Introduction

In 2008, the CALA Publications Committee, chaired by Min Chou, created a special publication, Spotlight on CALA Members. The first issue was published in May 2008. It featured Dr. Mengxiong Liu, past CALA President, on her accomplishments with a Fulbright Program.

CALA as a professional organization has brought together so many talented members who have made outstanding achievements and accomplishments in library profession, furthered objectives of CALA, and served as a source of inspiration and motivation for all of us. This year, the Committee continues the tradition of producing Spotlight on CALA Members. The Committee members spent time and reviewed numerous CALA members with their accomplishments. Though the Committee would like to nominate many for Spotlight, it elected to have Dr. Sha Li Zhang as featured member this year. Dr. Zhang is CALA past President and the recipient of CALA Distinguished Services Award in 2007. Dr. Zhang has consistently demonstrated outstanding leadership ability in her 20 years of experience through her work at several university libraries. She has demonstrated strong leadership and outstanding service in and beyond CALA, such as IFLA, ALA, ACRL, ALCTS, and IRRT. She has published numerous peer-reviewed articles and is also a frequent speaker at regional, national, and international conferences and academic institutions.

In preparing this interview, the Publications Committee asked Dr. Zhang to share her insight, knowledge, and experience with CALA members. Dr. Zhang graciously agreed. We hope that through this special CALA publication, we will continue to showcase the accomplishments of CALA members. We also hope that CALA members will be inspired and motivated through reading this special publication.

Dr. Sha Li Zhang

Current position:
Assistant Dean for Collections & Technical Services at University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG).
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Highlights of Professional accomplishments:
Incoming chair (appointed by ALA President), ALA’s International Relations Committee, 2010-2011.
Chair (elected position), ALA International Relations Round Table (IRRT), 2009-2010.
President (elected position), Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA), 2008-2009.
Project Director for Academic and Cultural Enrichment (ACE) Scholars Program, an IMLS funded project of $862,000 for three years (2008-2011) on the first cohort, and $889,401 for the second cohort, 2010-2013.
CALA Distinguished Service Award recipient, 2007.
ALA Councilor-at-Large (elected position to the ALA governing body), 2004-2007.
CALA Board of Directors (elected position) for two terms, 2001-2004 and 2004-2007,
Serve on CALA with Passion and Dedication

Publication Committee: You have chaired numerous CALA committees, served as a board member for two terms, and became CALA President of 2008-2009. Will you please share with us how did you get involved with CALA?

Dr. Sha Li Zhang: It is a long story. In summer 1996, when I attended a library event at the ALA Annual Conference in New York, I met Dr. Mengxiong Liu, then CALA President–Elect. We had a brief and enjoyable conversation. Though I was a CALA member prior to that meeting, I really did not have much knowledge on how to serve on CALA. A few weeks later, Mengxiong called me and asked if I would accept the appointment of chairing CALA’s International Relations Committee. I was very excited and gave her a “Yes” answer immediately. At that time, I served on numerous committees with Kentucky Library Association and ACRL, but never chaired any committee. I was a little nervous and wondered if I could do a good job for the committee. It turned out that it was a fun committee with a group of wonderful CALA members. During my two-year term, the Committee met at every ALA meeting and conference. The committee members and I became good friends since. Working together, we wrote several articles, reports, and interviews for the CALA Newsletter to report and promote CALA members’ international activities.

In fall 1998, Mengxiong and I raised funds from U.S. donors and hosted the first CALA Reception at the International Conference for Academic Libraries held at Peking University in November 1998. All conference participants, including those from China and from other countries, attended the Reception. The event was an excellent promotion opportunity for CALA. I would say, chairing the CALA’s International Relations Committee was my starting point in getting involved in CALA. When I made committee appointments during my presidential term in 2008–2009, I also made every effort to include many younger and newer CALA members to all committees which would open the door for them and enhance their professional careers.

Publication Committee: Would you like to name some of the CALA committees on which you served?

Dr. Sha Li Zhang: In addition to chairing the International Relations Committee for a two-year term, I chaired the CALA committees of Scholarship, Publications, Constitutions and Bylaws, Ad Hoc Committee on CALA Strategic Plan, co-chaired CALA Awards Committee, and was CALA Newsletter Editor. Though serving on these committees is voluntary in nature, I took each appointment seriously and with distinctions. For instance, I chaired the Ad Hoc Committee on CALA Strategic Plan 2007-2010, with Mengxiong Liu and Harriet Ying, two CALA past presidents. After two-year’s diligent work, we came up with a document of CALA 2010 Strategic Plan that outlines CALA’s priorities and implementation plans. The document was subsequently approved by the Board and implemented since.

