

OLA Quarterly

Library Wonders and Wanderings: Travels Near and Far



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**Upcoming
Issue**

Summer 2011
Vision 2020

Library Wonders and Wanderings: Travels Near and Far

Cover image:
Photo of author, Reita Fackerell,
outside the Cook Islands Library.



Introduction

When I first proposed an issue dedicated to library-related travels and wanderlust, I thought I would get tales of serendipitous library discoveries or of dragging long-suffering traveling companions into yet another musty old library. Amy Hutchinson, Director of the Lake County Library District echoed my thoughts when she sent me an email saying, “Anyone who has travelled with me at all in the last five years knows that I have two cultural institutions that are priority visits: the art museum, and the public library. And I can skip the art museum if I have to. My friends and family have sat and looked at magazines in libraries everywhere from Charlotte, North Carolina to Lander, Wyoming to Eugene, Oregon so that I could have the chance to walk through the library building and see what I could see. Libraries are as different as the communities that build them, and every library has at least one small treasure of an idea that I can learn from. I thank library staff everywhere for always putting your great ideas on display. I also thank my travelling companions for their patience.”

That’s it! The stories would be about stumbling upon a charming old library in New England while driving through autumn leaves on winding roads ... of taking a breather in the British Library only to discover Jane Austen’s writing desk and a 1215 copy of the *Magna Carta* ... of finding a tiny pastel public library while touring the Caribbean island of Bequia ...

However when the submissions started trickling in—then roaring in—I learned I was wrong, very wrong! I had to change the lens on the big old camera I was carrying around my neck to one that took in a much broader view.

These weren’t stories of serendipitous discovery, of pedestrian travelers. These were stories of passion, determination, philanthropy and dreams. These were individuals driven to discover and experience other parts of the world—sometimes quite remote—and for some, to fulfill their desire to work in libraries along the way. Not afraid to be conspicuous or considered an “outsider,” these library adventurers shared encouragement, frustrations, similarities, challenges, and sometimes even squid with their new acquaintances. Many did not know what to expect as they embarked on their journeys and they marveled, got goosebumps, and their hearts skipped a beat as they came to understand the proud history and common spirit alive in libraries worldwide. The positive impact made by the travelers and their hosts cemented the belief that libraries are important—whether they be on a remote island or in downtown Manhattan. The libraries visited were not just about books, but about culture and connection.

So this issue, which I had intended to be a lighter travel issue is much, MUCH more than that. It is testament to the adventurous spirit and devotion of library workers worldwide. Now when I wander I will still be drawn to libraries as some are pulled in by the lure of museums or cathedrals. But my personal intrigue with libraries is but a tiny fragment of the possibilities and wonders to be discovered in libraries around the world. I wish you happy travels as you wander through these stories of joy and wonderment.

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A Visit to the Dr. Seuss Archives at UC San Diego

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For more information on the collection, visit:
<http://tinyurl.com/cqdc43>



The Geisel Library at dusk, looking as if it is about to take off into outer space.



An original sculpture by Dr. Seuss.

About ten years ago when I was conducting research on Dr. Seuss, I discovered that his archives were housed at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) in La Jolla. Since then I've wanted to go visit the collection. Little did I know that my dream to visit would come true many years later as a member of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Special Collections and Bechtel Fellowship Committee. My committee had the opportunity to visit the Dr. Seuss archives during ALA Midwinter in January 2011.

Dr. Seuss, also known as Theodore Geisel, was a long time resident of La Jolla up until his death in 1991. He and his wife Audrey were long time supporters of UCSD libraries. It was his wish to donate his archive collection to the university, which was fulfilled by his wife in 1992. Thanks to other generous gifts from the Geisel's over the years, the main library

building on campus was named and dedicated the Geisel Library in December 1995. The building, designed by William Pereira in 1970 looks as if it's a spaceship ready to take off into orbit, or perhaps something that would of come out of a book on outer space, if Dr. Seuss had written one.

The librarian who served as our host displayed all of the materials and communications that were used from *Dr. Seuss' Sleep Book*. Every detail that was involved in the creation of the book was laid out from beginning to end. We saw the original drawings, sketches, proofs, and manuscript drafts for the book. It was interesting to see some of the edited artwork, which had notes and markings on it telling the printer what percentages of colors to use on each page. There were also files that went with the creation of the book that contained all of the written communication and letters between Dr. Seuss and his editors at Random House. I was amazed by the lengthy communication needed for publishing just one book!

The complete Dr. Seuss collection has approximately 8,500 items which date back to 1919, when he was in high school. The items are kept in special map drawers in a climate controlled storage room, along with materials from other special collections housed by the library. The drawers contain the contents from each of Dr. Seuss' books: original artwork, text, communication with his publisher, and other related materials. I even got to take a peek at the original artwork from *The Seven Lady Godivas*, baring their backsides. The collection also contains audio and videotapes, photographs, sculptures, his commercial art, political cartoons from World War II, and other memorabilia. A most impressive piece was the pages from one of his college notebooks decorated with doodles in the margins. A special library display is created annually on the anniversary of Dr. Seuss' birthday, March 2nd. 🌿



Canyon Wonderment:


Travels of a Ranger Librarian

by **Jenny Gapp**
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As I stood marveling at what is arguably the world's most famous chasm, a fork of lightning briefly illuminated the dark Arizona sky. Goosebumps (or was it the electrified air?) sent a shiver of the present through me, a reminder that my temporary role as a “flat hat” librarian for the National Park Service was quite real. During the summer of 2010 I spent eight weeks in Grand Canyon National Park participating in their Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Program, or in my case, Librarian-Ranger-Librarian, as administered by GCNP Research Librarian, Betty Upchurch. Betty, a former school librarian herself, has designed the recurring position specifically for K–12 information specialists and educators. Using titles like *Snail Girl Brings Water: A Navajo Story*, by Geri Keams (1998), I crafted lesson plans, annotated bibliographies, and pathfinders in collaboration with the Environmental Education Department; philosopher John Dewey at my shoulder, “if knowledge comes from the impressions made upon us by natural objects, it is impossible to procure knowledge without the use of objects which impress the mind.” The collective jaw-dropping that occurs on the South Rim each day serves as evidence that people are being impressed.

Storytime Adventure, a ranger-led program on the lawn of the El Tovar Hotel was undoubtedly the most revelatory part of the two months. Through Socratic dialogue we discovered truths about the landscape and ourselves. While investigating some elk scat with a kid from Greece and a kid from Scottsdale I was struck by how libraries near and far are place magnets for local culture and natural objects, a wonderment of special collections defined by demographics and environment. We would do well to embrace the “Grand Canyon” in our home collections—at Valley that would be nuns, prayers, and SATs—becoming experts on how to acquire and borrow those tactile objects that will illuminate people, places, and ideas for our patrons.

I was lucky (or crazy) enough to do a Rim to Rim backpack in early July, which truly solidified the magic ... and danger of the canyon. Three people perished in the canyon on the weekend of my trek—an imperative to do your research if there ever was one. I took day hikes through the ponderosa, learned to avoid tourist traps, pondered the logic of Library of Congress cutter numbers, gazed at the Perseid shower, and did plenty of adult reading for myself, including a must for Oregonians visiting the desert, *Getting Over the Color Green: Contemporary environmental literature of the Southwest*, edited by Scott Slovic (2001).

Stationed in a quiet corner of the Park Headquarters courtyard I met people from Germany, Seychelles, and Chile. British tourists slipped in to escape the heat and post travel photos on Facebook, a French family relaxed after a day of hiking with a nature program in the AV room, and several Jamaican youth, employed by Xanterra in the capacity of food service and hotel launderers, solicited my assistance in making online travel plans. NPS employees, interns, and Grand Canyon Association members contacted the library daily in search of histories, environmental impact statements, and scholarly journal articles. With a collection of 12,000 items on the park itself and the larger intermountain region, I handled interlibrary loan requests from as close as Sedona and as unlikely as the Library at Disney's Animal Kingdom in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Can't afford a trip to The Canyon this year? Request an ILL on the exploits of the Kolb Brothers, John Wesley Powell's epic voyage, or a biography of architect Mary Colter while you plot an exchange, sabbatical, or summer adventure of your own. 



GCNP Research Library
<http://tinyurl.com/6tw9ln>

NPS Teacher Ranger
Teacher Program
<http://tinyurl.com/66afabz>

More on the author's travels
<http://tinyurl.com/5toublk>



Librarians Tour of Scotland

by **Carolee Hirsch**
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BLAAAAAT! What th...? I fumble the alarm clock off, but the noise continues BLAAAAAT! If we were at home, I'd think the library was having a fire drill. But it's 4 a.m. in a University of Edinburgh dormitory, and BLAAAAAT! It is a fire alarm!

