
The Second National Conference on Librarians and International Development

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*A report on the conference held at Indiana University,
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The Second National Conference on Librarians and International Development was held on May 7–9, 1989, at Indiana University, Bloomington. The first national conference had been organized by representatives of the Washington State University Librarians and held in Pullman in 1987. Based on the responses of participants in both conferences, a conference will be held every two years in various locations throughout the United States. The site selection is based on proposals from those libraries interested in hosting the conference. The site of the 1991 meeting will be announced in late 1989.

The conference program focused on libraries in developing countries. It included librarians and others from the United States involved in library development and representatives of countries which had been on the “receiving end” of library development. The topics ranged from “Adaptive Strategies for Working Abroad” to “The Philosophy and Rationale for International Library Development.”

The subject of the keynote address reflected the

strong interest of conference participants in additional opportunities for involvement in library development; most participants had at least one overseas library consulting experience. B. Robert Tabachnick, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the former MUCIA Program Director in Indonesia, focused on academic librarians playing a part in overseas development projects (Tabachnick’s presentation appears on pages 819–25 of this issue). On a related topic, Janet Gilligan, library program officer for the U.S. Information Service, described the USIS abroad. She spoke not only about how to get involved in overseas programs, but perhaps more importantly, how we might help librarians in developing countries find opportunities to come to the U.S. More specifically, she outlined the options available through the International Visitors Program and the Voluntary Visitors Program for Foreign Librarians already in the U.S. She also spoke about services the USIS would provide to librarians interested in the overseas library development.

One of the programs at the conference focused

on the reasons why we become involved in library development in other countries. Robert Bruce, ALA fellow 1987/88 in Indonesia and head of the History/Travel Department at the Minneapolis Public Library and Information Center, read a paper on the philosophy and rationale for underlying international library development.

Information about what libraries in developing countries really need was presented by librarians who had worked in South America and Africa. Miriam Bonham, Indiana University, Bloomington; Robin Gratz, Manchester College; and Barbara Seitz, Indiana University, Bloomington, shared these ideas based on experiences in Brazil, Malawi, and Nicaragua, respectively. The program was also enriched by a panel on "Adaptive Strategies for Working Abroad." Advice about preparing at home before the consulting trip, understanding yourself and culture shock, and feeling at home and making friends in a foreign culture was given by the United States director of a cooperative program in Malaysia (Charles Reafsnnyder, ITM/MUCIA Cooperative Program in Malaysia), a professor of anthropology who has done field work in Mexico and Nepal (Alan Sandstrom, Indiana University-Purdue University at Ft. Wayne), and the spouse of a program director in Indonesia (Jeanne Tabachnick, Cross Plains, Wisconsin). School of Library and Information Science professor David Kaser's presentation focused on cultural differences affecting libraries and how library consultants should take those into consideration when trying to decide what kind of library that country needs.

Another area of interest expressed by participants in the first conference was information about

particular experiences—both from the point of view of consultants and from those persons in the developing country receiving the services. Hwa-Wei Lee, Ohio University, organized a panel presentation that included his presentation on recent library developments in the People's Republic of China. Zi-Wei Ma, library director at Beijing University, Hui-jie Chen, librarian at Fujian Teachers University, and Robert Houdek, Ohio University, described library developments from their perspectives. All of them discussed the progress to date in making library resources available and in cooperation among libraries in China. Abdul Kadir, Indonesian Centre for Scientific Documentation and Information, spoke about his experiences with consultants from the point of view of a librarian in a developing country.

The fourteen poster sessions provided a forum for the informal sharing of information about libraries and library exchange programs around the world including the Far East, South America, Africa, and Europe.

The evaluations of the conference by participants indicated a high level of satisfaction with the content of the conference in which there was a good blend of practical information and scholarly presentations, along with an opportunity to develop one's network in specific areas. There is a continuing need for a forum for persons in this area to share information and ideas. Conference attendees included librarians, faculty, researchers, consultants, and administrators which also added to the opportunities to share experiences across different fields of expertise.



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