Publication Committee: Looking back at your CALA presidency, what are some of the major accomplishments?

Dr. Sha Li Zhang: I was CALA President in 2008-2009.
It was an exciting time. I was able to get more CALA members involved in CALA activities through CALA committee and taskforce appointments; took needed actions to address the issues on membership recruitment and retention; implemented funding support on professional development of CALA members; enhanced the organizational effectiveness through developing several guidelines and procedures. The outcomes were that more than 100 CALA members were appointed in serving on committees, taskforces, and ad hoc committees of CALA. Our membership increased 20 percent in the year of tough economic climate. The CALA Conference Travel Grants were awarded when they were most needed by CALA members. We worked closely with the Steering Committee of Think Globally, Act Globally, China – U.S. Library Collaboration Project. Through this Project, many CALA members were able to participate in presenting lectures to the librarians in China and in hosting Chinese library directors at several CALA chapters. Being a CALA President is once-in-a-life opportunity. I was very lucky for having unwavering support from Haipeng Li, then CALA interim Executive Director who has much needed knowledge on CALA’s ongoing operations, regular communication with ALA and other library associations, and operational protocols and procedures. I am also grateful for having an active Board to help move action items in a timely manner, and for having dedicated membership who embraced new opportunities and initiatives. In the past ten years, CALA has continually increased its visibility at the national and international scenes, with the vision and leadership from Sally C. Tseng, CALA Executive Director from 1999-2007 and CALA Honorary Executive Director. With support from these individuals, I felt that I was standing on the shoulder of the giant. We are obligated to continue moving the Association to a higher level.

**Support and Promote Diversity**

**Publications Committee:** In addition to all of your responsibilities on your job, writing projects, and professional services to CALA, ALA, and IFLA, you are directing a diversity program at your university. Will you please share with us about it?

**Dr. Sha Li Zhang:** We have witnessed rapid demographic changes in the compositions of U.S. populations. According to 2005 updated census data, 30 percent of U.S. populations are minorities. It is predicted that by 2050, minority populations in U.S. will be more than 50 percent. Library services should reflect these demographic changes. The compositions of library staff should also reflect the user populations that they serve. However, ALA’s Diversities Count Report (2007) indicates that we are not recruiting and graduating enough librarians with diverse backgrounds to serve the rapid changing user communities.

In fall 2007, I discussed the idea of applying for a federal grant to recruit minority students into LIS programs with Rosann Bazirjian, Dean of University Libraries at UNCG. We also shared the idea with a dozen of university library directors in North Carolina. We were very encouraged by positive feedback and commitments from these library directors. Ms. Bazirjian encouraged me to lead this project which involved in writing the grant application, planning funding requests, securing commitments and agreements from all participating institutions, and facilitating communications among all parties. To me, it was an excellent opportunity to lead, collaborate, and walk the walk on the ideal for which we all have passion. In June 2008, when we were awarded with the IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program’ grant of $862,000, the entire community was excited and inspired by this project. This federal funded program, in collaboration with...
Spotlight on CALA Members  June 2010

Dr. Sha Li Zhang (right) with Reforma colleagues.

with ten universities in North Carolina, has created an Academic and Cultural Enrichment (ACE) Scholars Program in recruiting students from under-served communities into a LIS program, providing these students internship opportunities at the participating institutions, matching them with experienced librarians for mentoring, offering them with a series of culturally enrichment events, and assisting them for employment upon graduation. In fall 2009, we successfully recruited 14 ACE scholars with diverse backgrounds into the LIS Department, representing 60 percent increases of minority students at the LIS program. These scholars are making excellent progress toward their MLS degrees. By May 2011, 14 ACE scholars will graduate from the Program. They will enter the library profession and will bring changes in the compositions of the librarians.

Dr. Sha Li Zhang spoke to a group of diversity college students on library profession as a career choice. The students were invited to participate in the ALA 2009 Annual Conference in Chicago.

As Project Director, I am continuing learning and obtaining wonderful experience in working with participants from multiple-institutions, LIS Department, and all ACE scholars. I am also busy in writing and presenting the outcomes of this Program at the conferences of North Carolina Library Association (NCLA), ACRL, ALA, and IFLA which enabled me to meet other library professionals who are experts on the topic. In August 2010, Dr. Lorie Roy, ALA past President, and I will co-present a program on recruitment of diversity librarians at an IFLA satellite conference in Copenhagen. I am very excited on this great learning opportunity with Dr. Roy and looking forward in sharing what we are doing in U.S. with colleagues around the world. When I prepared this

Preparing the librarians with diverse backgrounds for tomorrow: A collaborative project in North Carolina
At 6th Annual Joint Mini Conference, New York, May 14, 2010

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A presentation at the 2010 Joint Mini Conference in New York.

response for the interview of the CALA Publications Committee, I learned a good news. On June 15, 2010, IMLS announced funding of $889,401 to the second cohort of the ACE Scholars Program. As Project Director for this program starting in July 2010 through May 2013, I will be able to work closely with all participants from ten universities and help recruit 15 students from under-represented communities into the LIS Program at UNCG. I am very excited about this wonderful opportunity. It is always gratifying to see that our efforts make a difference in our profession.

