

REVIEW

## **Experiences From the OCLC Europe and USA Study Tour**

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OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) is a world leader in the field of library technology research and development. It was founded in 1967, in Dublin (USA). OCLC is working on the improvement of information access for all and on reduction of library costs. OCLC is a nonprofit membership based library service and research organization. Up to this day more than 25,900 libraries from 170 countries around the world became members of the OCLC. The most significant OCLC product is WorldCat – the largest online public access catalog in the world. Since 1998 the development policy has moved towards the inte-

gration of libraries outside the USA into the WorldCat. This trend can be clearly supported by figures: before 1998 only 3,200 libraries outside the US were members of the OCLC, while in 2010 the number of non-US libraries reached 19,215.

OCLC headquarters are located in Dublin, Ohio, and it consists of numerous departments.

Most departments work on research and development of the new services and also on maintaining current systems and services.

On the top of the OCLC governance

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structure is the Board of Trustees (16 members – more than half of which are librarians). Librarians are elected to the Board of Trustees from the Global Council of librarians, and they are elected by Regional Councils of member libraries. Regional councils are:

- The OCLC Americas Regional Council
- The OCLC Asia Pacific Regional Council
- The OCLC Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) Regional Council

Each regional council has a chairperson. OCLC hires top experts from different fields for the work on development of new services. In 2007, OCLC went through readjustment of organizational structure with the aim to achieve “global integration of services”<sup>1</sup>

As the biggest company in the library world, OCLC is a golden sponsor of two largest library conferences – ALA and IFLA annual conferences. Besides the sponsorship of conferences OCLC is also a sponsor of numerous scholarships and career development programs for librarians. Some of those scholarships are:

- Frederick G. Kilgour Award for Research in Library and Information Technology (more commonly known as the “LITA/OCLC Kilgour Award”)
- John Ames Humphry/OCLC Forest Press Award for International Librarianship
- OCLC/LITA Minority Scholarship
- OCLC/ALISE Library and Information Science Research Grant Program
- Jay Jordan IFLA/OCLC Early Career Development Fellowship Program<sup>2</sup>

Since 2001, in cooperation with the Ameri-

1 More information can be found at [www.librarytechnology.org/ltg-displaytext.pl?RC=12929](http://www.librarytechnology.org/ltg-displaytext.pl?RC=12929)

2 More information can be found at <http://www.oclc.org/community/careerdevelopment/default.htm>

can Theological Library Association (ATLA<sup>3</sup>) and International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA<sup>4</sup>), OCLC has been a sponsor of „Jay Jordan IFLA/OCLC Early Career Development Fellowship Program“. This program provides early career development and continuing education for library and information science professionals from countries with developing economies<sup>5</sup>. It is a five week program of which four weeks are spent in the USA and one week in Europe. The participants get an insight into current trends and issues in USA and European libraries. They also get familiar with the latest technologies and their impact on libraries. The program avails them of the opportunity to meet the leading people from world biggest libraries and to present them the librarianship from their own countries.

Due to numerous holidays in Europe at the beginning of May 2011 program was set to start first in Europe and then in US (it was vice versa in the previous years). Fellows for 2011 were:

Mrs. Khumo Dibeela, Botswana,  
Miss Geanrose Lagumbay, the Philippines,  
Mr. Fiskani Ngwira, Malawi,  
Miss Tian Xiaodi, China,  
Mr. Milan Vasiljević, Serbia

and on the European part of the program:

Mr. Elchin Mamadov, Azerbaijan (He was the 2010 fellow who couldn't get visa for EU in his first attempt, so the program coordinators managed to put him in with 2011 Group)

On the European part of the program or on eliminating the differences between the types of the libraries

3 More information can be found at <http://www.atla.com/Pages/default.aspx>

4 <http://www.ifla.org>

5 You can find list of countries here

<http://www.oclc.org/community/careerdevelopment/fellows/guidelines-2013.pdf>

We had our first introduction with OCLC's organizational structure and services in Leiden, the Netherlands (Headquarter of EMEA region). During the five day program in Europe we have visited: National Library of the Netherlands, commercial company for integrated library systems CIPAL<sup>6</sup> (working mostly for Belgian market), Public Library Permeke in Antwerp, University of Antwerp, IFLA headquarter in The Hague, Amsterdam Public Library, University of Leiden, and NBD biblion<sup>7</sup> commercial company for physical protection of books (they are also preparing books for public library purposes – protective cover, stronger binding, RFID protection etc.) Each of these visits is a story for itself.