My roommate Jennifer and I pull blankets around our shoulders and head outside with all the teens who are here for a swim competition. A few teens obviously have not yet been to bed. One young man shivering in his boxers obviously had been deeply asleep.

Jennifer and I are not teenage swimmers. We are middle-aged librarians on a Librarians Tour to Scotland, led by Jane Pearlmutter, of the University of Wisconsin library school. For the next two weeks we visit traditional tourist sites, such as Edinburgh Castle and Rosslyn Chapel. But we also tour libraries, such as the modern Mitchell Library in Glasgow and Sir Walter Scott's personal collection in his home Abbotsford. Down a lane through a pasture where tree branches scrape the top of our bus, we find the lovely Innerpefferay Library, Scotland's first public library. In the 1600s when the library opened, this was the main road across Scotland. We gaze at early books and then at the librarian's new little daughter while his wife serves us tea and cookies.

But first, a few hours after that early fire alarm, triggered by a forbidden cigarette too close to a smoke detector, we tour the National Library of Scotland. In an elegant paneled room, scholars in mandatory white gloves examine rare books propped on special stands. We learn the process for requesting admission to this reading room and for requesting materials from the closed stacks. Then we are led down into the depths of the decidedly utilitarian closed stacks. Our guide is explaining that in order to make best use of the limited space, the books are organized by size, when BLAAAAAT! The guide is terribly polite and embarrassed, but we must evacuate the building due to a fire alarm. Visiting libraries, like all travel, can be full of surprises. That's why we go. 🌿



Jane Pearlmutter combines her passions for travel and librarianship by leading library tours abroad. It is probably too late to sign up for the Librarians Tour to Germany in 2011, but to receive information about future tours, you may contact her at:

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Bibliotekistan:

A Tour of Libraries in Kyrgyzstan

by Jane Salisbury
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Six years ago, I would have been hard-pressed to point to Kyrgyzstan on a map, let alone put all those consonants in anything like the proper order. Central Asia conjured hazy pictures of horses riding across high plains with enormous mountains in the distance. But I was lucky enough to find out not only where Kyrgyzstan is and how to spell it, but to spend two weeks exploring this wonderful country in the company of a lively group of dedicated librarians. And yes, there are horses riding across the plains against a backdrop of stunning mountains.

In the fall of 2005, I went to Kyrgyzstan in the good company of librarians Daniel Peterson and Christine Hanolsy from the World Affairs Council. We were invited to visit the Kyrgyz librarians who had come to Oregon in 2004, as part of the World Affairs Council of Oregon's *Community Connections* program, which brought professionals from Eurasia to the U.S. to learn about American communities, businesses, and organizations.

Kyrgyzstan is the smallest of several Central Asian republics that were part of the Soviet Union in "former times" as our Kyrgyz friends call them; times that seem to loom very large over the present. Its longest borders are with China and Kazakhstan; the majority of the population are Kyrgyz Muslims. There has been a nomadic culture, and to some extent, it is still. But there is a great interest in education, libraries and preservation of their proud history, even when that means establishing more Western-influenced institutions.

Our itinerary took us as far away from Oregon as one can possibly go, I thought. It took the better part of two days to get to Bishkek, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan, on this route: Portland-Cincinnati-New York-Istanbul-Bishkek.

Our layover in Istanbul was long enough for us to tear into the city with a manic taxi driver and spend a few hours walking little cobblestone streets, past rug shops and tea shops



Young performers at the Uzgen Library.



and beautiful little doorways near the Blue Mosque. This was the first time I heard the call to prayer echoing, a beautiful sound we were to hear many more times.

The drill each day was to visit libraries, but they varied from visits with higher-ups at places like the Humanities University to homey tours of small town libraries, complete with singing and dancing. Daniel and Christine, thankfully, both speak Russian, but in some places there was a need for triple translation, from Kyrgyz to Russian to English. They were terrific traveling companions, with great language and people skills, and in Daniel's case, very useful and entertaining juggling expertise, which came in handy more than once.



Daniel Peterson juggling for our hosts.

Libraries in Kyrgyzstan are typically closed-stack education-oriented institutions, with some computer and Internet access. Part of the mission of the Kyrgyz visitors to Oregon was to learn more about American public libraries. What they accomplished in the interim before we came to visit was truly remarkable. Two things really stood out: the creation of children's rooms with books and programming, and the opening of public law libraries. In the post-Soviet world of Kyrgyzstan, this represents huge progress, promoting the idea that citizens may do research and learn about the workings of the government, freely.

When we had finished touring university and government libraries in Bishkek, we began a long road trip through the country. Travelling in the company of some of our host librarians, our eventual destination was the city of Osh, where the program alumni were converging for a conference in which we were presenting.

We set out for Jalal-Abad, very early in the morning, driving towards the mountains in a large van. A few kilometers down the road, our hostesses explained with great glee that we each had to drink 100 grams of vodka to celebrate the beginning of our trip. Out came a brand spanking new bottle of vodka and glasses and there we were, careening down the road, drinking vodka from an open bottle. This was daunting to me at first. But it began to



seem normal when done in the company of six or seven mostly middle-aged librarians! Out came chicken and bread and tomatoes, and it was party on. All of this started well before 9 a.m. and went on for quite a while.

As we drove up into the gorgeous mountains, we encountered jagged peaks, small glaciers and patches of snow and steep switchbacks. Yurts were sprinkled across the landscape, along with Soviet-era train cars with families living in them. These families were selling honey and koumiss, a fermented mare's milk. Men and boys on horses along with herds of goats and sheep roamed meadows crossed by clean rushing rivers. Everywhere there were donkey carts and burros walking along with women and children. We stopped to rest beside a stream tumbling down a hillside, and out came a picnic of mutton, sausage bread, grapes, vodka and bottled water—just a snack.



A family selling fermented mare's milk on the roadside.

One of our first stops was the Toktugul Cultural Center, which houses the Toktugul Library, named after a revolutionary songwriter and singer beloved throughout Kyrgyzstan. A fabulously dressed welcoming band of singers and musicians greeted us, and beautiful children handed us bouquets of flowers. The singing was wonderful: lively harmonies accompanied by accordion and the komuz, the three-stringed local instrument.

They had been told not to prepare a feast or even lunch, because we were stopping later for lunch. Hospitality is essential and extraordinary in Kyrgyzstan, so that request was very enthusiastically ignored. Inside there were long tables set in a u-shape, with the three of us in the place of honor. Piles of beautiful bread and fried pastries, bowls of perfect apples and grapes, wild honey, special jams made from wild berries, tea and vodka were on the tables. This was overwhelming enough, but the grand finale was an array of dishes made from the sheep they had killed in our honor, including the head for Daniel, as the honored man in our delegation.



As we ate, we were entertained with a wonderful concert. Women in brilliant costumes and hats decorated with fur and plumes sang to us and there was a fantastic performance by a 10-year-old girl who is an accomplished singer of Kyrgyz traditional songs, accompanied by her father on the komuz.

We spent the next week traveling throughout the country, greeted like royalty everywhere we went, touring libraries and enjoying our conversations with librarians along the way. Schoolchildren and townspeople performed for us in many places, singing in their full-throated style, dressed in lavish costumes, the men always in some variation of the traditional Kyrgyz white wool felt conical hat. At every stop there were feasts for us, their honored guests, some of them served in beautifully carpeted traditional yurts.

A few generalizations can be made about the libraries that we saw in Kyrgyzstan. Many of the libraries had computers, but Internet access was not universal, or at least it wasn't in 2005. Computerized catalogs were coming, but slowly, and for the most part they were still using hand-written cards in card catalogs. They don't use Dewey Decimal, but a Russian classification called BBK. Most libraries have books in Russian and Kyrgyz, the two official languages, and usually a small collection of books in other languages. The further south you go, the more prevalent the Kyrgyz language. In Bishkek, most people, even ethnic Kyrgyz, speak Russian first.

Two libraries stand out in my memory as stellar examples of what these dedicated, passionate women had accomplished. One was in the sad town of Mailuu-Suu. In "former times," during the Soviet era, it was the site of a uranium mine and very important in the development of the atomic bomb for the USSR. But that time has ended and the town is struggling, even though it has a large light bulb factory. It is now one of the most polluted places on earth, but its residents have few choices, other than to emigrate to Russia for work, as reported by NPR: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18666435>.



Guests at a library grand opening – note the Kyrgyz headgear.





Christine, Daniel and I chronicled our trip in *Bibliotekistan: The Great Silk Blog*, which is available here: <http://tinyurl.com/66yz8ar>



Children enjoying their new library.

We met Valentin, the English teacher, who had studied in the U.S. and who told us about the 700 students in the school and how he is able to teach them with almost no resources. Their English textbooks were almost completely disintegrated, repaired over and over, and dated from the Soviet era, complete with references to Lenin. Ludmila, the librarian who joined our group here, showed us around and gave us tea and cookies. She had managed to create a colorful and welcoming place in their school library, with very little but hope and ingenuity.

