Highlights of the IFLA 2014 Conference Experience in Limerick and Lyon

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In mid-August 2014, I attended the IFLA 2014 Satellite Meeting on Information Literacy in Limerick, Ireland, and the IFLA World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) 2014 in Lyon, France. This trip was made possible due to the award of the WLIC-LAS grant. I am indeed thankful to LAS and honoured to be given the opportunity to undertake my first overseas conference experience. During the trip, I attended keynote addresses, presentations, interactive workshops, poster and trade exhibitions, library tours, cultural activities and social programmes and even a knowledge café!

Here I present my highlights on the trip.

PART 1: THE IFLA SATELLITE MEETING ON INFORMATION LITERACY

The IFLA Satellite Meeting on Information Literacy hosted by Limerick Institute of Technology took place from 14 to 15 August 2014 in Limerick City, Republic of Ireland. The theme was: Facing the Future: Librarians and Information Literacy in a Changing Landscape.

The key takeaways from the various presentations are organised by topic.

Keynote Addresses

- **Understand good research behaviour in order to understand and teach about information literacy** -- study the real needs of students and faculty using ethnographic research methods
- **Play multiple roles to stay relevant** – be embedded presences virtually and physically, reflective customer service practitioners, and learners who take control of our professional development.
- **Treat the library as a creative classroom** -- by employing the building blocks in the “Creative Classroom Research Model” as mentioned in the HORIZON Report for Higher Education 2014
- **Play is the new mode of learning, thinking and doing** -- include physical community learning spaces, game-focused initiatives that make the library a laboratory for exploration and creation zones

Teaching and Curriculum

- **Change how searching is taught** - start searching from the Google and identify relevant citations, then move on to finding the full text of a relevant article and other similar articles by using controlled vocabulary and the unique features of a particular database.
- **Create a “take away” Learning Support Menu** – organize the library’s learning solutions by learning need, level of advancement, whether it is generic or tailored, and type of learning object.
- **Create inquiry-based course-integrated assignments** -- include activities that replicate researcher workflow, scaffolded steps and hands-on practices, and emphasize interoperability between different data resources.
- **Create and implement an information literacy (IL) curriculum map** -- prevent repetition of material and ensure thoroughness in teaching all the required information literacy (IL) standards.
- **Create a mobile-enabled blended learning package** – construct content in small, free-standing units which allow greater flexibility in menu construction.
Classroom Assessment


- **Ensure proper follow-up** to improve students’ understanding— address common questions and issues that surface during and after the class through email, libguides, another tutorial, as well as in future classes.

- **Use web-based Google forms** in/out of class - identify the concepts that students struggle with and adjust the instruction to concentrate on those or generate student-supplied keywords for database examples.

- **Ask performative (simulated scenarios) and authentic (real-world contexts) questions**— to find out if students are able to do what we teach them to do. Do check out the workshop materials for examples.

Engaging Users and Securing Support

- **Hold regular lunchtime training workshops** - accommodate students “at point of need” and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning.

- **Integrate into credit-bearing, compulsory first-year courses**— ensure all students are exposed early to IL training and make IL a core student learning outcome.

- **Incorporate games** to make teaching more enjoyable and learning more effective— they should be fun (entertaining), quick (no more than 10 minutes), simple (easy to prepare), easy (not complicated but make students think), and relevant (meet a learning objective).

“Types of Resources” game

This game consists of matching a particular resource with their definition, and what they are useful and not useful for. After going through the answers, librarians could then refer to the subject guides or libguides to encourage students to find out more about the different types of resources.
PART 2: IFLA WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS 2014

This year, the annual IFLA World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) was held in Lyon, France, from 16 to 22 August 2014. The congress theme was, “Libraries, Citizens, Societies: Confluence for Knowledge”.

Here are learning points I found useful, organised by topic:

**Libraries Creating Content**

How can libraries partner their community to create original content?

- *Create photo books quickly and cheaply through fastpencil.com* - library users respond very positively to books that feature local people and themes.

Pages of the photobook “Julie’s visit to the village garden”

- *Create a dynamic collection of handwritten books by students as part of an annual school writing project* -- to cultivate interest in writing and encourage the notion of giving back to the community.
- *Engage youth to create short videos for library outreach* -- give youth a chance to use their imagination and skills, and establishes a relationship built on trust.
- *Partner youth with people of different expertise to create professional art products* -- use the library as a platform for collaborative projects.
- *Organise a short story competition where the reward is being a published author* -- cultivate our local youth’s interest in writing and create an avenue for their stories to get published!
- *Organise a variety of workshops to create content utilising tablets and apps* -- reach out to reluctant library users and give something extra to those who read a lot.

**Transmedia Storytelling**

Is “transmedia storytelling” a way for children to bridge the gap between technology and reading?

*Definition*

Transmedia storytelling is defined as “a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.” This definition was coined by Dr. Henry Jenkins from the University of Southern California.

*Benefits*

Using transmedia has two main benefits. Firstly, transmedia encourages emotional engagement by involving children in the format they are most excited by—comics, animation, online videos and games. Hence transmedia storytelling with their multimedia elements can lure reluctant and struggling
students back into reading. Secondly, transmedia promotes self-directed learning. The variety of media can help learners engage content according to their strengths and learning style. Hence, it is recommended that schools and libraries incorporate more transmedia texts into the curriculum and collections, respectively.

Examples of Transmedia

Examples of transmedia products include “Shakespeare in Bits”, “Hidden Like Anne Frank”, “Cathy's Book: If Found Call (650) 266-8233” and most of Patrick Carman’s books such as The 39 Clues, Skeleton Creek, Trackers, and Dark Eden.

