

Frontline



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Feedback to your Board of Directors

Board members welcome your comments and feedback. Please feel free to contact a Board member at any time.

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I was lucky enough to go to IFLA for the first time this year. As I said in the ALIA blog, it's like the United Nations for the library world. At the 2010 IFLA Congress there were approximately 3,000 delegates from 128 different countries. The annual IFLA Congress is undoubtedly the pinnacle in terms of international engagement and making connections. It's a combination of meetings and a general library conference, with underlying tenets of international collaboration and the sharing of ideas and issues.

Attending such an event certainly made me reflect about how we're (ALIA) positioned internationally, and how the Australian library environment compares with other parts of the world. I'd have to say on both counts we are positioned very well. Obviously there are a large number of developing countries which haven't yet had the opportunity to develop sophisticated library and information associations such as ours. Surprisingly, even a number library and information associations of well developed countries don't seem to be as well positioned as ALIA in terms of structure, function and activities. The Australian library environment also seems quite healthy compared to a number of our peer countries. No doubt there are a number of Australian libraries affected by the GFC but its impact on Australian libraries seemed to be fairly benign when compared to some of the drastic measures that are being taken overseas. Although things are tough for many libraries at the moment, my own included, I'd have to say we are a lucky country though of course that doesn't mean things couldn't be better.

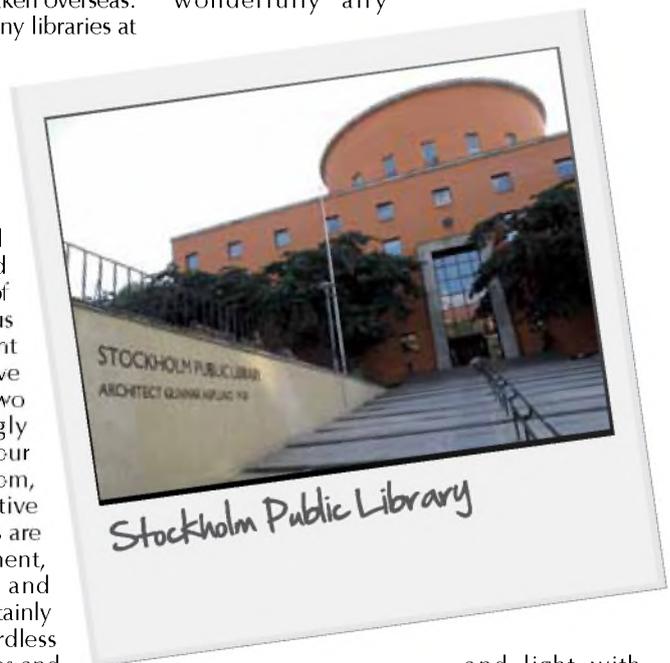
One of the real benefits of attending conferences where there are international delegates is meeting them and understanding their issues (one of the downsides is feeling envious of people who can speak fluent English in addition to their native tongue and probably one or two other languages). Interestingly enough, regardless of where our international colleagues are from, once you strip away the relative wealth factor many of the issues are the same – member engagement, funding, staffing, technology, and government support. We can certainly all learn from each other, regardless of how rich or poor our countries and libraries may be.

One international theme not many of us have thought about is providing library services to people in immigration detention centres. While libraries in Australia have been providing collections for migrants for many years (did you know that the Mt Isa public library used to have one the largest collections of Finnish language material in Australia?) we are now faced with this different challenge. This was raised at our most recent Board meeting in October. It currently appears to be a topic that sits in political 'no man's land'. Whose responsibility is it to provide

the service and resources and to ensure it is of an appropriate standard – The Department of Immigration and Citizenship, contractors who manage the centres on their behalf, state governments, or local authorities? ALIA has written to DIAC seeking clarification on the issue.

Now dear reader (I know there are at least a dozen of you who read my column) it's that time of the year again for you to consider whether you'd like to have a direct influence on the direction ALIA is taking. Regardless of whether you support the direction the Association is taking or would like to see it take an alternative direction, nominations are being called for the Board of Directors and Vice President/President elect. Being on the ALIA Board is interesting and challenging and it certainly increases your awareness of the broad church that is ALIA. For the past two years, ALIA Board Directors and Vice Presidents have ascended to their positions without the need for an election. This is not a healthy situation for an organisation of fifty members, let alone one like ALIA with about six thousand members. Please consider!

Back to the international theme. Although I'm pre-empting next year's library tourist issue of inCite I thought I'd get in early and show you a photo of the Stockholm Public Library. It was built in 1928 and is situated not far from the Stockholm CBD. Inside it's wonderfully airy



and light with the stacks literally running around the inside wall. It's simply one of the nicest libraries I've visited.

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