

Brian Vetruba

# New Directions for Libraries, Scholars, and Partnerships

North American librarians' symposium in Europe provide forums to share, collaborate, and learn

One hundred twenty librarians and information professionals from ten countries descended on Frankfurt am Main, Germany, on October 13, 2017, for a day of networking and information exchange covering librarianship and scholarship in the 21st century. "New Directions for Libraries, Scholars, and Partnerships: An International Symposium"<sup>1</sup> grew out of a need to have a forum for North American librarians who specialize in European Studies to share insights with and learn from librarians and archivists from Europe and elsewhere.

Sarah How, European Studies librarian at Cornell University, and Heidi Madden, librarian for Western European and Medieval and Renaissance Studies from Duke University, led a team of 16 librarians over a two-year period in organizing the New Directions Symposium and ancillary events. Administrative and partial financial support was provided by the Collaborative Initiative for French Language Collections (CIFNAL) and the German North American Resources Partnership (GNARP), both part of the Center for Research Libraries' (CRL) Global Resources Network.

The planning team benefited from modeling the New Directions Symposium after the 2004 "Migrations in Society, Culture, and the Library" conference held in Paris, which was organized by librarians from ACRL's Western European Studies Section. As with the prior conference, vendors and publishers were essential to the success of the Frankfurt symposium with generous financial and programmatic contributions. In addition to the 11 vendor sponsors, symposium

planners partnered with national libraries, European university libraries, European LIS schools, and cultural organizations, such as the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (BnF) (French National Library) and the *Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg* (Johann Christian Senckenberg University Library) of the Goethe University. The *Deutsche Nationalbibliothek* (German National Library) provided venue and technical support for the symposium.

In a strategic move, planners decided to hold the symposium in Frankfurt at the same time as the Frankfurt Book Fair (October 8–15, 2017), one of the largest book fairs in the world. This allowed symposium attendees to participate in the fair, as well and assisted many in justifying a trip to Europe to their home institutions. In addition to the symposium itself, a number of outside events and tours were organized, including a book fair orientation session, and tours of the German National Library, the *Stadtbücherei Frankfurt am Main* (Frankfurt Public Library), and the offices of Otto Harrassowitz—a distributor of German books to academic libraries in North America. One of the most popular events was a tour of the printing facilities for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a leading daily German newspaper, during which attendees

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Brian Vetruba is European studies and digital scholarship librarian at the University of Minnesota and chair of the German North American Resources Partnership, email: [bvetruba@umn.edu](mailto:bvetruba@umn.edu)

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were treated to viewing all stages of newspaper printing from copy editing to coming hot off the presses. As France was the guest of honor at the Frankfurt Book Fair, symposium attendees could take advantage of the multiple events at the fair and in the Frankfurt-area on French language, literature, and culture.

To promote the symposium, a wide net was cast, which included sending targeted emails to British, French, and German librarian associations and relevant groups within ALA and ACRL, such as the Western European Studies Section (which merged with the Slavic and Eastern European Studies Section to become the European Studies Section later in 2017). Planners also used contacts with German librarians that came about due to ALA's cooperative agreement with the *Bibliothek & Information Deutschland* (BID) (Federal Union of German Library and Information Associations) for 2016–19.<sup>2</sup>

Symposium attendees came from ten countries: Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States; as well as from a variety of different institution types, from academic libraries, national libraries, and special libraries to vendors and publishers. CIFNAL and GNARP provided travel stipends to 30 North American librarians to offset travel and accommodations, and BID provided additional stipends to 12 U.S. librarians. Both symposium planners and leadership from CIFNAL and GNARP made a concerted effort to encourage early-career librarians to attend and apply for travel stipends.

Using an anonymous review process, presentation and poster proposals were vetted by

a subgroup of the planning committee. The New Directions Symposium featured 13 English-language presentations divided into four panels on a wide-range of topics confronting libraries in North America and Europe, including cooperative collection development and library services, digital humanities, web archiving, and digitizing collections. Speakers included a number of prominent LIS leaders in France and Germany. Dorothea Sommer from the *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* (Bavarian State Library) provided an overview of the recent shift in German research libraries from having comprehensive subject collection areas (*Sondersammelgebiete*) to “Specialized

Information Services for Research” (*Fachinformationsdienste für die Wissenschaft*), under which libraries covering a particular discipline work closely with scholars to develop discipline-specific information services.<sup>3</sup> Of particular interest in this new model is the emphasis on digital over print materials. Sommer provided details

on how the Bavarian State Library, which has been designated as one of the specialized information service libraries for History, has worked with the German Historical Association and other groups to develop a number of tools and services, such as the history research portal *Historicum.net*.<sup>4</sup> Doris Grüter from the Bonn University and State Library continued the discussion of this new specialized information services model and highlighted how her library is working with scholars in Romance Languages and Literatures to provide services. Valérie Beaudouin from the BnF presented on research projects undertaken to examine usage and the user communities of Gallica,



