

# Go global!

## Ten ways to play your role on the world stage

By Barbara J. Ford

It's no secret that ours is a small world—and getting smaller all the time. All you have to do is look around to see, hear, and taste the influence of world cultures on even the smallest campus.

As president of ALA, I am focusing on an area of great personal and professional concern—the role of libraries and librarians in the global village. The theme I have selected, “Libraries: Global Reach. Local Touch,” focuses on a unique and exciting aspect of what today's libraries offer: access to worldwide information resources and local accessibility.

Those of us in academic settings are especially aware of the need to prepare young people to live and work in a digital age, which releases us from geographic limitations as the basis for friendship, collaboration, commerce, and community. As librarians, we have a responsibility to facilitate the flow of communication. We understand how to organize and present information and how people use information once they have it.

Just as information easily crosses borders, our challenge now is to take a larger role on the world stage. ALA's participation in the Geneva copyright negotiations is a good example of how we can act on a larger stage to ensure a balanced and fair information doctrine.

When ALA holds its Annual Conference this summer in Washington, D.C., I will host several activities to promote greater international

understanding and awareness within our profession. These include a Diversity Fair, which will showcase examples of how America's libraries incorporate diversity in their services and programs. The fair will be Saturday, June 27, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Many academic libraries offer exciting programs such as the University of Arizona's digital exhibits designed to share the history and experiences of Tucson residents from various ethnic backgrounds (<http://dizzy.library.arizona.edu:80/images/diverse/diverse.html>).

An International Literacy Fair will showcase model literacy programs in the United States and around the world on Sunday, June 28, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. There will also be a first-ever panel of international librarians presenting papers on “New Ways to Serve the Library User: A Global Perspective” on Monday, June 29, from 8:30 to 11:00 a.m. Watch the ALA Web site at [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org) for updated information on these

and other Annual Conference programs.

Another exciting opportunity is the annual meeting of the International Federation of Library Agencies and Institutions, which will be held in August 2001 in Boston. But you don't have to wait until 2001 or even the next conference to “go global.” There are things that each of us can do in our libraries, starting most immediately with National Library Week, April 19–25 (see “Ten things you can do” on the next page). Please join me in “going global.”



### About the author

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## Ten things you can do to go global

**1. Celebrate National Library Week.** This year's event, April 19–25, features a global twist. For program ideas and publicity information, contact the ALA Public Information office for a free "Go Global" tip sheet or see the ALA Web page (<http://www.ala.org/GoGlobal!/index.html>). Colorful posters, bookmarks, and other promotional items feature the message "Global Reach. Local Touch. Connect@ the Library." For speedy delivery, order from ALA Graphics by calling (800) 545-2433, press 7.

**2. Celebrate America's diversity.** Reach out to community or campus groups reflecting other cultures and countries, and celebrate that diversity with speakers, exhibits, films, and special performances. Plan programs, displays, and fairs around international holidays, United Nations, and world commemorative days. Sponsor a series of lectures or slide shows on different countries or world regions. Invite a returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Library Fellow, Fulbright Scholar or others with international experience to speak. Watch the ALA Web page ([www.ala.org/work/international/tipsheet.html](http://www.ala.org/work/international/tipsheet.html)) for monthly suggestions of multicultural celebrations and programs.

**3. Expand and diversify** your library's collection of multicultural and multilingual materials. Add United Nations' materials and publications to your collection. Include materials on language learning. Host reading groups with an international focus.

**4. Broaden your online horizons.** The Internet provides exciting opportunities to connect to other cultures. Check out the recommended international sites on the ALA Web page. Provide lists of international libraries, United Nations, and other Web sites that promote learning about other countries, cultures, international travel, and global cooperation.

**5. Persuade policy-makers** that libraries are an investment in a more literate, productive, and globally competitive nation. Invite them to your library to see how students and people of all ages are getting help with their jobs and studies. Participate in state and national library legislative days. Encourage your state library association to offer advocacy training on how to deliver the message to the media, legislators, and other groups. For information, contact the ALA

Public Information Office ([pio@ala.org](mailto:pio@ala.org)) or see the ALA Web page ([www.ala.org/advocacy/](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/)).

**6. Learn more** about global information issues, such as copyright, and how they affect your library and libraries around the world. Become a member of ALA's International Relations Round Table or International Relations Committee. Become active in ALA divisions with a special focus on international issues such as preservation. Take advantage of free membership and newsletters of UNESCO's Network of Associated Libraries.

**7. Connect with libraries in other countries.** If your city has a sister city program, seek sponsorship for an exchange of library staff. Work with international library colleagues to organize a conference or training program or focus your state library conference on international issues. Plan now to attend the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) conference in 2001 in Boston. Contact World Wise Schools to connect to a Peace Corps volunteer.

**8. Leave home.** Join one of the ALA-organized delegations to international book fairs. Apply for a Fulbright Scholarship, overseas fellowship with the Women in Development Fellows Program, or other grants from organizations that support international librarianship. Join the Peace Corps, United Nations volunteers, or other international volunteer organizations.

**9. Support libraries overseas** by donating books, journals, and other materials to a donation program. Choose books with multicultural themes or role models in other countries to donate. Adopt an international library partner on your own or through IFLA. Become a resource person or correspondent with librarians or library school students abroad.

**10. Increase your global awareness.** Learn another language. Take a course in the literature, history, or culture of another country or region. Become a literacy volunteer to teach English as a second language to refugees and immigrants. Read more about the social, economic, political, health, and environmental issues affecting the world. Join a study tour abroad. Use your information skills to assist international human rights groups and promote intellectual freedom worldwide. ■