The other library was in a village in the Osh region, where one of the alumni from the trip to Oregon, Myrzaim, had done wonders to create a beautiful and welcoming children's room in the village library. Myrzaim had raised about 800,000 soms (\$20,000) from her local community, as well as some grant money from various sources to rebuild the library itself. We were at the ribbon cutting ceremony; in fact, Christine cut the ribbon with the town mayor! Myrzaim credited her success to her U.S. trip in 2004, where she was completely entranced with the Multnomah County Central Library's Children's Room. The highlight of this day was when a flock of very young children, their faces outlined by huge cutout sunflowers, marched out to sing to us.

In both places, and indeed, all of the places we visited in Kyrgyzstan, I was deeply moved by the joy these librarians took in their work and their dedication to the idea that libraries are important. They are really making wonderful use of what they learned in the West to preserve their own language and culture, and to seize the relative freedom of the post-Soviet era. 🌻



A Librarian in the Land of the Pharaohs

by Joan Petit

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In the summer of 2007, my husband and I packed up our house, our kids, and our cat and moved from Carrboro, North Carolina to Cairo, Egypt, where I was to spend the next two years working as Reference and Instruction Librarian at the American University in Cairo (AUC). While it was a big transition for my family, the university worked hard to make it as seamless as possible. They arranged for a shipment of 17 boxes of our most important possessions (including bikes, clothes, and toys) to Egypt. And when we arrived at the Cairo airport, where the hot, dry air was a refreshing change from the humidity we left behind in North Carolina, we were met by a friendly AUC employee who presented us with an envelope bursting with Egyptian currency and escorted us through immigration and customs to a waiting van and driver. The city lights twinkled as we drove to a furnished apartment in Maadi, a Cairo suburb. The shiny, bright, air-conditioned apartment on the 7th floor offered us extensive city views, three bedrooms, a bath and a half, and a comfortable home for our family. It even came stocked with cereal, bread, chicken, eggs, and milk, so we didn't have to venture out too soon. And thus began our adventure in Cairo.

Truthfully, working at the American University in Cairo was not all that different from working at a private American university. The classes were conducted in English; the students were mostly from wealthy families and were well-traveled; the professors griped about their students; the students always needed staplers—that is, when they weren't updating Facebook. But of course, there were big differences from American campuses. My students were primarily Egyptian and most spoke English and Arabic; most were Muslim, though of varying degrees of religious observance; and most lived at home. Many had their own cars and drivers. And many had attended high schools without libraries or research assignments.

As Instruction and Reference Librarian, I had responsibilities in several areas, including reference and collection development for my liaison departments. My primary role was to teach and help coordinate LALT 101, the required information literacy class. Students typically took (or tested out of) this class in their first or second year at AUC. The class met once a week for an hour, and we had about 11 class meetings during a typical semester; I taught two or three sections of 20–30 students each semester. The course was intended to teach information literacy skills, including library research and critical thinking; this was a particular challenge given students' lack of familiarity with libraries. At the beginning of each semester, I was always filled with great hope and anticipation; by the end of the semester, it sometimes felt like I had failed to do all that I wanted—a common scenario for many librarians in instruction sessions all around the world.

Fortunately, at the AUC Library, we were able to experiment. My first year in Cairo was the University's last year at its historic downtown campus (located on Tahrir Square, the site of early 2011 large-scale protests in Cairo). AUC was bursting at the seams downtown, and, in fall of 2008, relocated most operations to a large new campus east of the city in "New Cairo," formerly the desert. The new campus felt more like a typical American university with large plazas, purpose-built buildings, a student recreation center and pool, and dining halls, complemented by beautiful Arabic-influenced architecture and design (think granite, lots of granite). The air was cleaner and cooler. What we gained in amenities, however, we lost in convenience, as the new campus was many miles from downtown Cairo, and a particularly irksome commute given Cairo's inadequate highways. Cairo ranks with Delhi and similar cities for traffic congestion and pollution.

But perhaps because of this big transition, we also made some big transitions with LALT 101. We incorporated student blogging into weekly assignments and moved the



course materials into a wiki (<http://lalt.wetpaint.com>). Students loved blogging, even about benign issues like library research. They seemed to learn better and retain information longer. The blogging experiment continues at AUC, with great success.

The bigger transition for my family was cultural. We moved from a college town to a city of 19 million people. Even though we lived in a Cairo suburb, our neighborhood felt urban to us, with high-rise apartment buildings dominating the new developments. A welcome change for us included our employment of a part-time housekeeper and nanny, a lovely Ethiopian woman who worked for us for two years. She cleaned our house, did the laundry, cooked us dinner, and watched the kids. When my husband started working a few months after our arrival, we hired her full-time, and she picked up the kids after school. My house has never been so clean and my clothes so freshly pressed. And all this for \$500 a month—a salary that our Egyptian and expatriate friends considered exorbitant.

We also were very conspicuous in Cairo—not because we were Americans, but because my family is multiracial. My husband and I, who are white, adopted our children, who were born in Ethiopia, and formal adoption is uncommon in Egypt, as in most of Islam. More than once, strangers stopped us on the street to say, “Is this your son?” “Yes,” we answered. “But he’s black!” they’d inform us (as if we didn’t know!). In this case, it was an advantage not to speak Arabic; a friend of mine, an adoptive mother and fluent Arabic-speaker, heard terrible things said about her family by some Egyptians. I’m very glad my children couldn’t understand these comments.

Otherwise, though, life in Cairo was good. We felt very safe, even at night. We joined an American expat club with a pool, restaurant, and tennis courts, which felt especially luxuri-




Author and her family at the Great Pyramids.



ous given Cairo's lack of public parks and open spaces. We spent many evenings and most weekends at the club, visiting with friends, swimming, eating, and relaxing. We weren't rich (is any librarian anywhere?), but we were comfortable. We visited the Great Pyramids at Giza; we crept down into the Red Pyramid at Dashur, near the original Memphis. We went to Alexandria and visited an ancient Roman coliseum and gazed at the turquoise Mediterranean from the plaza outside the newly rebuilt Bibliotheca Alexandrina. We took a few trips to the Sinai Peninsula: we saw the (not) burning bush at St. Catherine's and snorkeled over incredible coral reefs where my kids joyfully shouted "Nemo!" every time they saw a clownfish. I also visited the White Desert, miles from any sea but dotted with prehistoric shell fossils.

And perhaps most interestingly, we experienced immersion in an Islamic culture. We were in Egypt twice during Ramadan, the Muslim Holy Month when Egyptians fast during the day and spend evenings with their families, eating huge meals and watching special Ramadan soap operas; and we loved the joyful holiday afterwards, when children proudly wear their new clothes and celebrate with their friends. Living in Egypt, I learned more than I ever could have studied on my own about the tenuous politics in the Middle East. I saw the joy of Egyptians when Barack Obama was elected and George Bush left office. And I gained a new perspective on my home, the U.S., from beyond the North American continent.

This insight has particularly helped me understand the recent popular uprising in Egypt against Hosni Mubarak, which has been raging for a week as I write this in late January. I've been concerned about our Egyptian and expat friends, though many feel safe and have chosen to stay. I am also very hopeful for the Egyptian people.

People often ask what took us overseas, and my husband and I don't have a convincing answer other than, "It seemed like a good idea at the time." And it was a great idea—even when Cairo was infuriating, with its pollution and overcrowded streets—we never, for one moment, regretted moving there with our two young children. My kids rode camels around the Pyramids when they were two and four years old; they swam in the Red Sea; and they interacted with people from around the world. The pollution and the complications for our multiracial family brought us back to the US—and we're all happily settling into Portland—but with a much better sense of the world and our place in it. 



Note From the Author

If you'd like to learn more about how to find a librarian position overseas, please read the articles I wrote for LIScareer.com:

Petit, Joan. "Working Overseas in a School or Academic Library." LIScareer.com. April 2010.
http://liscareer.com/petit_overseas_academic.htm

Petit, Joan. "Working Overseas as a Librarian for the United States or Non-governmental Organizations." LIScareer.com. June 2010.
http://liscareer.com/petit_overseas_gov.htm



Muli bwanji? How are you? Volunteering at a Health Resource Center in Zambia

by Kimberly Pendell
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Social Sciences Librarian
Portland State University Library

In October 2009, my fiancé, Craig, and I moved from Chicago to Lusaka, Zambia for six months. Craig had been working for World Bicycle Relief (WBR) as a product manager for over two years. WBR is a non-profit whose primary operations are in Zambia, supplying other non-profits with bicycles to support existing health care and education programs. I was an Information Services Librarian in the health sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago. We both felt it was time to move on from Chicago, and WBR wanted Craig to live in Zambia full time. Over drinks one night at our neighborhood bar, we decided to make the move. I finished up some projects at work, resigned from my position, put most of my belongings in storage, and successfully pleaded with my sister to take care of my cat.

