

International Outreach and Leadership:

CALA 21st Century Librarians Seminar Series

Impact on ALA and IFLA and librarianship and how CALA can develop the series in the future

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Global Setting

Today the core competencies of library and information professionals must be demonstrated in a global context. The increasing effects of globalization on societies and institutions everywhere and the increasingly interconnected and interdependent world mean that library and information science professionals have a responsibility to their clients to provide services with a global perspective. Library and information professionals can educate, transform, and empower to enhance positive change and development in communities around the world.

Libraries are natural organizations and librarians are appropriate people to encourage global collaboration because they serve as repositories for large quantities of reliable information. In a globally networked environment, information resources can be made available worldwide, and this networked environment lends itself to cooperation and sharing of ideas and solutions worldwide. The key to this cooperation rests upon the public information clearing house - what we used to call the local library – existing as both a physical and virtual site.

Library providers have long recognized the important of adopting standards for organizing and providing access to global information and for allowing work to be broken apart, reassembled, and allowed to flow between various producers. Together, with free access to newly digitized information in libraries and other collections around the world, these standards will spur a new kind of collaboration. Trained intermediaries – librarians – are necessary to assist readers/users to know how to evaluate and use electronic tools and infrastructures. Without this, not everyone is able to make effective use of all the varied information sources. Both the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions and the Internet Manifesto clearly state the interrelations between unhindered access to information, freedom, equity, global understanding and peace.

The founding of global communities across international and cultural boundaries empowers people, insofar as groups can share and organize information when and how they choose. An increasingly horizontal, collaborative model for interactions, at all levels, has been opened because technologies have removed barriers and boundaries of both time and space.

Cultural fluency is essential for librarians to deliver the best services. It includes the ability to listen, learn, exchange ideas, and understand local needs in the global context. Communicating and networking with those who come from different cultural backgrounds are important today. We must develop a deeper understanding of values, traditions, and cultures and ensure that society fosters the exchange of ideas, information, and knowledge. Cultural fluency needs to be practiced and continually expanded.

So what are some ways to make ourselves more global? Connect with libraries in other countries. Organize a conference or training program and share best practices and learn from others. Leave home to participate in international events. Librarians can use their skills to educate, transform, and empower and to enhance positive change and development in communities around the world. Take advantage of every opportunity to expand your professional global reach and that of the libraries where you work. Every library and information professional can and should have a global impact and focus.

With China playing a more and more prominent role on the world stage, the need for collaboration and exchange among libraries in the U.S. and China has become very important. The Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA) has taken the lead in the effort of collaborating with Chinese libraries, both academic and public, to promote librarianship in the two countries.

CALA 2010 Strategic Plan – Goal 2 – Become a leader in Global Reach Initiatives

The strategic plan's second goal is to become a leader in global reach initiatives. The first action area is to develop the formal structure within CALA to coordinate the CALA 21st Century Librarian Seminar Series and other training programs in China.

Over four years beginning in 2006 the Seminar Series has conducted programs in more than 10 academic and public libraries in China. More than 40 CALA members, including some ALA leaders, joined the series and trained or exchanged their experience and knowledge with Chinese librarians. I had the pleasure and honor of participating in the seminar in 2007 in Kunming, Yunnan.

The focus of the seminars is to provide a practical way to examine librarianship in the United States. Topics have included library management, reference and instruction, cataloging and

digital libraries, library consortium and outsourcing, information literacy to the future of libraries, challenges and opportunities among others. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive with particularly comments about the lively presentations, enthusiastic discussions, and new ideas and practices.

Seminar presenters are CALA members with ALA-accredited MLS degrees and 6 years post MLS degree professional working experience in a library in the U.S. This has been a joint project with CALA presenters responsible for their international travel and preparing and delivering quality presentations. Hosting institutions in China have been responsible for domestic travel, room and board during the seminar, logistics in planning the seminar, and call for seminar participants. The commitment of CALA individual members and colleagues in China have made this remarkable program a success.

Other CALA global reach action areas include assisting CALA members in developing sister library programs between their libraries and libraries in Asia and Pacific Rim countries, providing information and contacts to U.S. libraries seeking exchanging programs with libraries in Asia and Pacific Rim countries, encouraging participation in the Library Society of China's annual conference, enhancing ties among CALA, ALA, IRC, IRRT, and ALA divisions' IRCs in collaborative library activities between the U.S. and Asia and Pacific Rim countries.

Comparison to Other Library Associations

The sections below provide a brief overview of the activities of ALA and IFLA. They have very different approaches and activities than CALA.

American Library Association (ALA)

"The object of the American Library Association shall be to promote library service and librarianship." The stated mission is, "To provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all." The priorities of ALA are listed below.