Welcome by Ute Schwens, director of the German National Library. Photo by R. Hacken.

the French National Library's digital library. Emmanuelle Bermès provided an overview of the BnF's initiatives to develop tools and services to assist with text and data mining of Gallica and the BnF's collection of archived websites. In his presentation "Collection Development in Humanities and Social Sciences: Past, Present and Future," Michele Casalini delivered a noteworthy vendor's perspective on the collection of non-English publications by North American libraries.

Presenters from outside Europe touched on similar themes. Kizer Walker from Cornell University compared cooperative collection development in Germany with initiatives in the United States, including the 2CUL partnership between Columbia University and Cornell University. In his overview of CIFNAL, Claude Potts (University of California-Berkeley) gave a history of collaboration among North American libraries in the areas of French and Francophone Studies. Silvia Gutiérrez de la Torre (El Colegio de México) discussed the landscape of digital humanities in Latin America.

Managing a digital archive or digitization initiative was a topic of discussion in a number of presentations. Lidia Uziel (Harvard University) noted challenges and opportunities encountered with creating a crowdsourced digital archive of materials related to the 2015 attack against *Charlie Hebdo*. Likewise, Jennifer Thom Dalzin (Newberry Library) spoke about the digitization of the Newberry's collection of 30,000 pamphlets from the French Revolution and the corresponding open data grant. Both presentations outlined best practices and pitfalls to avoid for digitization practices, including copyright, archiving ephemeral web content, and sustainable workflows. A midday poster session provided an additional opportunity for sharing and engagement. Thirty-one posters covered a variety of topics in the areas of digital scholarship, instruction, collections, scholarly publishing, library services, and community cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

Attendees and presenters were invited to provide feedback via an online survey, reports, and a focus group conducted at the 2018 ALA Midwinter Meeting. Overall, at-

tendees found the enthusiasm and innovative fervor around international collaboration and commitment to service very inspirational and rewarding. Likewise, meeting and exchanging ideas with international colleagues with similar responsibilities and interests was another positive aspect many noted. Some noted that these connections have led to regular virtual meetings with European librarians about collaboration. Learning how libraries from other countries tackle collection building, web archiving, user engagement, and other issues provided many with the opportunity to reflect on practices at their home institutions. Quite a few attendees mentioned how they would benefit from ideas or approaches presented at the symposium for specific projects or for professional growth.

One presenter noted how reporting to faculty on her participation at the symposium helped to illustrate the high-level skills academic librarians can offer, such as project management, research planning, instructional design, data management, and community programming. One attendee exclaimed that his participation has put him in a better position to make his library more relevant in the 21st century.

Not surprisingly, the Frankfurt Book Fair was a draw for many to attend the symposium. A handful noted that receiving travel stipends was the only way to financially afford an international conference. Others noted how the stipends enabled them to secure institutional support. A few suggestions regarding logistics were also included in the feedback. Some attendees wished the symposium had been spread out over more than one day, and others wished for more informal sharing sessions with other attendees.<sup>6</sup>

### **Next stop—Italy in 2020**

Building on momentum from the symposium in Frankfurt, a group of European Studies librarians under the leadership of Sarah Sussman (Stanford University) began planning the next meeting almost immediately upon return from Frankfurt. "The New Shape of Sharing: Networks, Expertise, Information"<sup>7</sup>

will be held May 11-14, 2020, in Fiesole, near Florence, Italy. Casalini Libri, which supplies North American libraries with print and electronic resources from southern Europe, has agreed to host the New Shape of Sharing forum. As with the 2017 symposium, CRL is providing administrative support. Both CIFNAL and GNARP have pledged financial support and are likely to offer travel stipends again. The hope is that European vendors will

- changing trends in the European publishing landscape,
- open access and its effects on scholarly communication, and
- onsite research for North American scholars in European libraries and archives.<sup>9</sup>

### **Ongoing need for conferences on Europe**

As librarians are being asked to reexamine



Casalini Libri's offices in Fiesole, Italy. Image copyright Casalini Libri.

be as generous with financial and programmatic support as they were in Frankfurt and Paris. Excursions to libraries and other cultural institutions are also being planned.