Craig had already taken several long trips to Lusaka, and I'm an experienced traveler myself. Most of my travel has been in developing countries, places like Bolivia, Nepal, and Cambodia. But I had always been a backpacker, easily moving from place to place; committing to day-to-day living in another country was a new challenge.

Lusaka is a sprawling city of over one million people, where long roads connect neighborhood compounds, sprawling markets, and farms. Overall, the architecture of Lusaka is simple and suburban in character; most of the downtown district is comprised of one-story concrete buildings. Many residents of Lusaka live in densely populated compounds, often with irregular sources of water, electricity, or health care services. Upper class Zambians and expatriates (expats) are more likely to live in houses, which are circumscribed by high walls and guarded gates.

Craig and I lived a few miles out of the city, in a cottage apartment on a large, gated estate owned by a British and Zambian couple. Each morning, we traveled along Leopard's Hill Road, bustling with men and women going to their office jobs in the city. Many other women headed away from the city to farms, walking on the roadside in their brightly printed *chitenge* wrap skirts, hand hoe slung over their shoulder and often a child on their back.

And here our life was mostly normal, but with the underlying awareness of being an outsider. Craig and I spent a lot of time stuck in traffic, minivan buses packed with passengers zooming by us on the unpaved shoulder of the road. We shopped for groceries at one of the big South-African owned grocery stores full of familiar items, except for the barrel of dried caterpillars in the bulk food section. I went to the local open-air market as often as possible for fresh produce or bartered with women for tomatoes and onions on the dusty roadside. We went to parties at friends' houses, and swam in backyard pools. We even went to yoga classes three days a week at the Alliance Française, the quasi-official meeting place of expats in Lusaka.

One major difference in our day-to-day living was our maid, Liz. I was reluctant to have a maid at first, uncomfortable at the thought of someone else washing our dishes and laundry. It seemed like such an undeserved luxury. But, as many friends pointed out, we were providing valuable employment to Liz, and turning down her service would be a hardship for her family.

We also travelled outside of Lusaka when Craig's work schedule allowed. We visited Victoria Falls twice, once in dry season and once in rainy season. During the dry season visit, we swam in the Devil's Pool at the very edge of the falls—a 350-foot drop into the mist. Another extraordinary adventure was our camping trip to the Lower Zambezi. We camped near the river during dry season, where there were an incredible number of animals nearby, including herds of elephants. I was particularly nervous when a few elephants moved into our campground in the middle of the night to eat from the surrounding trees. I could hear



each elephant munching on fruit, less than five feet from our tent. Monkeys also arrived in camp, stealing our bread and fruit whenever we had our backs turned. Making a meal required an extra person to stand guard against the quick moving monkeys, occasionally whacking a large stick on the ground for added “stay away” emphasis. Thankfully, none of the local hippos or crocodiles decided to visit.



Local elephant.



Group at the Devil's Pool.

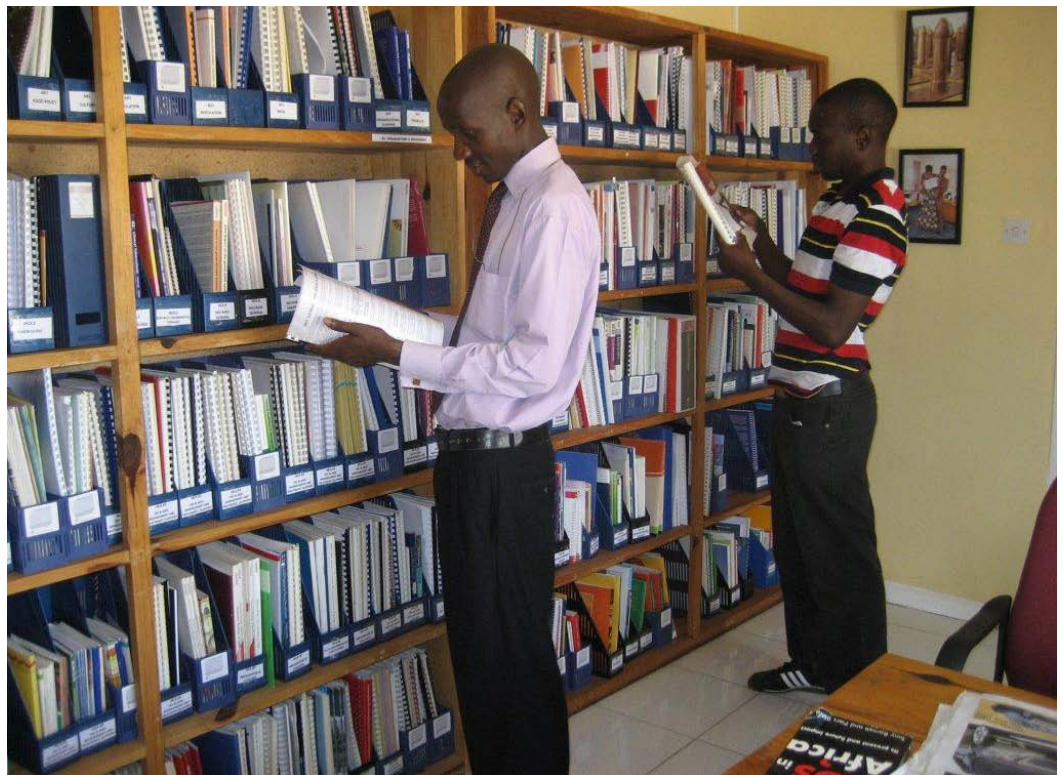


We adjusted to this new normal, swimming in waterfalls, employing a maid, and taking our place in Zambia's international community of expats.

Once we settled in, I was eager to volunteer at a local organization where my library skills would be of use. Luckily, rumor spread quickly through the expat community that there was a librarian in town. The executive director of Afya Mzuri, a Zambian non-governmental organization (NGO), soon contacted me, and I become a volunteer librarian at the Dziwani Knowledge Center for Health.

For almost ten years, Afya Mzuri ("good health" in Swahili) has been providing HIV/AIDS related workplace and behavior change trainings, as well as collecting, managing, and disseminating HIV/AIDS information. The Dziwani Knowledge Center for Health houses the reference and media collections, Internet cafe, and media viewing room. Dziwani also acts as the collection and distribution site of the Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials archive. I volunteered at Dziwani for the duration of my time in Zambia, working closely with Zambian staff to build their Web site (<http://www.afyamzuri.org.zm/dziwani/>) and organize the IEC archive.

Dr. Alison Matutu is the executive director of Afya Mzuri; she oversees 13 staff between Dziwani, workplace trainers, and administrative staff. Dziwani has a Resource Center Coordinator, a Resource Center Officer, an IT manager, and one or two volunteers. Kangwa Nkonge, the Coordinator; Wilson Bwalya, the Officer; and Paul Phiri, a fellow volunteer, are all graduates of the University of Zambia's bachelor degree program in library science. Just like here in the States, it can be difficult in Zambia to find entry-level library positions, so Paul volunteered full-time for several months as a cataloger in order to get valuable experience on his resume.



Dziwani reference collection.



The reference collection at Dziwani is comprised of donated books and reports from various health related NGOs and government agencies. When a large program contract has ended, departing staff bring over boxes of materials that must be sorted, selected, and cataloged. Many materials are quite old when judged from the perspective of a health sciences librarian in the States, but it's difficult to disregard the value of these materials when viewed in context of a sparse collection and extensive local need for accurate information. At our department meetings, we worked to update and formalize collection development criteria that would better assist Kangwa and Paul in selecting from the many boxes of donated materials. Dziwani is also working to broaden its collection beyond HIV/AIDS into other important local concerns such as malaria, tuberculosis, and maternal and child health.

Culturally appropriate and effectively targeted health promotion materials are valuable. Unfortunately, many health programs have spent time and money in creating similar materials. In an effort to lessen the duplication of effort, Dziwani established an archive of IEC materials. The archive includes handbooks, posters, pamphlets, videos, and audio recordings. The IEC archive materials were developed, tested and validated for use within Zambia. Most materials are available in the seven primary tribal languages and English. A previous volunteer had accomplished the task of obtaining copyright permissions to reproduce many of the materials. I worked on organizing the archive by material creator, matching materials with their digital master files, and establishing a workflow for the entry of materials into Dziwani's catalog. The archive is steadily becoming an important resource to health and community organizations in Zambia, with one or two requests each week for materials.