In my imagination headquarters of IFLA were located in a huge glass building swarming with employees. In reality IFLA headquarters is located in the National Library of the Netherlands and has only 14 employees. Those 14 employees are on the top of IFLA's organizational structure, each of them is responsible for one segment of the organization, and they are also coordinators for numerous IFLA volunteers around the world. The work of volunteers, in fact, is what makes IFLA the way it is - a global network of librarians worldwide. Through the discussion with IFLA colleagues I have realized that huge glass building from my imagination may exist but in virtual environment. We have also seen: global librarianship side of IFLA organization, opportunities and advantages of IFLA membership, IFLA's strategic plan for the next five years and IFLA's striving for freedom and access to information for all.

In the National Library of the Netherlands we've seen amazing book collection and we got

<sup>6</sup> More information can be found at <http://www.cipal.be/Default.aspx?tabid=418>

<sup>7</sup> More information can be found at <http://www.nbdbiblion.nl>

more familiar with Europeana<sup>8</sup> project. Visit to the University Library of Antwerp was one of the best that we had during the whole program. University Library of Antwerp was created during the merger of three large Universities (which consisted of seven faculties). Library is located in renovated, and specially adapted building with modern and functional interior and with preserved medieval exterior at the same time, within the central campus (there are also two branches in other campus). The modern approach that library director has towards users and collections can be clearly felt in the library atmosphere. Users can carry bags, food, drink into the library (which is not the case in Serbian libraries). By the circulation of people and cozy atmosphere you get an impression that you are in a public and not academic institution. Also, IT company Avnet<sup>9</sup> is located in this library. They are the creators of software for circulation and cataloguing. This library is a great example how good management, and basically good will, can transform one – by nature traditional - institution into information center that meets all needs of its users.

Public Library Permeke is placed in the adapted building of an old Ford car service. This library is fully automated (users can do self-registration, self check in and out) with RFID<sup>10</sup> technology. Everything in this library is designed to fit the users' needs – on the ground floor you can find most popular books, children literature, cinema (every user can pick a movie from the collection and organize the projection) and on the first floor you can find less popular titles. For the classification they are using ZIZO system – which uses

<sup>8</sup> More information can be found at <http://www.europeana.eu/portal/>

<sup>9</sup> More information can be found at <http://www.ts.avnet.com/be/>

<sup>10</sup> More information can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio-frequency\\_identification](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio-frequency_identification)

image tags instead of the numbers (for example, a gun tag is for crime novels, a ghost for horror etc.). One more interesting thing is the integrated shelving – library material is shelved by topics, not by type, so it is possible to find a disk among the books. Public computers are located along the former car ramp (now modified into stairs) – transparent public computers are much safer for web browsing because it's not likely that users will open explicit contents.

University of Leiden is one of the oldest universities in Europe. It is specific by the fact that the whole collection is held in closed stacks (first closed stacks that we encountered during the program) so users must order them through ILS. Good thing is that users can order a book from home and within an hour the book will be waiting in one of many lockers. The locker code will be sent on user's email as soon as the book reservation is made. This library has a large department for digitization and repository for doctoral dissertations and other works of professors and students. About 60% of annual budget goes to acquisition of electronic resources. Lots of efforts goes to digitization process because, as management says: "If a material doesn't exist in digital form it is as if it doesn't exist at all". Some might say that with closed stacks this library is a typical traditional library, but on the other side, state of the art technology, investments in digitization, production of digital repository and care for user needs put it side by side with modern university libraries.

