

**World Library and Information Congress:
75th IFLA General Conference and Assembly
"Libraries create futures: Building on cultural heritage"
23-27 August 2009, Milan, Italy
and
IFLA Satellite Meeting
"Libraries and Society: A Pan-Mediterranean Perspective"
31 August-1 September 2009 Palermo, Sicily**

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September 2009

I am really pleased I attended 2009 IFLA Milan as it is an event worth experiencing. There were nearly 4,000 participants and that many librarians in one place are quite daunting! The venue was in an isolated place, nothing around except one little cafe which was packed as the food in the venue was expensive and the service poor.

I took the train in from Despenzano on Lake Garda about 1hr 20mins on Saturday August 22nd for my SIG (Special Interest Group Meeting) Library Service to Multicultural Populations 1st meeting. I then took the Metro from Central Station and then the 20 minute walk through deserted streets in very hot weather (30 degrees) to the Conference Centre! Luckily I met a Spanish Librarian on the train (we do stand out from the crowd) who knew the way! We did find out that there was a shuttle bus for the rest of the Conference, thank goodness!

SIG members were all very friendly (of course) and came from Russia, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Canada, USA, Finland, Japan, Germany, Spain, England, Netherlands, and of course Italy with a fellow Australian Robert Pestell who I know as a LOTE supplier and who has been a long term member of the SIG. I had to take the train back to Lake Garda arriving at the hotel about 11pm. I moved into central Milan on Sunday having spent a beautiful but hot 4 days at Lake Garda including a trip to Verona to see Aida performed in the open amphitheatre. On Sunday evening I attended the Concert at La Scala organised especially for the Conference. It was a spectacular event with an extrovert conductor, excellent orchestra and 4 opera singers who sang solos and duets. I bumped into Sue (Australia St Co.) and Craig Boaden at interval which was a terrific surprise for all of us.

On Monday, in the morning, I attended the Public Libraries and Metropolitan Libraries session. Christine McKenzie's paper (from Yarra Plenty) "*Emerging Themes for public libraries looking forward*" was read by her husband as she was unable to attend at the last minute. Her paper placed emphasis on 3 areas: use of buildings, staff development and work force planning and the increasing use of research to inform decision making and implement evidence based practice. The purpose of her paper was to draw out the themes, discussions and learning from the Metlib SIG mid term meeting in Brisbane held in May 2009. This paper is available on the IFLA site. <http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/91-mackenzie-en.pdf>

There was another Australian speaker! Marion Morgan Bindon, Library Manager Gold Coast City Libraries. My notes indicate GCCL has a resource budget of 6m with a collection comprised of 8% newspapers/ serials, 47% books including audio books, 23% DVDs and music, 21% on-line resources. They have collections in 3 languages with back up from SLQ. On-line training packages are also available. GCCL strongly advocates research based decision making.

I enjoyed hearing Thomas Galante the CEO of Queens Library, NY which has 2.2m residents who speak 160 languages. The Library has a Board of 19 Trustees with government and non-government support. It collects in 26 languages and has 1800 staff including 450 librarians! I was particularly interested in their BOOST (Best Out of School Time) programme which runs from 3-6 Monday to Friday. This program employs youth with excellent grades to tutor others. I was pleased that most programs he spoke about were already being done at Fairfield and many other NSW libraries albeit on a much smaller scale.

Paul Whitney from Vancouver Public Library spoke about the impact of technology on public library usage. They break down their circulation usage in 4 year age gaps for children and youth to track the increases and decreases. Once again Vancouver Library is researching to support decision making. They have 112 databases so is this justified? How are they being used and are they making a difference? They have experienced a huge increase in AV which he believes will not continue and a gradual decrease in print loans which he believes will continue. I don't think many of us would disagree with these statements. On-line renewals have also increased dramatically. It's worth checking out their *Library to Go* collection at www.vpl.ca/electronic_databases/details/1845 and the project Best of BC (British Columbia) Books On-line at <http://cancult.ca/2009/02/10/best-of-bc-books-online/> which Paul spoke about.

A speaker (unfortunately I didn't note the name) from Stockholm Public Library www.biblioteket.stockholm.se structured this paper under the themes of Learning, Lending, Reading. The slogan for the library is "The Library makes the City grow if the Library grows with the City". Their common value is "the good encounter" (approach and attitude towards the customer and each other). They use process mapping to discuss what they are doing, why they are doing it and how they do it. They use evidence based learning and engage leadership at ever level. So once again I would be confident that this is happening in many NSW libraries.

For this session the only scheduled speaker was Christine with the others being a "surprise". The program is still not updated on the IFLA website (and the book in the conference bag was way too heavy to carry home). Christine's is still the only paper available.

Monday afternoon I listened to the first paper in the session Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning where a mention was made to check the recent ads placed by Gosford Library and then I dashed of to Libraries for Children and Young Adults and Library Buildings and Equipment. I would recommend the paper *The red thread – New central Library in Hjoerring, Denmark* <http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/103-lunden-en.pdf> as it has some terrific photos for inspiration.