While working with the archive, I often browsed the handbooks or watched the short videos. One video from a malaria prevention campaign told the story of a mother who brought home a mosquito net for her child's bed. When the father sees the net, he is tempted to use it to catch fish instead. A debate ensues, and the mother successfully explains why it is so important to use the net for the bed, not fishing. Paul explained that this is a common issue in Zambian villages as resources are often appropriated for another use. Catching fish to eat and sell at the market might well outweigh the less immediate threat of malaria. This is one example of how poverty shapes the choices made by many Zambians.

Many librarians around the world will recognize some of the challenges faced by Dziwani, if perhaps on a different scale. The Center has no funding for collection development, not enough space to grow (a shipping container currently acts as the storage room for distribution materials), and intermittent Internet outages on an already inadequate connection. One of the biggest challenges Dr. Matutu faces as the executive director is the forever shifting nature of her budget and staff. Contracts begin and end, often times with gaps or delays in between. Also, donors often prefer to fund onetime costs, like equipment, rather than recurring costs, like staff salaries. Keeping skilled staff is difficult when their jobs are insecure due to funding.

Still, the organization is doing a remarkable job serving Zambia's many health promotion programs by providing access to research and materials. Any Zambian may use the reference and media collections, as well as the Internet café. From my impression, public access to research information is fairly rare in Zambia. When developing the Dziwani Web site, I built upon Dziwani's commitment to access by integrating a PubMed Central search form on each of the health topic pages, creating a direct link from their Web site to full text journal articles. I also successfully applied for an account with HINARI, the World Health



Organization program that provides organizations in developing countries free access to an array of health sciences research journals.

International volunteers are valued at Dziwani for their ability to share their expertise with local staff. Zambian staff members are less likely to have experience in a digital environment, and the presence of experienced volunteers can help build local capacity in areas such as digitization of materials and Web site development. Dr. Matutu recently reported that the organization has expanded their international volunteer program. Currently, a German is volunteering, along with a Peace Corps worker, and a volunteer from Japan will soon join them.

Volunteering at Dziwani gave me the opportunity to connect with Zambians professionally and personally. We talked about library science programs, discussed the frustrations of Internet outages and server crashes, and developed a style guide for the blog. Paul and I became friends, passing our time talking about Zambian and American politics while cataloging archive materials. Paul had fun trying to teach me phrases in Nyanja, and we made endless jokes out of my responding to any question with “*ile che*” (“it’s cool”). On my last day at Dziwani, the staff presented me with a beautiful *chitenge*, and I was honored that they had considered me a colleague for those six months. 🌿



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New York! New York!

by **Judith Norton**

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Introduction

“New York, New York, a wonderful town!” (Comden & Green, 1942), full of museums, performance halls—and libraries. Most people know about the main branch of the New York Public Library (NYPL), with its iconic lions, Patience and Fortitude, flanking the broad steps to the entrance. But New York City (NYC) has other libraries open to the public. These hidden gems often escape the notice of the casual visitor. In particular, there are two libraries, in addition to NYPL, that are well worth visiting if you have an extra day or so in NYC.

The New York Public Library

History

By the 1850s, NYC was a bustling metropolis with a population larger than Paris. Civic leaders dreamt of a future New York replete with the cultural riches worthy of such a great city. NYC already had two quasi-public libraries. John Jacob Astor established the Astor Library in 1849, primarily for research purposes. Later, in 1871, James Lenox opened his private library of rare books to scholars and bibliophiles, although access was limited. By the early 1890s, both libraries were struggling to maintain their collections and services. Meanwhile, in 1886, Samuel Tilden, a former governor of New York State, bequeathed NYC almost \$2.5 million dollars to be used to establish a “free library and reading room in the city of New York” (New York Public Library, 2011).

With these resources in place, plans moved ahead to merge Astor’s and Lenox’s libraries with Tilden’s trust fund and create a new entity: The New York Public Library. The organizers of the new library envisioned a landmark building, to include a capacious reading room and seven floors of stacks. The beautiful marble building opened to the public in 1911, sixteen years after initial planning began (Reed, 1986). The architecture reflects the vision the creators had of “library as temple of learning.” As Reed writes, “one cannot imagine New York without it” (1986, p.x i).



Patience, one of two lions flanking the main entrance to the New York Public Library.



Visiting

Even if you choose not to poke into the collections (many of which require making advance arrangements), the building itself is worth taking time to meander through. Astor Hall is the main lobby, a vast vaulted space with wide stairs flanking each side that lead up to various exhibit and collection rooms. The Main Reading Room is not to be missed. Reference books on two levels line the massive space. Soaring windows, huge chandeliers, and brass table lamps provide illumination for readers. The Gottesman Exhibition Hall showcases collection highlights. During my last visit, books, letters and small personal objects from the Romanov Dynasty (the last imperial house to rule Russia) were poignantly displayed.

The Frick Art Reference Library

History

Henry Clay Frick was a successful 19th century industrialist who was notorious for his ill treatment of workers (Emma Goldman was involved in an assassination plot against him). He used his enormous wealth to support his passion: art collecting. By 1905, Frick's collection had grown to such an extent that he began to scout for land in NYC to build a house where he could display his treasures. He soon acquired a building at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 70th Street.

But Frick could not start work on his house until the construction of the new branch of the New York Public Library was completed. Why would this be? Remember our bibliophilic philanthropist, James Lenox? His original library was sited at this very location! Lenox's collection first had to be transferred to the new NYPL before demolition. Additionally, Lenox's will specified that any use of the land must include a library. Perhaps these restrictions planted a seed in Frick's mind, as within a year after moving into the new house, he stated that he wanted his extensive collections available to the public in order "to encourage and develop the study of fine arts, and to advance the general knowledge of kindred subjects" (Bailey, 2006, p.93).



The Main Reading Room of the New York Public Library is a popular space for quiet study ... and other mysterious activities. Check out this YouTube!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKB7zfopiUA>



Soon after Frick's death in 1919, his daughter, Helen Clay Frick, founded the library in her father's memory. At first, the library was located in the home's bowling alley, but within four years, the collection moved to a newly constructed building on the site. This building soon proved inadequate for the growing collections and plans were made to construct a thirteen-story library. The current building, immediately adjacent to the Frick Museum, officially opened to the public in 1935 and still houses the collections today.



The serene reading room at the Frick Art Reference Library.

The library's collections focus on European and American art from the fourth through the twentieth century. The library holds over 285,000 monographs, and currently subscribes to 750 journals. Regular exhibits include artists' sketchbooks, catalogs dating back to the eighteenth century, and other unique ephemera, with a special emphasis on the history of collecting in America.

Visiting

Unlike many special research libraries that restrict access to credentialed scholars, the Frick Art Reference Library is open to any adult with a "serious interest in art" (Frick Collection, 2011). If you are visiting the library for the first time, bring photo ID and arrive before 3 p.m. on weekdays;

11 a.m. on Saturdays. Registration is painless, especially if you present your library employee ID. Exhibitions showcase the library's extensive holdings and change regularly. After browsing the stacks, the reading room is an ideal place to relax and leaf through books filled with glorious art plates.



Exhibit at the Frick Art Reference Library.



The Pierpont Morgan Library & Museum

History

John Pierpont Morgan was born into a banking family in 1837, and leveraged his background and connections to become a wealthy financier. By the early 1890s, he was one of the United States' most prominent citizens, both lauded and hated. Morgan started to collect books, paintings, and other art objects at an early age. In 1902, his home no longer had the space to contain all his literary materials, so he commissioned a library to be built adjacent to his residence. The design was inspired by the European model of a gentleman's library. There is evidence that from early on, Morgan planned that his collections would be made "permanently available for the instruction and pleasure of the American people" (Pierpont Morgan Library, 2000, p.18).



The original Morgan library, now the East Room.

Morgan had a particular interest in the history of the physical book, so the library's collection holds special interest for those of us that still love to cradle a book in our hands. Other highlights include ancient seals, tablets, papyrus fragments, medieval codices, and an extensive array of American first editions. The library also holds a substantial collection of early children's books. Of particular note are three copies of the Gutenberg Bible.

Visiting

Any visit to the Morgan Library & Museum must include a stop at the East Room, originally Morgan's personal library. The room evokes past splendors, with its rich walnut bookshelves that stretch three stories high, beautiful painted ceiling, and hidden staircases. Exhibits change regularly, but always include a representative sample of the library's extraordinary holdings. During my last visit, among the items on display were the following: a Gutenberg Bible; an autographed manuscript of Mozart's Symphony no. 35 in D Major ("Haffner"); and a Queen of Swords tarot card originally owned by the Visconti-Sforza Family circa 1450.




