

World Library and Information Congress 79th IFLA General Conference and Assembly Singapore 17 – 23 August 2013/ www.ifla.org: By Joseph Semugabi

Introduction

The theme for this year's conference was "Future Libraries: Infinite Possibilities" and took place from the 17th to the 23rd of August 2013. The Congress venue was Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre which is a world-class venue located at the heart of Asia's most integrated meetings, conventions and exhibitions hub. IFLA also held a trade exhibition at the said Centre in conjunction with the World Library and Information Congress.

Academic & Research Libraries (ARL) Attendance Grant

I am forever indebted to the IFLA Academic and Research Libraries Section (ARL) Section of IFLA with generous sponsorship by SAGE and ExLibris who considered my essay good enough to win me the 2013 Attendance Grant that covered the Conference Registration Fee and 800 Euros as contribution to my travel and accommodation expenses. This award enabled me to attend a IFLA conference for the very first time.



Three Attendance grants were actually offered for IFLA WLIC 2013 to an information professional from each of the following regions: Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Asia/Pacific Region. The beneficiaries appear in the photograph above and they include me, Joseph A. Semugabi, Librarian Law Development Centre, Uganda as the winner from **Africa**; **Sasekea Harris**, Academic Librarian, University of West Indies **from Latin America and the Caribbean**; and **Aditya Nugara**, Head of Library, Petra Christian University, Surabaya, Indonesia from the **Asia/Pacific** region . We were later to be presented Awards and Certificates in Session 136 of the Conference.

Brief about IFLA and the Conference

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.

The IFLA World Library and Information Congress is the **international flagship** professional and trade event for the *library and information services sector*. It brought together over 3,500 participants from more than 120 countries. Once again it set the **international agenda** for the profession and offered opportunities for networking and professional development to all delegates. It was an opportunity for the host country to **showcase** the status of libraries and information science in the country and region as well as to have their professionals **experience** international librarianship and international relations in a unique way. The congress also offered an **international trade exhibition** with over 80 exhibitors and an exhibition of approximately 1000sqm. The combined buying power of all delegates was estimated at more than 1.2 billion dollars.

Academic Sessions

I attended three main Sessions which included the following:

Session 72: Opening Session:

This session had the following speakers:

- Mrs. Elaine Ng, Chair of IFLA WLIC 2013 National committee
- Dr. Ingrid Parent, IFLA President 2011-2013
- Dr. Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Communications and Information, Singapore
- Ambassador Chan Heng Chee, Keynote Speaker

The keynote speaker - Prof Chan Heng Chee, Ambassador-at-Large at the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, spoke on the theme "Are Libraries Ready for the Big Change?".

Session 98: Agile Management: Strategies for achieving success in rapidly changing times – Knowledge Management with academic and research libraries.

Papers presented during this session emphasized ideas, innovations and the anticipated new developments. They included:

- *Who is looking after you e-journals? Telling tales about the keepers registry & your digital shelves* – Peter Burnhill (Edina, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland UK) and Françoise Pelle (ISSN International Centre/Centre International de l'ISSN, Paris, France)
- *Implementing agile Management through collaborative social computing* – Margaret Tan (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)
- *From Search to Discovery* – Tamah Sadeh (Ex Libris, Jerusalem, Israel)
- *Agile Management: strategies for success in rapidly changing times* – Andrew Wells (University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia)
- *MOOCs in the library: addressing the changing needs of students and faculty in the age of online learning* – Mariellen F. Calter (Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA)
- *The opportunities and Challenges of MOOCs: viewpoints of Asia countries* – Joyce Chen (National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan, China)

Session 151: Hot Topics in Academic and Research Libraries:

The following insightful and educative papers were presented during this session. They all emphasized innovation in the management of academic and research libraries:

- ***Convergence of open access, open knowledge, and open innovation: towards libraries as an open knowledge service platform***
XIALON ZHANG (National Science Library, Beijing, China)
- ***"That was then, this is now". A new era of research support.***
JENNY ELLIS (University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia)
- ***Using social media to build an engaged community***
GULCIN CRIBB and YUYUN WIRAWATI ISHAK (Singapore Management University, Singapore)
- ***An age of un-discovery?: copyright, curiosity and scholarly access to information in a digital world***
ELLEN BROAD (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), The Hague, Netherlands)

Benefits from the Conference:

The following benefits accrued from participation in this conference:

Professional Acquaintances and New Friends

I was privileged to interact and make acquaintance with several participants. This was even easier given that I was one of the three beneficiaries of the ARL Attendance Grant. Naturally everybody wanted to check us out and congratulate us. You can bet that I left with my bag full of business cards as well as contacts of a couple of sales representatives exhibiting various products. The Conference gave me the rare opportunity to literally interact with people from almost every continent. .

Academic/Professional Papers

I was able to freely obtain all the papers presented during the Congress thus enhancing my knowledge regarding best practices, innovations and new developments in the field of library and information science.

New Ideas in connection with the management of our libraries

The congress provided new insights especially on how the library can stay relevant and useful in an era of information and communication technologies.

Concluding Remarks

There is no doubt that the 79th IFLA General Conference & Assembly was an exceptional event. It was an outstanding learning and networking experience. The programme was well balanced with both academic and social activities as well as tours that contributed to the understanding of Singapore. Such arrangement was invaluable and simply a memorable experience. Neither could one come here and fail to make acquaintances at both a professional and social level. The facilitators, balanced between accomplished scholars in various disciplines and as well as librarians undoubtedly contributed to professional development and ensured that we left with enough knowledge to understand the new role of the library in an increasing technologically sophisticated world.