Twenty seven branches and one central building form the Amsterdam public library network. New building for Amsterdam Public Library was constructed in 2007. It is a seven floor building located on the banks of the river Amsteel. With four million visits per year library is a center of cultural life. It is open seven days a week and it has numerous cafes, a restaurant, a radio sta-

tion, a theater (with 250 seats), meeting rooms, a space for kids, etc. The main motto of this library is „Open for all“. Beside book collection, this library has one whole floor for audio CDs, movies, video games, daily news in several languages, magazines and more then 600 public computers with free access to Internet. This library can be a guiding star for all public libraries which give more attention to collection development rather than the users needs. Following the constant changes in time that we live in, libraries must adapt their philosophy if they want to become places of cultural significance.

Last stop in the European part of the program was visit to NBD biblion <sup>11</sup> - commercial company for physical protection of books and their preparation for public library purposes (mostly in the Netherlands and Belgium). They buy new books from the publishers, unbind them and then rebind them again with the new hardcover and the use of high quality glue. For every book that has gone through unbind/rebind process they give two years warranty for the use in public libraries. Besides physical protection they also create a sort of cataloging in publication, as well as bibliographical records that are distributed with the books. This procedure facilitates the acquisition process greatly because libraries get highly resistant "shelf ready" books. On library request they can put RFID tags in books, do a binding of older collections etc.

The European experience enriched our perception of libraries and we had a clear picture regarding where librarianship in our countries stands respectively. One can say that in Europe there is no distinction between the different types of libraries, there is only one type, and that is library according to the user needs.

<sup>11</sup> More information can be found at <http://www.nbdbiblion.nl/?pagina>

## **American Experience**

Before entering the USA, coordinator of the program Nancy Lensenmayer <sup>12</sup>, warned us to be prepared because we will be constantly on the run. So it was – straight from the airport we went to the OCLC Global Council meeting.

USA part of the program was divided in four major parts.

### **The First Week, April 11-15, 2011 Dublin, OH**

We started USA part of the program with the participation in OCLC Global Council Meeting – the annual meeting which gathers member delegates elected by the Regional Councils. The goal of this phase was to become acquainted with values of global cooperation among librarians and to make connections with colleague librarians from all around the world. During our presence at OCLC Regional Council meetings the problems that arise in establishing global cooperation were also spoken about.

As fellows we had to do a poster presentation about the library where we are employed and about librarianship in our countries in general. Global Council is composed mainly of library directors from various countries and we had a wonderful opportunity to exchange the experience with them. Presentations of new OCLC services were done during the Global Council meeting. There were many discussions about the future role of OCLC and also about transfer to Web-scale Management Service <sup>13</sup> (global service for joint cataloguing, circulation, acquisition etc.). Some other services

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<sup>12</sup> OCLC Program Director, Education and Professional Development

<sup>13</sup> More information can be found at <http://www.oclc.org/webscale/>

were introduced as well (Europeana, Australian National Data Service etc.).

During the first week we also had at our disposal a beautiful office in OCLC headquarters and we had a chance to talk with WorldCat experts about the history and future of this service.

### **The Second Week, April 15-22, 2011 (Washington, Chicago, Urbana, Dublin)**

During the second week we have traveled around the USA and had the opportunity to see the best practice in American librarianship. We have visited: Library of Congress in Washington, ALA <sup>14</sup> headquarters and Loyola University in Chicago, and the numerous libraries in the state of Ohio: Ohio State University, Westerville Public Library, Columbus Metropolitan Library and many others. Every visit that has been organized included a tour around the library and an interview or a presentation with the director or people in charge for a specific department.