A Day at the Libraries

Manhattan is a city for walkers, and there are few cities in the world where you can sample such a rich array of cultural institutions within a two-mile stretch. You might begin your day starting with the Morgan Library at Madison and 36th Street. From the Morgan, it is only a few short blocks to the New York Public Library. After enjoying the splendor of the NYPL, and perhaps a bite of lunch, it's time to stroll up Fifth Avenue. Depending on when you visit, you may catch a parade. Regardless, this section of Fifth Avenue provides great window shopping, including Cartier, Tiffany & Co., Prada, and Versace. Apple's flagship store beckons to those less interested in glitz and fashion. Further up, you will pass the Washington Plaza Hotel, cross 59th Street over to the east side of Central Park and soon arrive at the Frick Museum and Frick Art Reference Library. The Frick Collection is well worth viewing before visiting the Art Reference Library. If you have any stamina or time left, you are well placed to continue on to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Guggenheim Museum. By the end of the day, you will be saturated with images of magnificent cultural buildings, exquisite art, and fascinating books. Ah, New York—a wonderful town!



Can't go? Visit Virtually!

All three libraries offer extensive online resources, including institutional histories, access to digital collections, and shopping! 

New York Public Library

General Information

<http://www.nypl.org>

Digital Gallery

<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital>

Live from NYPL (taped lectures, performances, etc.)

<http://www.nypl.org/live-multimedia>

Treasures of the New York Public Library

<http://www.nypl.org>

Shop!

<http://shop.nypl.org>

Frick Museum & Art Reference Library

General Information

<http://www.frick.org/library/index.htm>

Active Highlights

<http://www.frick.org/archives/slides.htm>

Photo Archive

<http://www.frick.org/photoarchive/index.htm>

Virtual Tour

<http://www.frick.org/virtual/index.htm>

Shop!

<http://www.shopfrick.org/index.htm>

Morgan Library & Museum

General Information

<http://www.themorgan.org/home.asp>

General Information

<http://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/defaultExhibOnline.asp>

Music Manuscripts Online

<http://www.themorgan.org/music/default.asp>

Virtual Tour

<http://www.themorgan.org/about/campus.asp>

Shop!

<http://www.themorgan.org/shop/>



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How Many Roads Must a Librarian Walk Down?

When Location Shapes Vocation

by Mark Kille

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Naropa University

Unlike many of my librarian colleagues, I did not grow up with a love of libraries. They were not formative places for me, and I had no influential librarians in my life. I loved books an awful lot, and I appreciated libraries as a free and simple source of piles of books, but good books also came from bookstores and my brother's shelves. My most vivid memory of my childhood library is the "cha-chunk" of the date-stamping machine with the metal plate in it that worked with my library card. Man, that thing was cool.

Libraries themselves, though, were not especially cool to me. That impression changed after I got my first passport in the spring of 1990. I was a junior in high school. My brother was a junior in college spending a year studying abroad in Aberystwyth, Wales. My mother and I went to do touristy things in London with him and his English girlfriend, who is now his wife. We went to the British Library almost as an afterthought; it was part of the British Museum, and we had bog people and colonial plunder to see. I am not sure that I had any expectations for the British Library, really, as a kid from a small North Carolina university town. I do know that seeing Henry VIII's personal Bible, with Henry VIII's personal marginal notes, was astonishing. I believe there were some original Handel's Messiah manuscript pages on display as well. My family had to drag me away from all of the display cases full of numerous impressive books, manuscripts and maps, but those two, Henry and Handel, stick out in my memory as proverbial lightbulb experiences. I remember thinking, "Oh, of course, these things really happened. These people really lived. It happened here, and here is the record of it."

After my encounter with history in the British Library, my heart beat faster with a craving for the real. I had not found it in the Chapel Hill Public Library; more accurately, I could not yet recognize it there. I did not see it in my college's undergraduate library, as a student or a library worker. I started to see it in my college's main research library, as a student and a library worker. I found it in full measure in my college's rare book and manuscript library, where I worked for my last two undergraduate years. Here were letters and novel drafts and sketchbooks by important people. Here were complete collections of all the editions of works I had never heard of by authors I had never heard of. Here were researchers coming from around the world to gather evidence for their arguments about what really happened in a book or a place or a life. They saw this library, my library, the way I had seen the British Library. As I watched them do their work, I realized that even if they might not envy the routine of my particular job, they envied my access to the collections that had drawn them there across borders and oceans. When they left, I would stay. I began to understand that my everyday life could play a part, however small, in someone else's dreams.


Thanks to a fortunate combination of geography and affordable airfare, I could fly to Europe from my college's city for not much more money than it cost me to fly home to North Carolina. I still had my passport; my choices were obvious. I went to places like the Danish Royal Library, which is still one of my favorite places in the whole world. In the fullness of time, as they say, I graduated from college. I went to work for an American school in the Netherlands. My job title was "Teaching Intern," but I was their middle school librarian. I had agreed to do it because I wanted to be in that place at that time, and my employer saw the library experience on my resume and thought I could fill a need that they had. It was a win-win situation. I had expected to have a good year and wear out my rail pass. I had not expected to come out of it wanting to be a professional librarian. To my surprise, I did.



I discovered two very important things as the middle school librarian for the American School of the Hague. My first discovery was that my fifth- and sixth-graders were just as compelling, just as really real, as Henry VIII or Handel or John Dryden or Teddy Roosevelt. History was happening right there in my library, and the world would never be the same when these kids grew up, no matter what. My second discovery was that the standard American school library collection—Judy Blume, Laura Ingalls Wilder, biographies of American sports heroes and presidents and inventors, birds of prey and dinosaurs and volcanos—represented *home* to many in the school community, and to my homesick self, in a way I had never thought of when it had just been part of the scenery. Like my brother's English girlfriend, who had never done the touristy stuff in London because she *lived* there, I had never really read the books for what they were. I had never really looked at the people around me for who they were. Reality is everywhere, I learned. History is everywhere. As it had in the British Library, my heart beat faster.

While I was still living and working in the Netherlands, I made a point of visiting Aberystwyth, where my brother had studied six years before. Naturally, I also made a point of visiting the National Library of Wales, perched up above Aberystwyth's harbor. It did not quite live up to my expectations, possibly because my expectations were so high, or because it did not have a very good public exhibition area, or because I had to climb up a really big hill and illegally go through various construction-cluttered parking lots to get there. In any case, it was not all I had hoped for. I found my disappointment reassuring in a way. What is real and important and true is not always awe-inspiring, whether one encounters it in an institution that is the steward of a nation's history or in a school library that is doing its part to help children along their way to becoming competent, conscientious adults.

Since my time abroad, I have worked in public libraries, special libraries and academic libraries. In each, I have tried to help make them places where people could walk in and see not only books and magazines and films and music, but connections. Information is important; enrichment is important; even entertainment is important. Most important of all, though, is the fact that information, enrichment and entertainment are things that we share. They are contextual, relational, and historical. Libraries for me have been the embodiment of particular contexts, relations, and histories. For whatever reason, I had to first learn to see these embodied communities in libraries far away from home.

Today, I am the Director of Library and Archives at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado. Naropa understands itself as “North America's leading institution of contemplative education,” building on “the rich intellectual and experiential traditions of East and West” (Naropa, para 1). Students and scholars come from around the world and set their minds and bodies and hearts on learning and teaching others to “engage courageously with a complex and challenging world, to help transform that world through skill and compassion” (Naropa, para 2). I do my best to ensure that our library collections and services support them in their efforts to understand and shape the reality of the world we share. I do my best to encourage them through the inevitable disappointments. My heart beats a little bit faster every day. When the time comes for me to walk down another road, however near or far it takes me, I know there will be a library at the end of it. There always is. 



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300 Cups of Tea

by **Nancy Hoover**
University Librarian
Marylhurst University



China trip by the numbers

- 3 weeks
- 10 hotels
- 7 cities
- 22 libraries
- 1 annual conference
- 3 train rides
- 1 bamboo raft trip
- 1 hydrofoil boat ride
- 5 presentations
- 1 interview by the local press
- lots of sightseeing
- over 300 cups of tea

China trip blog

<http://tinyurl.com/5ue3wvp>

During the 2010 Horner Exchange trip to China, I visited big libraries, small libraries, main libraries, branch libraries, children's libraries, new libraries, old libraries, libraries located in industrial complexes, libraries located in major urban public parks, libraries on islands, libraries on the mainland, under resourced libraries and well resourced libraries. Whew! What an experience!