Dr. Sha Li Zhang (left) with a colleague Gerald Holmes (right) presented a poster session at the ALA 2009 Annual Conference.
Become a Global Librarian

Publications Committee: You have had many international activities with CALA, ALA, and IFLA. Where did you get started on these activities?

Dr. Sha Li Zhang: Many of my international activities started with the ALA’s International Relations Round Table (IRRT). At my first ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco in 1987, I received a free ticket in attending the International Librarians Reception hosted by IRRT. It was an eye-opening event. Several hundred librarians from abroad coming to ALA were at the Reception. It inspired me to join the roundtable after the reception.

The roundtable is a very unique group within ALA. It promotes interest in library issues and librarianship worldwide and helps coordinate international activities within ALA. Many ALA members have benefited from contact at conferences with colleagues around the world through the services and programs of IRRT. Many international librarians’ first encounter with American library practice has also been through the work of IRRT.

From January 2000 through December 2003, I served as Editor-in-Chief for International Leads, the roundtable’s official publication. During my four-year term on this publication, I actively recruited articles, reports, and stories reflecting ALA membership’s activities on global scenes. The publication also provides a platform for the librarians from U.S. and abroad to share and exchange ideas. Being an editor enabled me to become familiar with the issues that all libraries face in U.S. and abroad. It helped broaden my views on trends and opportunities for implementing library services and programs. During my term as Editor, the published reports and stories cover the countries from all continents. For instance, in preparing my first issue of March 2000, I contacted a librarian, Mr. Andras Riedlmayer at the Fine Arts Library of Harvard University. At that time, Mr. Riedlmayer just came back from a site visit in Kosovo. I was able to secure a timely report from him on “Libraries and Archives in Kosovo: A Postwar Report.” The report was well received by our readers. During my term, we also brought the publication online at http://www.al.org/ala/mgrps/rts/irrt/intlleads/leadsarchive/archive.cfm so that our international members have an easy access to the publication.

I served as Chair of IRRT Membership Committee for a two-year term. During that period, the number of our roundtable members doubled, due to a policy change of including all ALA international members. I was kept busy in writing and sending out more than 800 welcome letters to all new members, including a large number of international members. It appeared a small operation then. In 2007, when I was at one of concurrent sessions of the IFLA Conference in Durban, South Africa, a librarian from the Republic of Ghana came to me and said hello. She mentioned that she recognized my name from a welcome letter that I sent to her a few months ago. She was very excited to become an IRRT member, an extra to her ALA membership. She also let me know that she treasures the communications with the librarians in U.S. It made me realize that the librarians around the world really want to be connected, despite of far distance among the five continents. Understanding this part, I worked with our roundtable web master and developed a Notable IRRT Members Column at http://www.al.org/ala/mgrps/rts/irrt/irrtnotables.cfm in an effort to recognize the accomplishments of the individuals who have played an important role in promoting understanding of and interests in library services around the globe. Many of them indeed think, plan, and act globally. Some of them, such as Sally C. Tseng, Barbara Ford, Dr. Ching-chih Chen, Dr. Haw-Wei Lee, and Gary Strong are CALA members. The Column has grown since, with younger members being added.

Publications Committee: You were elected by IRRT membership to the chair position of the roundtable. What is the best part of this position?

Dr. Sha Li Zhang: The chair person for the roundtable is an elected position by the membership of the roundtable. I feel much honored for being elected in 2008,
though I have been a member with the roundtable for nearly 20 years. Being a chair, I was able to involve many members through committee and taskforce appointments; represent the roundtable at many occasions; promote the interest in international librarianship; help plan and develop programs and events for the annual conference, and make connections with librarians in U.S. and abroad. In 2009, in celebrating the 60th anniversary, the roundtable initiated an endowment campaign, led by Jordan Scepanski and Lea H. Wells, past IRRT chairs, to raise funds to support international activities, including funding speakers from abroad who participate in the ALA annual conferences and funding library projects abroad from U.S. librarians. During my term as the roundtable chair, I continued working on this initiative to raise funds. In addition to ask donations from the roundtable members, I worked with Susan Matveyeva, Chair of ALCTS International Relations Committee, to get the overlapping members between IRRT and ALCTS engaged in the fundraising which provided these members the venue to support international librarianship. We have raised more than $11,000 so far. It is one of the highlights during my chair’s term. I thoroughly enjoyed this wonderful opportunity of serving on the roundtable.