A visit to the Library of Congress wakes up an amazing feeling in a life of every librarian. Once you find yourself in the library that gets about 20,000 new items every day, and which has a collection of more than one hundred million units you cannot help but wonder how this library functions. In my opinion, Library of Congress is more like a library of the whole world than just a USA library. In their stacks you can find not just most valuable books but also the latest books from almost all countries of the world. Departments in Library of Congress are divided by the world regions. For example you have one department that is in charge for Central Europe and the Balkans. Employees of those departments are in charge for that region's current

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<sup>14</sup> More information can be found at <http://www.ala.org/>

publishing. They visit book fairs and buy books for Library of Congress (they buy titles which are of cultural importance for that region). Library of Congress collects not only books, audio materials, movies but also video games and the appropriate software for those games. They collect software as well because no one gives warranty that it will be available in the future. Even though the Library of Congress was also struck by the recession their employees are still putting a lot of efforts to cover all fields of human knowledge and to build a modern Library of Alexandria.

Visit to the library of Loyola University in Chicago was one of the best visits that we had during the program. This library has two buildings – the older one, where the collection is held, and the new one, which is a learning facility. The name of the new building is “Information Commons”<sup>15</sup>. It is characterized by the beautiful architecture (so called self sustainable “green building” made of glass with beautiful view of Lake Michigan), technological innovations, fast Internet connection, numerous public computers (running on Windows or Mac platforms respectively), laptops for lending, student cards for self printing (something like credit cards), silent rooms for learning and rooms for teamwork. Management is very interested in users needs. The best illustration of that is “One stop shop” – place where users can get all information about the library. Users can make a “reservation” of a reference librarian for an entire day who will help them with the essays and other writings. Interesting thing is that you can see learning tables in the passage between two library buildings. That was done on purpose because management noticed that students like to hang out in that passage because it is a good point for

<sup>15</sup> More information about this building can be found at <http://www.luc.edu/ic/>, it is useful to mention that building was built in cooperation with IT sector of the University

interaction with colleagues. Interview with the library director and his team gave us the answers to every question we had about ILS, digitization, repository, acquisition of electronic resources, library mission etc. (In other libraries we could not get answers to all our questions). The role of this library in academic life is best illustrated by the library mission: “To facilitate the pursuit of knowledge and creativity through a user-focused services and collections in an inviting, collaborative, and innovative learning environment”.

In ALA headquarters in Chicago we have learned about the organizational structure of the world’s biggest library association. ALA has about sixteen thousand members (mostly individuals). 250 employees work in ALA headquarters and there are more employees in ALA offices in Washington, Connecticut and Philadelphia. Governing structure consists of a High council which has two meetings per year. The head of the ALA is the elected president. ALA pays a lot of attention to its visual identity (promotional READ posters, commercial materials; cups, bags, pens with ALA logo etc.). That is why the marketing department has an important role in the organization. Good visual identity brings a lot of funds each year (ALA is not sponsored by the government of the USA). ALA has numerous divisions and those divisions are defined either by the type of a library or by the service they provide. ALA’s annual conference usually gathers around 25,000 people. From the membership fees ALA gets around 20-25% of its annual budget. Almost 60% of its budget ALA gets from publications and promotional material. They are also applying for many grants sponsored by the USA government or individuals. ALA is meritorious for the high quality of American librarianship because they are doing the accreditation of LIS programs on American universities. They accredit about sixty different programs. Accreditation once given can be withdrawn if a

university does not provide any more the high quality education demanded by ALA. It is worth mentioning that every library we visited during our program had either ALA READ posters or some other ALA promotional material. That corroborates the story of successful marketing. ALA is also a big promoter of freedom of speech and free access to information for all.

During the visit to Mortensen Center we were introduced to their international librarianship program. In last twenty years this program has been attended by more than 900 librarians from 90 countries around the world. The mission of the Mortensen Center for International Library Programs is to strengthen international ties among libraries and librarians worldwide for the promotion of international education, understanding, and peace<sup>16</sup>. University of Illinois has Master and PhD programs for librarians, and those programs are highly ranked by the ALA accreditation office. Illinois experience was enriched by the tornado warning, so we had to go to the campus basement for safety reasons, where we spent two hours. Campus basement is a place for student recreation so we found numerous billiard tables, balling room, video games, pinball and a bar – great place to hide from a tornado. During our visit to University of Illinois we had an opportunity to see how fundraising for libraries works, how to educate students through organized workshops for finding and evaluating information on the web.