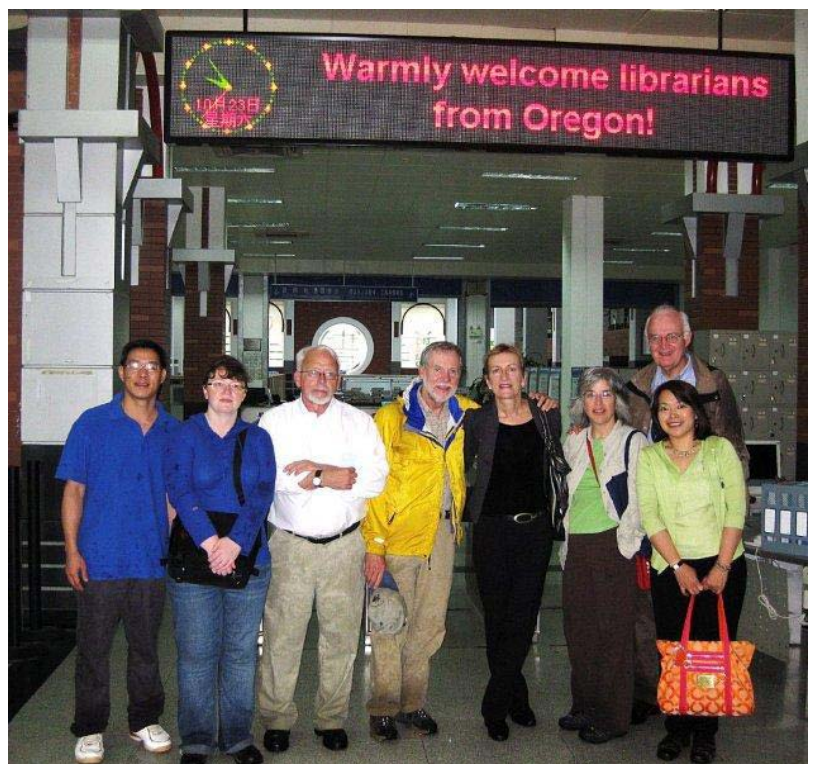
The Horner Exchange began in 1986 with librarians traveling back and forth every few years. The Oregon State Library is now signing the MOU that will continue the exchange for many years to come. The delegates that went on this trip to Fujian Province in southeast China were Amy Lee from Fort Vancouver Regional Library District, Brandon Barnett from Multnomah County Library and me, Nancy Hoover, from Marylhurst University. Also, for part of our trip we were joined by Deb Carver and Bob Felsing from the University of Oregon Libraries and Jim Scheppke from the Oregon State Library.

When I returned from China, I was often asked if the experience was what I expected. I actually did not know what to expect. The days of us going to China thinking we knew what is best may be over. If the libraries in China were behind us, they have caught up and surpassed us in many ways. They have benefited greatly from the Horner Exchange and we witnessed firsthand the things they had learned and implemented in their libraries. Some of the newer libraries were as nice, or nicer, than any libraries I have seen in the United States. We even visited a public library in the city of Xiamen that was designed by an American architect! And this library, they were proud to say, ranks #3 in the nation for numbers of visitors, while their population is only one third of that for the libraries ranked #1 and #2.

Are libraries the same the world over? Basically yes with some puzzling local variations.

Academic Libraries

China is big, really big. Everything they do is big. Each of the universities we visited had enrollments of 20,000 undergraduate students. And they struggle with the same issues we have: creating a culture of reading, improving lighting and atmosphere, improving acoustics, creating learning commons, being a destination for students and patrons, and need-



Welcome at Xiamen University Library.



ing more stack space. Sound familiar? The brand new library at the Xhangzhou campus of Xiamen University is an energy-efficient green building with built-in sun shading, a retractable curtain system covering the glass ceiling in the summer, and motion sensitive lights in the stacks. These are admirable improvements for a country with very low standards for pollution and air quality.

Academic librarianship pays more in China than public librarianship. If you need a job, China needs you! There is a shortage of MLS graduates in China and graduates can easily land a job. (One caveat though: you need to speak and read fluent Mandarin!) We visited two universities with library science programs, both in Fuzhou, the capital of the Fujian Province. Graduate school was free of charge, but students were required to work in the library while going to school, which makes sense and gives students real life experience.

Overall student employment in academic libraries is very restricted. In one library, students could only work one hour per day with a weekly maximum of 7 hours. In another library students were limited to 4 hours per day and 50 hours per month maximum.

Public Libraries

One of the most impressive things about the public library districts we visited is their outreach to their millions of constituents. We saw many hard working people, who were often volunteering time on their days off, using creative partnerships with local governments and industries to bring libraries to the people.



Xiamen University – Zhangzhou Campus Library.



Most people in China do not have cars. Traveling to a downtown library can take citizens as much as two hours each way on the bus. The Guangkuo community library “station” was created as a partnership with the Xiamen Public Library. It is a small library in a residential complex of 16,000 people, situated in a spare room of the local government / social service agency office. When the agency is open during work hours, patrons enter through the agency and a social service employee can help them check out a book. The “librarian” is a social service employee who runs the library on the side; staff takes turns volunteering to open the library room on weekends. This is quite an investment for the community workers and extra work for them to meet the information needs of their community. Xiamen Public Library supplies them with books, DVDs, and periodicals, but does not contribute money for staffing or capital expenses like furniture and computers; these are paid for with donations from the community. However, the government is now seeing the benefit of these stations and will be adding financial support to the public library’s budget next year.



Librarian’s visit from the U.S. make news in Dongshan.

Another station we visited, located in a township community center, offers free Internet access and is staffed by two full time employees that cover for each other if one is sick or on vacation. If one goes on maternity leave (six months off work, plus the new mom can come into work one hour late for a year), the town finds a substitute for them. This particular township has its own tax base and a cooperative agreement between the town and the public library where the town pays the salaries, but the public library maintains the budget.

One station was in a temporary building in an industrial complex for migrant workers and their families. This fills an important need because there is not much to do in the area and the workers are lonely and homesick.

We were the first international visitors to the brand new Tong’an Public Library, located in a park by the sea in a newly constructed Cultural and Sports Activity Center that was set



to open in December 2010. The process of hiring and examination of new employees was happening while we were there. Since the government pays the salaries, the government does the hiring. Libraries are assigned staff; they do not have a voice in the decision of who gets hired. This library had a creative arrangement with a nearby military base; the library provides information and collections to the military, and in exchange, the military helps them move things or provides other needed manpower in return.

There were many public libraries and children's libraries that had very few patrons in them. One reason is because everyone is working and the children are in day care or school. This is supposedly different on weekends, late afternoons, and in the summers when school is out. Libraries are partnering with day care centers to bring services to the children, but we did not see this firsthand. Also, Readers Service is a number one priority for all libraries.

All over the province, the library staff work hard and are very serious about their profession. I would say this matches our standards of customer service and outreach.

Differences

The biggest difference is charges for services. Patrons at the Xiamen Public Library must put down a deposit of 400 Yuen (\$60.00) before borrowing books, a minimum of 50 Yuen is good for checking out two books, and you cannot check out books that exceed the value of your deposit. The reasoning is that there are no collection agencies in China. We were vocal in explaining that this is an unnecessary barrier for patrons and that losing a few books is



Group picture in hard hats on site of the Fuzhou Children's Library.



the price of doing business. They said there are contingencies for poor people, but having to ask for assistance like this is not in the spirit of free access to information for all.

Public libraries that have implemented RFID also have self-check in. Yes, when patrons return their books, they check them back in themselves. No, they don't have to shelve them. Perhaps, since they have to put down a deposit to check the books out, they want to make sure they get checked back in. Book drops are located inside the building and are available 24/7 for all book returns.

Another charge that we saw in academic and public libraries was for accessing the Internet. One academic library actually removed the Internet from the computers in their lab because the computers were getting too much use! Students had to leave the library and go to another building where 1000 computers are maintained by IT and pay to access the Internet. Computers are all located in labs; they are not interspersed throughout libraries like they are in the United States. Also they can only access the databases and in-house resources like Photoshop with a two hour per day limit. This arrangement is easier for staff to maintain and control and not necessarily in the best interests of the students. Wireless, which is ubiquitous here, is rare in Fujian Province. When we asked why there was no wireless, the answer was, "If the government does not fund it, you cannot have it."

At one university we visited, only faculty have off campus access to the library databases because of licensing restrictions. Students have to be on campus to use them. Public library patrons must pay either a small fee for remote access to each database or 200 Yuen per year, per database for unlimited access. Libraries have to negotiate with vendors for remote access; it is not always an option or else it is very expensive. Some libraries are refusing to buy online resources if there is no remote access.



Conceptual drawing of the Fuzhou Children's Library.

Another big difference is the reporting structure; public libraries and the Provincial Library fall under the Department of Culture. Because of this, libraries are tasked with documenting and preserving local culture. The Provincial Library is the anchor for local libraries and they provide services ranging from preservation and digitization of damaged and bug infested ancient manuscripts to the videotaping of local cultural customs and festivals and streaming them on the web. Each local area is responsible for adding information to a national database: Fujian Province alone has over 200 dialects and villages. Since 2007, the entire country has made it a priority to recover and collocate documentation and history that was lost, destroyed, stolen or hidden during the Cultural Revolution.