### **Call for participation**

Different in format from the symposium in Frankfurt, this multiday event will include interactive breakout sessions, as well as panel presentations and a poster session. The overarching themes of the conference are cooperative collection development and services along with the evolving role of librarians and libraries in the research process. Thus, conversations that started in Frankfurt can continue in Fiesole. The Fiesole planning team has already issued a call for participation<sup>8</sup> and invites librarians, scholars, and vendors to submit proposals for a presentation, poster, or thematic breakout session by September 30, 2019. Some topics of particular interest include:

- building collections in a shared environment,

traditional service models and collection practices in order to better serve users, regular opportunities to engage with and learn from colleagues are an imperative. European studies librarians, like other area studies librarians, are called upon not only to stay current on their region of focus, but also engage and collaborate with international colleagues. As noted by the International and Area Studies Collections in the 21st Century library group,

area studies librarians are ... expected to initiate, establish and nurture their international networks (professional, informational and otherwise) through which they can support the work of others, most notably the students and researchers of our universities.<sup>10</sup>

The events in Frankfurt and Fiesole, as well as future conferences, provide opportunities to foster such collaboration and exchange of information.

## Notes

1. See <https://www.crl.edu/events/frankfurt2017symposium>.

2. See <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/ala-and-german-library-association-sign-agreement/>.

3. For a good overview of this new model, see Kizer Walker, "Re-Envisioning Distributed Collections in German Research Libraries—A View from the U.S.A.," *Bibliothek Forschung Und Praxis* 39, no. 1 (April 2015): 7–12, <https://doi.org/10.1515/bfp-2015-0008>.

4. See <https://beta.historicum.net/home/>.

5. The detailed program, video recordings of the panel presentations, and poster abstracts are available at: <https://www.crl.edu/program>.

6. For additional information on this symposium, see these articles and blog posts: Richard Hacken, "The 2017 Frankfurt International Symposium and Book Fair," WESS Newsletter 41, no. 2 (Spring 2018), [https://wessweb.info/index.php/The\\_2017\\_Frankfurt\\_International\\_Symposium\\_and\\_Book\\_Fair](https://wessweb.info/index.php/The_2017_Frankfurt_International_Symposium_and_Book_Fair) (accessed May 15, 2019).

Heidi Madden, Sarah How, and Sarah G. Wenzel, "Wenn alle Wege nach Frankfurt

führen: Bibliothekare aus zehn Ländern diskutieren Möglichkeiten internationaler Kooperation auf dem Frankfurter Symposium," *BuB: Forum Bibliothek Und Information* 70, no. 1 (January 2018): 56–60, an English-translation is available at <https://wessweb.info/wessimages/4/42/2018BuBarticle.pdf>.

Kristen Totleben, "Frankfurt: New Directions for Libraries, Scholars, and Partnerships," *American Libraries Magazine* (blog), October 25, 2017, <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/frankfurt-symposium-new-directions-libraries-scholars-partnerships/>, accessed May 15, 2019.

7. See <https://www.crl.edu/events/sharing2020>.

8. See <https://www.crl.edu/call-participation>.

9. Questions about proposals or the Fiesole conference in general can be directed to Sarah Sussman, [ssussman@stanford.edu](mailto:ssussman@stanford.edu).

10. "ASC21 Statement: The Value of International Travel for Area Studies Librarians," *International and Area Studies Collections in the 21st Century*, November 16, 2016, <https://sites.utexas.edu/iasc21/2016/11/16/iasc21-statement-the-value-of-international-travel-for-area-studies-librarians/>, accessed May 16, 2019. ¶¶

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(*New models for instruction*, "continues from page 381)

learning of a much broader audience of educators beyond the library realm.

Contextual and structural factors could obviously support or impede teaching librarians in their quest for sustained engagement. In making a case for the abolishment of the one-shot model in favor of more sustainable approaches to integrating information literacy, Melissa Bowles-Terry and Carrie Donovan argue that "the more that librarians teach within this context, the fewer challenges they face," a pattern that results in "perpetuating a cycle of librarians as reactive problem solvers and guest lecturers rather than curriculum developers and campus change agents."<sup>3</sup> If this is true, then librarians and coordinators need to continue to focus on strengths outlined in the Advocate and Leader roles of the Roles and Strengths document, pushing for new models of information literacy that allow librarians

to expand their teaching skills and approach teaching and curriculum design with agency, authenticity and unbridled creativity.

## Notes

1. ACRL's "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," accessed March 21, 2019, [www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework](http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework).

2. Standards and Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians and Coordinators Revision Task Force, "Roles and strengths of teaching librarians," [www.ala.org/acrl/standards/teachinglibrarians](http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/teachinglibrarians).

3. Melissa Bowles-Terry and Carrie Donovan, "Serving Notice on the One-Shot: Changing Roles for Instruction Librarians," *International Information & Library Review* 48, no. 2 (2016): 137–42, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2016.1176457>. ¶¶