Also the paper *Library of 100 Talents – Heerhugowaard, Netherlands* shows consultation with children and matching to final design or not? I would recommend that Managers encourage their children's librarians to read the papers from this session which are all available on the IFLA site. <http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/103-bertrams-en.pdf>

An idea I came away with was Newspapers for Children by Children, something I would like to explore at Fairfield. I also made a note that I should check out the IFLA Guidelines for Children and Children's Libraries and the Designing Libraries website especially since we are about to refurbish the central children's library.

Later Monday afternoon I attended the second SIG meeting hosted at the Goethe Institute in central Milan and afterwards the SIG dinner at a nearby restaurant. I am now on a working group to redesign the group's newsletter! It is evident that this group is focussed by an excellent Chairperson, Mijin Kim Director Public Programs and Exhibitions Library and Archives Canada Ottawa and Secretary Susy Tastesen Librarian Head of Department Copenhagen Public Libraries Denmark. The dinner was a good opportunity to network and discuss common issues and challenges and talk about our libraries.

Tuesday I took the day off to explore Milan as there was nothing on the programme which interested me. I saw the fresco The Last Supper by Da Vinci which was magnificent and I also visited the beautiful Duomo (Milan Cathedral) and climbed around the roof which was as spectacular as the interior. The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele was very beautiful and the Conference dinner could be taken in some of the restaurants and cafés there (or near there) including McDonald's which is in a key position in the Galleria!

On Wednesday I attended the session on Library Services to Multicultural Populations. My favourite paper was *Join us for a Journey through Islamic Art* by Kirsten Leth Nielsen from Oslo Public Library. <http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/158-leth-en.pdf>

This tells how a travelling exhibition based on a Picture Book can expose children to a different and often misunderstood culture. I will be encouraging the Multicultural Working Group to look at this for a future project. I was also interested to hear about the project by the National Library of Serbia which is digitizing the literature and culture of the Romani people. A paper from Romania about preserving the traditions of Russian minority groups on-line showed an effective librarian/community member partnership which was passionate and inspiring. The papers from this session are also available on the IFLA website.

I attended the Copyright session in the afternoon, which was quite overwhelming due to the different opinions of the panel. It is evident that governments and the legal system are not keeping up with the pace of technology change and its impact on copyright. I also stayed for the General Assembly and caught up with Jan Richards and Sue Hutley who of course were able to vote on the motions. It was pleasing to note that many delegates expressed disappointment in the cancellation of the Brisbane event. It is amazing that Gothenburg have been able to take on such a large event in such a short time frame and they were congratulated for this.

The Conference exhibition was as expected very large and I whizzed around it stopping at the Sirsi Dynix stand and any stands with library furniture. One I would recommend to look at was www.openingthebook.com if you haven't already which has a publication *The reader friendly library service* which I intend to purchase.

The Satellite Conference in Palermo was an entirely different experience. There were only 35 participants including the speakers, so it was very intimate especially as it was held in the Steri Palace, a quite large and beautiful building which is part of the University of Palermo. All the papers were interesting and I hope that they eventually appear on the website.

I especially enjoyed the paper given by the Chief Librarian Sohair Wastawy from the Alexandrine Library, Alexandria Egypt. I'd love to visit this library. Sohair was born in Egypt but had worked in the US for 35 years before returning to take up the position in 2004.

The common theme which emerged for me from most of the presentations was the educational support to children provided by public libraries with little or no recognition or financial support from the education sector in Italy, Spain, Egypt, Tunisia, Canada, US and Australia. My presentation, *Public Library Resources and Programs to Pan Mediterranean Language Groups in Australia*, which included video clips of children and adults who had attended library programs speaking about their experience, was well received. All speakers were passionate about services to their culturally diverse communities.

The Special Library Foundation in Seville, Spain experience of collecting and sharing the Islamic, Christian and Jewish culture and religion was especially thought provoking as was the US Indigenous Library Service initiatives.

This conference dinner beside the sea in a very atmospheric restaurant was preceded by a bus trip up the mountain giving great views of Palermo. I also managed to take a 2 ½ hr bus ride to Catania to see Mt Etna before the Conference which gave me a good look at the Sicilian countryside. Mt Etna was eyrie as it was very hot but with lots of thunder and lightening over the mountain.

Thank you very much to PLM, the State Library of NSW and Fairfield City Council for the financial support which helped to make my attendance possible. It was greatly appreciated.



Palermo- Ann-Katrin (Sweden) Anne (Australia) Sohair (Egypt) Domenico (Italy)



SIG Meeting 24th August Goethe Institute
Volker (Germany), Yasuko (Japan), Ayub (UK), Flemming (Denmark), Fred (US)



Palermo delegates and speakers



Poster Presentation in Milan: Kirsten (Norway) Lourina (Netherlands) Yasuko (Japan) Anne (Australia)



Palermo: Susy (Denmark) Gisela (Spain) Begona (Tunisia) Olga (Spain) Christine (who taught English to Gisela and interpreted for her)