

Spotlight on CALA Members

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Global Networking through Fulbright Program An Interview with Dr. Mengxiong Liu

CALA Publications Committee 2007- 2008:

Min Chou (Chair), Sai Deng, Nancy Hershoff, Shuyong Jiang, Shu Liu, Junlin Pan, Yunshan Ye



Dr. Mengxiong Liu

Engineering Librarian and Professor of Library and Information Science
San Jose State University, California
Email: Mengxiong.Liu@sjsu.edu

Education

Ph.D. in Library and Information Studies, University of Michigan
M.L.S., University of Denver
B.A. in English, Shanghai International Studies University.

Highlights of Professional Accomplishments

Fulbright Senior Specialist
American Library Association (ALA) Diversity Council
Steering Committee of ALA Spectrum Initiative
Research & Statistics Committee of ALA
Former President of Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA)
CALA Board of Directors
Former President of California Chapter of CALA
Active member of numerous professional associations and learned societies

Research Interests

Human information seeking behavior, reference and instructional services, and digital libraries

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. Dr. Mengxiong Liu is no doubt one of such distinctive members.

In addition to her significant service and contribution to CALA, as a president and a board member, among many other roles, Dr. Liu is also a well-know prolific scholar and inspirational speaker recognized nationally and internationally. Her research articles have appeared in scholarly journals, conference proceedings, and book chapters. Her articles on human citing behavior have been frequently cited by researchers and scholars. She has given more than thirty-three presentations and lectures over the past years. She has received numerous awards, honors, and grants in recognition of her continued excellence in teaching and research. Dr. Liu also served as a referee for *Library Quarterly* and *Journal of Documentation*, and an editor of the *Journal of Library and Information Science*.

In 2007, Dr. Liu received the Fulbright Senior Specialists Award and she traveled to Uruguay to evaluate and give advice for postgraduate programs in digital libraries and information literacy. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, recipients of Fulbright Senior Specialist awards are selected on the basis of academic or professional achievement. In January 2008, Dr. Liu was interviewed by a northern California local TV "Talk Tonight" show on her Fulbright experience in Uruguay. Although most CALA members in other parts of the country didn't get the opportunity to watch and hear Dr. Liu's talk about her Fulbright experience, the Publications Committee conducted the following interview, via email, and asked Dr. Liu to share her Fulbright experience, her view and comments of advancement of librarianship through global networking, and her encouragement and advice for CALA members to apply for the Fulbright award. The Publications Committee would like to thank Dr. Liu for her graciousness and willingness to share experience and expertise with CALA members, and also thank CALA President Dora Ho and Executive Director Shixing Wen for their encouragement and approval of this project.

Global Networking through Fulbright Program

Publications Committee: What are the qualifications for the Fulbright Scholarship application? Did you choose to go to Uruguay? Did you choose the topics to teach as a Fulbright expert?

Dr. Mengxiong Liu: The Fulbright program started after the end of World War II by initiative of US Senator J. William Fulbright. It is a program of exchange scholars. It is believed that the exchange between the people of the United States and other nations would foster an understanding and tolerance that would eliminate the basis for future conflicts. The first exchange program took place in 1948 when 65 American scholars traveled abroad and 36 students and scholars visited US. Nowadays, almost 300,000 Fulbrighters from approximately 180 countries have participated in the Fulbright Program. In recent years, Fulbright is sending 400 US scholars and senior experts to other countries each year.

It is very competitive to become a Fulbright scholar. "A Fulbright grantee stands out from among its peers as the best and the brightest, with excellent academic qualifications and therefore deserves to be honored with a grant to study, teach or research abroad." Hundreds of Fulbright alumni worldwide currently hold top positions in government, higher education, and other sectors.

- * 35 Fulbright alumni from nine countries are recipients of the Nobel Prize.
- * 60 Fulbright alumni are recipients of the Pulitzer Prize.
- * 22 Fulbright alumni are recipients of MacArthur Foundation "genius" awards.
- * 14 Fulbright alumni are recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.
- * 1 Fulbright alumni is a recipient of an Olympic gold medal.