The Future

What will the next round of Horner librarians find when they venture to China in 2013? They will certainly see all the completed libraries that were construction sites when we visited (with hard hats on) or the new buildings and expansions that are in the planning phases right now. Clearly the government is seeing the value of libraries in society and they are funding them. China wants and needs an educated population. The hard working Chinese librarians can take credit for this support because of the positive impact they are making in their communities. 🌿



Dongshan Public Library staff and guests.



Guillotines at the Door:

Waging Peace One Pencil at a Time

by **Reita Fackerell**

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Library Director

Seaside Public Library

My decision to become a library volunteer in the South Seas was one of the best choices I have ever made, and I entirely blame the Oregon Library Association.

I remember exactly when I got the notion to do library volunteer work in lieu of a vacation. It was at a Portland library seminar about Disaster Planning. The first speaker stood up and said (more or less), “I am supposed to talk about disaster planning, but I’m going to talk about volunteering instead,” and she stood up and gave us a rousing talk about adventure, global friendships, and working to make a better world. Thank heavens for that lady. If it hadn’t been for her, my next few months would have been all about worrying how to freeze dry books after a major flood and how to tackle the mold spores that were sure to arrive shortly thereafter.

Instead, the next few months were spent planning a trip to volunteer in a library in the South Seas.

I joined Global Volunteers, an organization that has been around since 1984. Their brochure said they needed people to help out in schools, clinics, conservation areas, libraries and museums in a place called Rarotonga. The philosophy of Global Volunteers is to “wage peace” though understanding and community service. That sounded good to me. The fact that I could wage peace in a library on a tropical island sounded even better. The final fact that it was all tax deductible made it perfect.

So I packed up my bag, rounded up my sixteen year old daughter and headed out to Rarotonga, an island steeped in the Maori culture in the Cook Islands. Where is Rarotonga? I didn’t know either. Go to Tahiti and turn right.

I joined a team of twenty other volunteers from around the world. The oldest was 90, and the youngest was my daughter. After a day of orientation, we were assigned our work projects. My daughter chose to work in the Takitumu Conservation Area and hack up stuff with a machete. If you knew my sixteen year old daughter at the time, it was probably for the best. At least she would be in the jungle.



Author’s daughter, Remy, stamping books at the Cook Island Public Library & Museum.





Cook Island Public Library back room—note the sheets covering the computers.

My project was to work at the National Museum of the Cook Islands to help organize and catalog thousands of historical photos and negatives that had recently been donated to the Museum. I am not a cataloguer, but fortunately, their system was easy to learn. It basically consisted of separating the photos from the negatives, trying to figure out what was on the negatives, and then sorting them into the appropriate album, by date and subject.

The only other staff with me in the work room consisted of two Maori ladies who were very shy at first. They made me wear white archival gloves and were very reluctant to say much. However, cataloging the historical pictures gave me a great opportunity to ask about the Maori culture. I would find a negative of a line of women wearing straw skirts and raising their hands in the air and ask, “Should this go in the Dance file or Women of the Islands file?” and they would laugh and say something like, “No these women are performing a dance in honor of their migration to the island in canoes in the 1300s. You must file it with Celebration and Holidays.” So, because of my ignorance and constantly having to ask questions, we became friends, and by the end of the first week, they were bringing me snacks, mostly in the form of raw squid. They were not joking. It turns out that the squid was a delicacy. We all ate it together.

It was extremely hot in the work room, but the ladies brought me fans, and when the rains came in the afternoons, they made me stop working to sit outside under the porch with them and watch the downpour while talking about America and what it was like to live there. I would ask them about their islands and what it was like to live there. It was then during the downpours, talking with them about their families and their culture that I truly felt that I was “waging peace.”

A few years later, I asked my daughter if she wanted to go on another vacation. She said she wanted to go back to Rarotonga: it was the best time she ever had. So, off we went.



She wanted to go back and chop more stuff up in the jungle. By now I was fine with her machete work, and as far as I could tell, it wasn't spilling over into her social life.

This time, I was put to work in the Cook Island Public Library and Museum in Avarua.

At the time, the Director of the Library was Johnny Frisbie, author of the well-known (at least in the Cook Islands) *The Frisbies of the South Seas*. In her absence, during my two weeks, the library was run by Sally Voss. She ran a tight ship, let me tell you. If we wanted to use a pencil, we had to sign out for it.

The library was great. There were always chickens running around. The first thing you saw when you walked up to the front door was this big machine labeled "Printing Press and Guillotine" which made me think twice about my volunteer duties. I didn't know how long retribution for American Imperialism would linger in the South Pacific. I soon found out that a "guillotine," is another word for paper cutter, and that the whole machine was brought over in the 1800s to publish the first bible in Maori. I breathed easier after that.

My volunteer teammate at the library was Ronit, a doctor of Internal Medicine from New York. Our job this time was to begin to catalog the collection. As I said before, I am not a cataloguer, and of course, neither was Ronit, but since their cataloging program was to enter information on an excel spreadsheet, we figured we could not mess up too badly. I tried to tell Ronit about how real MARC Record cataloging involved non-filing indicators and uniform resource identifiers, and she basically said that it sounded easier to remove a spleen.

Most of the books we "catalogued" were about the Maori culture, and like my previous volunteer time at the national museum, I got to talk to Sally about some of the items, and she lightened up a bit and invited me to actually assign Dewey numbers to a cart of items that had no COP. Fortunately, the library had Internet access and I showed Sally that she could log on to the New Zealand National Library Web site to see how they catalogued



Author outside the Cook Island Public Library.



their items. Since the Cook Islands are a protectorate of New Zealand and have a substantial amount of Maori history and language materials, she would probably find a lot of help there. It was a watershed moment in our relationship. Although she never brought me snacks, I no longer had to sign out for a pencil.

The Library itself was interesting. Instead of reading the shelves left to right, left to right, the books were arranged in an S-pattern: left to right, down a shelf then right to left. It was confusing at first, but by the end of the second week, it made sort of made sense.

The real problem was the environment. In a hot, humid climate, things tended to get full of bugs and mildew—and this meant everything. Most everything in the work room was covered with sheets until they were needed. The computers were covered, because insects would crawl inside the CPUs and wreak havoc. This gave a whole new meaning to the problem of your computer having a bug. These computers had lots of bugs, most of them alive building little bug communities.

The books also had a bug problem. If you think that Sally, who had a guillotine at the front door, was going to go down without a fight, you are mistaken. Since my visit, the Cook Island Library bought a freezer. They now put their infected books and other items in it for three weeks. After three weeks in the freezer, those bugs are no longer a problem. If they have too many books or larger items from their museum that can't fit in the freezer, they take them to the walk-in freezer at the local supermarket which has donated space to the library for bug warfare.

By the end of the second week, my daughter came down from the jungle and volunteered to work with me and Ronit in the library. I would like to think it was because she realized how fabulous her mother was, but more likely it was because her “mentor” had to leave the island for a few days and would not let a machete wielding twenty year old alone unsupervised in a jungle. Sally put her to work in the back room stamping books and helping out.

I was able to spend two weeks working in the library, and it was one of the most memorable “vacations” ever. My fellow teammates and I remain in contact to this day.



Author with Sally Voss at the Cook Island Public Library.



Last April, I once again joined up with Global Volunteers and traveled to Beja, Portugal with the hopes of working in a library. We had a team of six from all over the United States and we were all put to work teaching English in the schools. My team leader made sure that I could do something with a library, so I was granted a wonderful opportunity to spend part of the time in a public high school library where I got to meet the library staff and see how it works in Portugal.

Every day after work my fellow teammates would be at one of two places. They would either be at the outside café to drink “coffee,” which usually turned out to be wine or beer, or they would be at the José Saramago Biblioteca Municipal de Beja public library in the Internet Room. Those at the café would have been the ones who had already been to the library, because, in our team, the library was the first place you went after work.

Here’s another thing I learned: Internet rules in libraries worldwide are pretty much the same. You have to sign in, you can only get one hour, and the library staff is always helpful. Even though I spoke no Portuguese and they spoke no English, there were no problems. The universal language of library Internet usage is understood by all. So is beer drinking, I guess, because it was never a problem to get one.

Will I volunteer overseas again? You bet. I went on a normal vacation to Roatan last month, and although I visited the Public Library in French Harbor, it wasn’t the same as hanging out in the work room, and enjoying time (and maybe raw squid) with a fellow library friend from a different culture. I learned that no how different our customs are, librarians throughout the world possess a common spirit for sharing of their books and themselves. Volunteering in libraries is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. You should try it. Wage peace. 🌿



Author outside the Jose Saramago Biblioteca Municipal de Beja in Portugal.





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