

MEMBER AND SECTOR NEWS

WORKING TOGETHER

THE NEXT IFLA CONFERENCE IS ON 13–19 AUGUST 2016 IN COLUMBUS, OHIO, USA
THREE ALIA MEMBERS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES OF BEING INVOLVED IFLA.

LIBRARY POWER

The chair of IFLA's Public Libraries Section and City Librarian at Gold Coast City Library, **MARIAN MORGAN-BINDON**, is inspired by colleagues from around the world.

IFLA's Public Libraries Section (PLS) provides an active international forum and network for the development and promotion of public libraries. We are committed to ensuring free and equitable access to information and public library services for people worldwide. Members of the Standing Committee bring with them a wealth of experience, knowledge and skills, and our combined networks reach across the globe.

Leading the Standing Committee and participating in IFLA's annual World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) and other meetings has given me the opportunity to visit some amazing libraries and experience different conditions firsthand. It has also allowed me to experience the difference that public libraries make to people's lives and reinforce my belief in the importance of a united voice for public libraries at all levels – local, national and international.

In 2015, PLS partnered with the City of Cape Town Library and Information Service and the Western Cape Provincial Library Service to present 'Public Libraries at the Crossroads', a professional development event in the lead-up to the WLIC. Participants from around the world joined with colleagues from southern Africa in an exciting but very practical program. The mixed groups worked together to demonstrate that, despite geographical, societal and linguistic differences, our mission is the same. We were able to include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation workshop, 'Design Thinking Toolkit for Libraries', in the program.

The PLS had also conducted a survey, 'How do you describe a public library?', in which library professionals and their communities were asked what words or concepts immediately came to mind when thinking about a public library. Led by Jan Richards from Orange, the PLS Secretary and Information Co-ordinator, this project attracted respondents from 21 countries across 6 continents. Words such as 'community', 'free' and 'inclusive' were universally used to describe public libraries, reinforcing our contribution to social capital and the creative economy.



Marian Morgan-Bindon

More recently, PLS has been collecting stories about the ways in which public libraries across Europe have been responding to the refugee crisis. The resulting document is a starting point for shared experience and inspiration and demonstrates the power of libraries to have a positive influence on people's lives. For those of you attending WLIC 2016 in Columbus, be sure to make a note that the PLS's program will explore this topic in greater depth.

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ifla.org/public-libraries