
Participants engaged with QNL's digitisation processes, learning how fragile historical documents are scanned, catalogued and made publicly accessible through digital platforms. This session emphasised the role of technology in democratising access to information.
- *Qatar Reads Initiative*
The session on Qatar Reads introduced participants to programs like "One Book, One Doha" and family reading campaigns that connect communities through shared literary experiences.

Participant Gaith Zahir Said Alharthi reflected: "Qatar Reads is a program that has the potential to transform entire communities. It's an example of how libraries can inspire lifelong learning."

Day 4: Academic Libraries and Inclusivity

The fourth day featured visits to academic libraries, offering a deep dive into their role in research and education:

Qatar University Library: Participants explored strategies for supporting faculty and student research, including digital repositories and specialised workshops.

Doha Institute Library: Discussions centred on collection management and accessibility for postgraduate scholars.

Returning to QNL, participants explored the Assistive Technology Lab, which demonstrated tools like screen readers and braille embossers designed to make libraries inclusive for all users. The readers' advisory service – where members can get book recommendations based on their reading history – provided insights into how libraries can foster a love for reading through personalised services.

Day 5: Reflection and Closing

The final day allowed participants to consolidate their learning through reflection and discussions. A session with QNL's Access Services team provided a behind-the-scenes look at the operational aspects of library services, highlighting the importance of seamless processes in creating positive user experiences.

During the formal closing ceremony, National Collection and Special Initiatives Director Abeer Al-Kuwari delivered a speech about the essence of librarianship. She emphasised the role of libraries as gateways to knowledge, guardians of cultural heritage and hubs of community engagement. Her words resonated deeply with the participants, reinforcing the importance of their journey as emerging librarians.

The ceremony celebrated the participants' achievements with certificates distributed as recognition of their successful completion of the program. This marked the culmination of a week filled with learning, collaboration and inspiration, leaving participants motivated to apply their newfound knowledge and insights in their home institutions.

IFLA MENA PAC Regional Centre: A Commitment to Preservation

Participants gained a deeper appreciation of QNL's role as the IFLA MENA Preservation and Conservation (PAC) Regional Centre. The centre's mandate includes safeguarding documentary heritage through training, advocacy and disaster recovery planning. The session on disaster preparedness and recovery planning resonated strongly with participants, equipping them with strategies to mitigate risks to cultural assets during emergencies. This segment emphasised QNL's role as a regional leader in preserving cultural memory.

Broadening Perspectives Through External Visits

The external visits provided participants with valuable insights into the diverse roles of libraries, archives and cultural institutions in society, complementing their learning at QNL.

National Archives of Qatar

At the National Archives, participants explored how archival systems preserve national identity and ensure the accessibility of historical records for research. The visit highlighted the vital role archives play in documenting and safeguarding history of Qatar.

Museum of Islamic Art Library

The Museum of Islamic Art Library showcased the dynamic relationship between libraries and museums. Participants observed how the library supports curatorial efforts through specialised collections and academic resources, enriching the museum's exhibitions and enhancing public education. The integration of research and cultural engagement left a lasting impression, inspiring participants to consider similar collaborations in their own institutions.

Qatar University and Doha Institute Libraries

The visits to these academic libraries emphasised the adaptability of librarianship within educational settings. At Qatar University, participants saw how libraries support faculty and students with digital repositories and research services, while the Doha Institute Library highlighted resources tailored for postgraduate scholars. These visits underscored the importance of designing user-focused services and leveraging open access to meet academic needs.

By experiencing these environments, participants gained a broader understanding of how libraries, archives and cultural institutions collaborate to foster knowledge, preserve heritage and support learning across various contexts.

Leadership and Vision as IFLA's MENA Regional Office

As the first IFLA MENA Regional Office, QNL is at the forefront of advancing librarianship across the region. Its efforts connect local libraries with global best practices, fostering innovation and collaboration. The signing ceremony in December 2024 marked a milestone in this journey, celebrating QNL's achievements and reaffirming its commitment to the future of librarianship in MENA.

Future Aspirations

Building on the success of the Emerging Librarians program, QNL envisions expanding its training initiatives to cater to diverse audiences, including mid-career professionals, library administrators and policymakers. The goal is to create a network of libraries that are inclusive, vibrant and globally connected. QNL also aims to strengthen its role as a regional hub for professional development by introducing advanced workshops and collaborative research opportunities.

Conclusion: Redefining Librarianship

The Emerging Librarians program is more than a training initiative; it is a testament to QNL's vision for the future of libraries. By combining preservation, innovation and collaboration, QNL has set a benchmark for excellence in the field. Through its leadership as IFLA's MENA Regional Office, QNL continues to empower the next generation of librarians, inspiring a new era of regional and global cooperation. Its initiatives reflect a deep commitment to bridging cultures, connecting communities and preserving knowledge for future generations.



CILIP Members' Fest

"CILIP Members' Fest on 14 - 18 October 2024 was designed to introduce members to the work of the many incredible special interest groups, regional and member networks across CILIP – and to make the most of CILIP membership. You can view a recording of ILIG's contribution to the event here

https://player.vimeo.com/video/1031601302?badge=0&autoplay=0&player_id=0&app_id=58479

Ian Michael Stringer 1948 - 2024

Ian died on 8 September 2024 after a short battle with liver cancer. He began working in libraries in 1966 with Huddersfield, mobile library service and went on to work for Kirklees, and Barnsley before retiring in 2006.

He was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of CILIP in 2010 for his services to mobile libraries, to IFLA, and for his international work which included setting up the *Caterpillar Book Box Project* in Burkino Faso, Ghana and South Africa.

Ian's obituary is published in Information Professional 56, Oct/Nov 2024 issue, written by John Lake BA FCLIP. This will be available soon in the IP Archive on the CILIP website, but please note that a subscription to Information Professional is required to access this.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Copyright Conference 2025

Online | Thursday 22 May 2025

The CILIP Online Copyright Conference is an ideal and unique opportunity for all librarians, archivists and information professionals to update their knowledge and professional practice in this crucial area.

https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/CopyrightConf25_Pre_Register

CILIP conference 2025

Birmingham | 2-3 July 2025

Join established, new and emerging leaders from across the library, information and knowledge management sector for two days of inspiring talks, workshops and networking..

<https://form.jotform.com/RevMarketing/cilip-conf-2025-register-interest>

Keep an eye on the CILIP ILIG Events page on the CILIP website for further listings and booking information:

<https://bit.ly/2zC2TQq>