Diversity. Diversity is a fundamental value of the association and its members, and is reflected in its commitment to recruiting people of color and people with disabilities to the profession and to the promotion and development of library collections and services for all people.

Equitable Access to Information and Library Services. The Association advocates funding and policies that support libraries as great democratic institutions, serving people of every age, income level, location, ethnicity, or physical ability, and providing the full range of information resources needed to live, learn, govern, and work.

Education and Lifelong Learning. The association provides opportunities for the professional development and education of all library staff members and trustees; it promotes continuous, lifelong learning for all people through library and information services of every type.

Intellectual Freedom. Intellectual freedom is a basic right in a democratic society and a core value of the library profession. The American Library Association actively defends the right of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment

Advocacy for Libraries and the Profession. The association actively works to increase public awareness of the crucial value of libraries and librarians, to promote state and national legislation beneficial to libraries and library users, and to supply the resources, training and support networks needed by local advocates seeking to increase support for libraries of all types.

Literacy. The ALA assists and promotes libraries in helping children and adults develop the skills they need-the ability to read and use computers-understanding that the ability to seek and effectively utilize information resources is essential in a global information society.

Organizational Excellence. The association is inclusive, effective and responsive to the needs of ALA members.

ALA International Relations Committee

The charge of this committee is to have full responsibility for the Association's international relations programs and initiatives; to work with the International Relations Round Table ([IRRT](#)), division international relations committees, and other units of the Association in promoting the exchange of professional information, techniques and knowledge, as well as personnel and literature between and among libraries and individuals throughout the world; to advocate the recognition of the international aspects of the library profession and its priority within ALA; to recommend international relations policy for Council approval and to take the necessary steps for implementation; to make recommendations to the ALA Executive Board for appointments or nominations to international organizations ([IFLA](#), etc.) and other agencies concerned with international library and information services (IREX, etc.); to administer programs of the Association focused on international relations (awards, recognition, exchanges); to promote program and publication activities on international relations by the Association and its divisions and committees; to maintain communication, when appropriate, with other library and information service organizations concerned with international relations; to represent the Association's view to organizations and agencies outside the ALA that are concerned with international relations of libraries; to encourage active participation by U.S. librarians in the work of international organizations.

ALA International Relations Round Table

The purpose of this group is to promote interest in library issues and librarianship worldwide; to help coordinate international activities within the American Library Association, serving as a liaison between the International Relations Committee and those members of the Association interested in international relations; to develop programs and activities which further the international objectives of ALA; and to provide hospitality and information to visitors from abroad.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. It is the global voice of the library and information profession. IFLA's core functions relate to the societal contexts in which libraries and information services operate, IFLA's membership, and professional matters. They help libraries and information services to fulfill their purposes and to shape responses to the needs of clients in a rapidly changing global environment. IFLA focuses on the role and impact of libraries and information services in society and the contextual issues that condition and constrain the environment in which they operate across the world. Library associations are the major members of IFLA and the focus of much of the association's work but individual and institutional members are also welcome.

IFLA ALP – Action for Development Through Libraries Program

The mission of ALP is to further the library profession, library institutions and library and information services in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Oceania and Latin America and the Caribbean. Within the special ALP areas the goals are to assist in continuing education and training; to facilitate the establishment of new library associations and the implementation of IFLA Guidelines on the management of library associations; to promote the function of libraries: services to the general public, information literacy and lifelong learning, and to combat functional illiteracy; to promote the use of ICT and the creation of electronic resources and to increase publishing activities and dissemination of information to the communities, with special attention to marginalized groups.

The priorities of IFLA ALP are outlined below.

Human resources development. Developing library professionals and paraprofessionals by supporting projects for continuing education activities is an important priority. This is done through seminars, workshops and in-service training in the application of new technology, preservation and conservation methods and other fields.

Library association development. The library associations have an important role to play in marketing and advocating for libraries and library services. Supporting the development of library associations and the infrastructure is therefore very important.

Libraries and literacy. ALP promotes the establishment and development of library and information services to the general public, including the promotion of literacy, functional literacy, reading and lifelong learning.

Information technology in developing countries. Supporting the information technology and the integration of it at the different stages of development and libraries with little or no technology is most important to avoid that the gap between North and South becomes even bigger.

Information to the community with a special attention to marginalized groups. The gap between the information rich and information poor is wide. Especially communities in remote rural areas and suburbs are left behind. ALP tries to address this problem by supporting seminars and workshops with the objective to work out models, guidelines, adequate material and establishing networks of specialists within the field.

IFLA FAIFE – Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression

The overall objective of IFLA/FAIFE is to raise awareness of the essential correlation between the library concept and the values of intellectual freedom. To reach this goal IFLA/FAIFE collects and disseminates documentation and aims to stimulate a dialog both within and outside the library world.