**Publications Committee: What are other international activities that you like to share with our members?**

**Dr. Sha Li Zhang:** Sure. Here are some examples.

UNCG Libraries international visiting librarians program—Serving on IRRT always helps me with what I am doing at my own institution. With support from Dean Bazirjian, I have helped host visiting scholars and librarians from Russia, Thailand, China, Moldova, Argentina, and Spain at our library since 2006. When these individuals came to learn from the academic institutions in U.S., we also invited them to give presentations and other sessions to our library staff and LIS students. These events offered opportunities to share and exchange. In hosting visiting librarians from other countries, I was able to involve a team of the librarians at UNCG to have regular interactions with the visiting librarians, such as coffee and lunch breaks, meetings, show and tell, weekend outings, and cultural events. This kind of interaction indeed enhanced the experience of the visiting librarians and our library staff. The visiting librarians not only improved their English language, but also had better understanding on people and cultures of North Carolina. Due to the success of our international visiting librarian program, my library is continuing receiving requests from the academic libraries abroad for hosting their librarians. At a recent meeting with library colleagues at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics in China, they proposed to formalize the training program so that the younger librarians from the academic institution will receive systematical training in next few years. It is a good feeling to learn what we have done on these projects meet the needs of library colleagues beyond the U.S. borders.

ALCTS free CE session for international librarians—For librarians from other countries to come to U.S. and receive training, it takes large amount of funds and personal commitments. New technologies have made it possible in providing training to them virtually. When I was Chair of the ALCTS International Relations Committee, I led the Committee and developed a proposal to offer one free seat per session of online continuing
education courses from ALCTS to librarians from developing countries. The proposal was approved by the ALCTS Executive Board. This initiative was implemented by the Committee subsequently under the leadership of Susa Matveyeva, another CALA member. Due to the high demand of the free offering, ALCTS added more free seats to the continuing education courses for these librarians.

An IFLA wiring project—Working with colleagues from the IFLA Standing Section Committee on Acquisitions and Collection Development in which I am a member, I joined with Sharon Johnson and Judith Mansfield on a writing project, *Gifts for the Collections: Guidelines for Libraries*, published by *IFLA Professional Reports* 112, Hague, IFLA Headquarters, in 2008. Through this project, I learned how to phrase, construct, and organize the contents of the publication with less North American focus, but more on that of the readers worldwide. The draft of the writing project was commented and reviewed by librarians from other countries. This process enabled me to better communicate the concepts with which we are familiar to the readers whose backgrounds may vary.

TGAG Project—In May 2009, I led the first team from the Think Globally, Act Globally, U.S. – China Librarians Collaboration Project which is funded by IMLS Laura Bush 21st century Librarian Program. CALA is a partner of this collaborative project. Many CALA members participated in it. Our team participated in the opening ceremony of the Project at the National Library of China and conducted a series of continuing education programs in Nanjing, China. The programs served not only as a platform to discuss the issues and share the concerns we are all facing, but also as an excellent networking opportunity with our library colleagues in China. The bounds established through this connection will no doubt help generate new projects and initiatives among the libraries and librarians in both countries. I am grateful for having the opportunity and for being a part of this Project as a Steering Committee Member.

Visiting other countries—It has always been interesting and good learning experience in traveling and visiting libraries in other countries. I have had opportunities to do workshops and lectures at Ivanovo State Textile Academy in Russia, Chiang Mai University in Thailand, Tsinghua University, Lanzhou University, Tongji University, and Shanghai University of Finance and Economics in China, and give poster sessions and presentations at international conferences in Hong Kong, Italy, Sweden, and Denmark. These events enabled me to keep my passion and commitments on international librarianship.
Publications Committee: On behalf the Publications Committee and its members, we want to thank you for your time in sharing your experience, inspiration, and insight with CALA, ALA, and IFLA. We also want to send our best wishes for your future endeavors.

Dr. Sha Li Zhang: Thanks for inviting me to be a featured CALA member on this column. I am much honored and indeed appreciate this opportunity. Through my professional career, I received a lot of support and good advices from many distinguished librarians. Dr. Hwa-Wei Lee, former Dean of Ohio University Libraries, served a wonderful mentor for me. I hope that CALA members, especially experienced members, will continue this tradition.

— End —

CALA Publications Committee

Committee charge:
Oversees the operations for all CALA publications and coordinates with Journal of Library and Information Science (JLIS), CALA Newsletter, and CALA Web publishing.

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