### **The Third Week, April 25 – 29, 2011 (Columbus and Dublin, OH)**

During the third week we had an introduction to technological innovative OCLC services through various presentations about WorldCat,

<sup>16</sup> More information can be found at <http://www.library.illinois.edu/mortenson/about/index.html>

QuestionPoint, WMS, ContentDm. The great thing about these presentations was that they offered us the opportunity to see both users and librarians side of these software. My attention was caught by the idea of the future of cataloging – which will for librarians look like a login to something like Gmail (simple interface without worries about data storage, all modules on one place and everything works through the web).

Beside the introduction to new services we have visited Columbus Metropolitan Library<sup>17</sup>. This library was the winner of 2010 competition for the best library in the USA. In this library you can find a teen space where the entrance is forbidden for non-teen persons. It was designed by the teenagers, so you can see a café-like chairs, video games consoles, lazy bags etc. This library is also specific by so called “floating collection” – a borrowed book from one branch can be returned to any other branch where it will stay. That way, their collection constantly moves, which is good for the users. At the time of our visit they purchased all e-book readers available on the market. It was done because of users need to get more familiar with e-book readers before deciding which one to buy. Acquisition policy of this library is also interesting. Besides the classical acquisition, they buy additional books for those titles that had more than two reservations.

Quality of the Westerville Public Library<sup>18</sup> can be clearly seen through information about number of members. Town itself has 86.000 residents while the library has more than 100.000 members! The philosophy of the library director is very simple: there is nothing that library cannot do for a customer’s (his word for user) need. Library keeps on listening to the needs of the community and tries to provide perfect

<sup>17</sup> More information can be found at <http://www.columbuslibrary.org/>

<sup>18</sup> Small town near Columbus

customer service. As part of this library you can see „Drive In“ – place where you can come by car and pick up a book (movie, music etc.). It might be too much for the European sensibility but in the USA there is an evident need for the existence of a “Drive In”. For example, if a mother with two young children wants to take a book from the library she has to find a parking space, take a stroller from the trunk, put the babies in the stroller and walk into the library. A “Drive in” makes this situation much easier for her because she can easily order books from her home, and library guarantees that they will be in a “drive in” within an hour. If books fail to be there within an hour, the library will deliver them to a customer’s home address. Among book shelves you can see a red telephones which can be used for communication with librarians. If a customer needs any information he/she can easily pick up a phone and ask a librarian, there is no need to walk all the way back to the information desk. In this library customers can rent even a painting. Paintings can be rented on a six month period and that is very useful for a decoration of one’s home or office space. There is no limit for number of books, movies, audio CDs that customers can borrow. After all of these benefits it’s not surprising that on local elections for tax increase more than 80% of residents voted for increase of library tax.

#### **The Fourth Week, May 2-5, 2011 (Dublin, OH)**

Our fourth week in USA was reserved for work on our professional development plans. We had to sketch our current position in the profession, and based on the knowledge and skills we have, to make a five years plan. We also had time to use vast resources in OCLC special library and also visit couple of local libraries: High school libraries in Dublin, Ohio State University (OSU) in Columbus, Deposit Collection of OSU, Public Library in Bexley, and Blackmore College Library.

#### **Instead of the conclusion**

Participation in the *Jay Jordan IFLA/OCLC Early Career Development Fellowship Program* has further expanded my horizons. The expectations that I had, were surpassed in the first week of the program. I have learned a lot from exchange of the experience with top experts in our profession. Visits to various libraries showed me how the transformation of Serbian libraries should look like, while interviews with managers of these libraries – where each of them successfully runs his library with his own philosophy – showed me that there are many paths towards a success but the goal is always the same. I am particularly delighted that our colleagues were eager to answer to all our questions and present every segment of their library organizational structure. Once again, I would point out the openness of American libraries and their philosophy to always put in the first place the needs of users, rather than of librarians. At the end, I will quote the manager of the University Library Blackmore who said: “My goal is a library full of students and books they need, not the other way around.”