Learning materials for workshops developed by FAIFE include workshop manuals intended for use by library professionals engaged in training colleagues to consider the challenges that libraries face when supplying information to users. Topics include: Internet Manifesto, Access to Information on HIV/AIDS through Libraries, Manifesto on Transparency, good governance and freedom from corruption

IFLA CLM – Committee on Copyright and Other Legal Matters

CLM was created to advise IFLA and represents the voice of the international library community in copyright and intellectual property concerns. CLM is also active in issues relating to, disputed claims of ownership of library materials, economic and trade barriers to the acquisition and use of library resources and effective library services, subscription and license agreements, a wide range of other legal matters of international significance to libraries and librarianship

CLM keeps a watching brief on the activities of the World Trade Organization, especially GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services), and has represented IFLA at key World Trade Organization-meetings. CLM works closely with other regional library organizations with shared interests, such as EBLIDA, to ensure that the concerns of libraries are voiced.

IFLA Management of Library Associations Section

Within IFLA, the Section on Management of Library Associations advocates for the interests, aspirations and concerns of the library associations that are represented among IFLA members. There is a continuum of resources available to library associations: some have paid staff and others are run by volunteers, both possessing a wide range of experience and expertise. The Section addresses the needs and promotes interests of all types and sizes of library associations and brings together staff and elected leaders and representatives of these associations to:

- foster and improve leadership skills;
- share experiences;
- develop useful publications and to offer workshops, seminars and programmes that address their needs and interests;
- support IFLA's Core Programs;
- advocate within IFLA for the promotion and development of effective library and library association practices worldwide.

Materials developed by the section and available on the website include Guidelines for the Organizational Structure of Associations, Association Programs and Services, Developing Policies and Procedures for the Library Association, Guidelines for Financial Management of Library Associations, Guidelines for Governing and Leading Library Associations, Guidelines for Library Association Operations, Expanding Advocacy in the Library Community - A Guide for Developing a Government Relations without Borders. Many of these materials are available in Chinese and English.

How CALA Could Develop the Seminar Series in the Future

So with this brief review of ALA and IFLA we see that CALA has unique programs and makes important contributions. No other library association I am aware of has taken the kind of initiative that CALA has. CALA is a leader in thinking about these issues and having a strategic plan that has becoming a leader in global reach initiatives among its goals. Of course CALA also has a unique membership with ties and a commitment to a specific region of the world which makes it unique and in a position to offer excellent programs and services.

Here are some ideas on how CALA might continue to develop its global reach through the CALA 21st Century Librarian Seminar Series and other training programs in China.

1. Continue the series of seminars in new locations in China with additional CALA members being involved.
2. Write about what has been accomplished in the general library literature so others can build on the model. There is much information and many successes to share with others.

3. Look for partnerships like the one with the University of Illinois at Chicago that will bring additional recognition and funding. The grant, Think Globally Act Globally, funded jointly by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Chinese Ministry of Culture in cooperation with the Library Society of China, provides a model for how governments value public libraries and can cooperate to provide support for training and exchanges for librarians so they can provide improved services for library users.
4. Think about broader goals and about how to benefit library users and librarians in the U.S. and China. Here are some ideas. Arrange library visits for Chinese librarians who attend ALA. Include more non-Chinese speakers in programs since we need to learn about Chinese speaking library users and develop cultural fluency to better serve them. Develop programs at ALA, divisional conferences, state conferences, and other such venues to share your perspectives and expertise in serving Chinese speaking users.
5. Make educational materials available online. While there is no substitute for face to face interaction to learn about topics like user services it would be good to make materials available for those who cannot attend seminars.

Conclusion

On a personal note it has been professionally rewarding and enriching to work with CALA on collaborative projects. In July 2007 I participated in the CALA 21st Century Librarian Seminar Series held in Kunming City in China. I gave a speech on “21st Century Library Management” at the Sino-U.S. Librarians Pragmatic Forum. I was pleased to be involved in preparing an IMLS and Chinese Ministry of Culture funded project, Think Globally, Act Globally in 2008. I believe that this type of collaborative program will help educate librarians in the U.S. and in China which will in turn improve library services to Chinese American citizens. The Mortenson Center is the place we are conducting exchanges between U.S. librarians and the public librarians and library educators from China as a part of this project. CALA and the University of Illinois are the grant project partners. I have been a member of the Steering Committee on this grant project since November 2008 and will be a presenter on one of the project workshops in China in September 2009. In June we welcomed the first group of Chinese public librarians to the Mortenson Center as part of this grant and now they are here at the ALA conference.

Finally I want to say how honored I am to have received the 2009 CALA President’s Recognition Award along with Haipeng Li. Working with organizations like CALA has been one of the highlights of my professional career. We have accomplished much but still have much to do as we work with library associations and librarians to promote international education and understanding. I look forward to continuing to work with CALA to expand our global reach.