There are five Fulbright programs for US Scholars:

- * Fulbright Traditional Program (long-term, lecture/research)
- * Fulbright Senior Specialists Program (FSSP) (short-term, presentation/evaluation/consulting)
- * Distinguished Chairs Program
- * International Education Administrators Program
- * German Studies Seminars

The more well-known program is the Fulbright Traditional Program which provides the awardees opportunity of staying in a foreign country for 6 months or long teaching or doing research. When applying, the applicant is required to apply for a specific country listed in the Fulbright program book. Less known is the newer Fulbright Senior Specialist Program (FSSP) which gives the awardees opportunity of visiting a foreign country for 2-6 weeks. The country is assigned to, not applied for. In my case, I applied for the Fulbright Senior Specialist program and was assigned to Uruguay.



At Fulbright Office

All Fulbright programs are listed on the website <http://www.cies.org>. All applications are online. For FSSP, the eligibility requirements include U.S. citizenship, Ph.D. or equivalent professional/terminal degree at the time of application plus a minimum of five years of post-doctoral teaching or professional experience in the field which you are applying.

My Fulbright assignments were threefolds:

- * Advocate and advise information literacy programs at British Schools and CLAEH (Latin American Center for Human Economy)
- * Evaluate and provide directions for the libraries at British Schools and CLAEH
- * Evaluate and recommend the design and structure of Library and Information Science program at the University of the Republic; and the postgraduate degree in Management of Digital Documentation at CLAEH.

Global Networking through Fulbright Program

During my two-week stay in Uruguay, I visited the libraries, universities, schools; met and discussed with teaching faculty, librarians, administrators and students; and make presentations on information literacy, library technology plans and design and structure of digital library education. While I delivered information from the perspectives of the United States, I also learned a lot about the culture, education and libraries in Uruguay. This was a great opportunity of increasing mutual understanding of the people between the two countries.

Publications Committee: What is the current situation in Uruguay with regard to library services? Could you tell us some of your best experience in Uruguay in terms of "improving with the trend of globalization"?

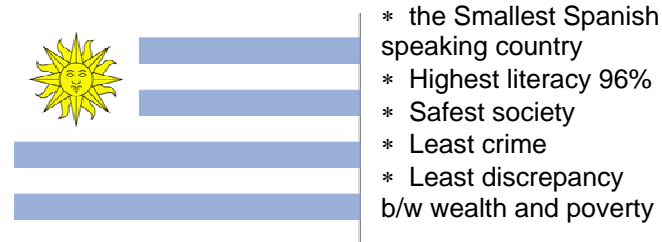
Dr. Mengxiong Liu: Here are some basics about Uruguay:



Uruguay

- * Location: South American, between Brazil and Argentina;
- * Area: 68,000 sq. miles (three fifths of California)
- * Population: 3.3 million (two fifths of New York)
- * Language: Spanish
- * Capital: Montevideo (with half of pop.)
- * Economy: agriculture, livestock raising
- * Government: republic

Compared to the other countries in South America, Uruguay is:



Flag of Uruguay

Libraries have always played a very important part in the cultural life of Uruguay. They were established with the founding of the Republic in 1816. Despite having a population of only 3.3 million people, there are 158 public libraries throughout the country. During my stay in Montevideo, Uruguay, I visited many different libraries, namely, CLAEH library, British Schools library, Library of the Parliament, the Uruguay National Library, the Law Library at University of the Republic, and University of Montevideo Library. There are dedicated people working in the libraries, however, due to the limited resources, the libraries do not have an integrated library system. Most of the libraries only have the in-house, self-developed, stand-alone system using open software, e.g. WINISIS (supported by UNESCO). Uruguay libraries need assistance from abroad to help improve their library systems and train their librarians. This is where "improving with the trend of globalization" may take place in the libraries. My Fulbright visit partially fulfilled that goal.



Montevideo

Global Networking through Fulbright Program

Under the sponsorship of UNESCO, Uruguay is launching an important project *One Child One Laptop*. This project provides further opportunity for globalization. Uruguay will need computer experts, educators, and librarians to help launching this project. Information literacy will play an important role in this project. Once every child has a laptop, they can find all kinds of information from the internet. We must prepare the children to learn how to evaluate information.