“Hidden Like Anne Frank” is available both as a book and website with animated stories

Co-creating Transmedia Products with Children

Consuming transmedia is not the only way to introduce young people to the practice. Children can create transmedia products too! An example of a co-created transmedia product is the interactive comic NEOMAD, which combines animation, live action film, music and voice overs.

Mobile Technology

How can we make use of mobile technology to enhance our library services?

- Create **personalised stories** using OurStory™ app – give caregivers and their children handheld devices and teach them how to take pictures, record voices and write simple stories.
- Create **self-paced library audio tours using QR codes** – give students a map with locations of the QR codes marked at certain stations.
- Use **augmented reality info retrieval on covers of books** – use in thematic book displays to enhance the browsing experience linking users from a real (printed) world to a virtual one.

User Outreach and Feedback

What can libraries do to reach out to their users and/or get their feedback?

- **Actively roam the library as “hosts” to welcome, direct and assist guests** – wear easily recognizable green shirts to provide high visibility, conduct briefings before/after each shift and introduce selected library products to encourage targeted lending while boosting spontaneous lending.
- **Use visual data while collecting feedback from users** -- give users instructions to take photos of what they like or dislike about the library and form a visual gallery on collected feedback to identify which library services to improve.
- **Adopt a transparent, visual and interactive feedback system** -- easy for students to get heard and staff to respond quickly.

Knowledge Sharing Programmes

- **Create a national online portal of library event “recipes”** -- write a “food recipe” of your event and share it online for re-use or adoption by other libraries
- **Use library spaces for community engagement** among faculty, students and librarians --- hold 5-minute lightning talks on a theme or 3-minute speed meetings to share about your research interests.

Library Services for the Users with Special Needs

How can we give support to users with physical and learning disabilities?

- **Create a shared repository of accessible text** – eligible users with a unique “token” can access the portal and request material to be added.
- **Implement recommendations from IFLA Dyslexia Guidelines** -- e.g. organise a frequent drop-in café with technology support, create the possibility of booking your own personal librarian and implement easy to read signs and labels.

Documenting History in Real Time

In the process of archiving images and videos, we often encounter problems such as lost metadata, inconsistent file formats and unknown copyright. These issues often arise because we start archiving the material retrospectively. What if we could collect and preserve the historical record in real time?
For archivists here are the recommendations:

1. Scale the selection process by asking contributors to vote for the five best videos or photos in pre-defined categories
2. Influence behavior of potential contributors—convince people of the need to preserve their media for posterity
3. Be proactive and collaborate closely with those making or recording historical events
4. Be involved early in the life-cycle of that record, long before the record enters the archive.

For people recording events, here are the recommendations

1. Set the recording devices to automatically record date, time and location
2. Capture metadata by embedding them within file names or orally reciting them in a script
3. Post to video platforms that will not throw away their metadata
4. Execute Creative Commons licenses.

For more advice, do check out the Activist Archivist website.

Knowledge Café

The session topic on Learning Challenges for Librarians and Library Managers was conducted in a Knowledge Café format.

Delegates were invited to join tables to discuss a topic. There were ten tables with ten topics of discussion. There was an introductory presentation by a fixed table facilitator, followed by a round-table discussion of 25 minutes. Meanwhile a fixed rapporteur would record notes and summarise previous points made in earlier discussions. In the subsequent rounds, delegates could move to a different table or remain. Finally, all rapporteurs went on stage to give a short summary on their topic.

Trade Exhibition

Representatives from libraries and vendors set up over 100 booths to showcase their latest product and service offerings. Two products are highlighted below:

The first was an innovative roll-on sticky “dot” tape for poster displays by Neschen (Germany) that can be easily removed by rubbing away the tiny dots.

The second vendor I found interesting was Studio Antti E (Finland) which displayed two of their products for testing. The Silence Phonebox is a tiny enclosed room that offers effective soundproofing and a quiet environment. The Silent Sound Center can block out much of the external noise and play music via your own tablet or smartphone within the space confinement.
Library Tour of the Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon Part-Dieu (Lyon Municipal Library)

When I attended an off-site workshop at the Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon Part-Dieu, part of the programme involved three tours of the library. In the first tour we explored a playful and inventive exhibition on Little Red Riding Hood which displayed a variety of print and digital versions of the story (via iPADs), and even incorporated a stage for puppets.

The next tour involved exploring the Youth section of the library, including a brief overview of The World through Picture Books exhibition which displayed favourite local books by librarians all over the world. I felt a tinge of homesickness when I saw the books by Singaporean authors!
Finally, the last tour brought us around the library's major facilities and sections such as the Art and Recreation (where pieces of art could be borrowed out with a higher tier membership fee), and the Society section (where shoulder-height shelves provided an unblocked view throughout the space).

Cultural Activities

Whenever attendees had free time during the conference, they could participate in various activities meant to introduce them to the cultural wealth of Lyon. Lyon is world renown for their silk goods and silk industry. Hence one of the cultural activities involved hands-on weaving and a live display of silkworms.

Conclusion

Attending the IFLA Satellite Meeting and Congress had not only exposed me to a wide variety of new cultures and sights but also increased my awareness of the current trends taking place internationally. Being among passionate librarians from all over the world opened up an opportunity with each conversation to learn and exchange knowledge. Strangers easily became friends! Hence, I would definitely recommend the overseas IFLA conference experience to everyone, from budding librarians to experienced veterans in the field. You will not regret it!

Disclaimer: All views expressed herein are solely personal and does not reflect the views of my institution and LAS.

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