Publications Committee: How do you think your continuing CALA involvement has contributed to your having received the Fulbright fellowship? What is your advice for CALA members who might be interested in applying for Fulbright?

Dr. Mengxiong Liu: My CALA involvement has definitely helped me grow professionally and developed my global connections. As the past president, committee member, newsletter editor, journal editor, and current board member, I have had the opportunities of organizing the international conferences, delivering lectures and speeches abroad, and establishing relationships with library professionals in different countries. The ultimate goal of Fulbright is to foster further understanding between the people of the United States and other nations. Therefore, my international activities certainly helped my application for Fulbright.



Independence Square, Montevideo, Uruguay



Library at British Schools

My advice to CALA members who are interested in Fulbright is: *Get Involved*. CALA has many wonderful programs with international connections, such as the wonderful programs sponsored by the International Relations Committee, [CALA 21st Century Librarian Seminar Series](#), conferences in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, to name only a few. As a CALA member, you also want to be active with the International Relations Committee at ALA. Fulbright is looking for people who can become the positive cultural ambassadors for its programs.

Publications Committee: What do you think that CALA, as a professional organization, can do to make a unique contribution in promoting global reach and networking in advancing librarianship?

Dr. Mengxiong Liu: As a professional organization, CALA has been doing very well in making contributions to promote global reach and networking in advancing librarianship. My articles "Contributions of Chinese American Librarians to Library and Information Science" published in *Chinese Studies in History* vol. 34, no. 3, (Spring 2001): 24-41, and "The History and Status of Chinese Americans in Librarianship" published in *Library Trends* 49 (Summer 2000): 109-137 both articulated CALA contributions in this area. More recently, CALA's 30th anniversary publication *Bridging Cultures – Chinese American Librarians and Their Organization: A Glance at the thirty Years of CALA* further elaborated many of CALA's contributions in promoting global reach and advancing librarianship. The success

Global Networking through Fulbright Program



Dr. Liu's presentation at British Schools

of the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color is CALA's another significant contribution to the librarianship.

CALA's 2010 Strategic Plan clearly laid out the direction for global reach. Goal 2 specifies *Become a Leader in Global Reach Initiatives*. Let's work together to fulfill this goal.

Publications Committee: Could you share with us about your global reach experience, and tell us how we can, as individual librarians, benefit from these activities?

Dr. Mengxiong Liu: Of course, Fulbright in Uruguay is my latest global reach experience. In addition to China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, I have visited many countries, e.g. England, Germany, Belgium, France, Ukraine, Japan, Brazil, Argentina, to name only a few. I delivered lectures on digital libraries at the National Library of China, and at many other libraries in China and other countries. I organized and attended numerous international conferences, such as the First and the Second China-US conferences, IFLA Forum, and dis-

ussed professional issues with library professionals. I also published articles in foreign professional journals, such as U.K.'s *Policy Future for Education* and some Chinese journals and conference proceedings. All the experience greatly helped my professional growth. As the Fulbright program note states, "The exchange of information from one place to another in the world can occur in an instant through *optical fiber cables*; but the exchange of true understanding about the forces of our times – political, social, economic and cultural – still needs time and the physical presence of two persons with inquisitive minds and open hearts, and the active and dedicated participation of human actors to whom the bottom line are ideas and not only facts."

Publications Committee: Do you have any other words of wisdom to share with CALA members?

Dr. Mengxiong Liu: After I received my Ph.D. from University of Michigan, I wrote an article "Surviving an American Ph.D. Program". At the end of the article, I wrote, "As life goes on, I believe more strongly than before that *'Life is a journey, the meaning of which is found in the voyage and not in the destination.'*"¹ I still believe it. And now, I'd like to share it with CALA members.

¹ Alexander Lowen, *Fear of Life* (New York: Collier Books, 1980)

Please send feedback to CALA Publications Committee 2007-2008:

Min Chou (Chair) <mchou@njcu.edu >
 Sai Deng <sai.deng@wichita.edu>
 Nancy Hershoff <sunn@fiu.edu>
 Shuyong Jiang <shyjiang@uiuc.edu>
 Shu Liu <shu.liu@colostate.edu>
 Junlin Pan <jpan@niu.edu>
 Yunshan Ye <yey@dickinson.edu>

