

# Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 6 Issue 2

December 2012

## Conference Corner

Doolan, L. 2012. IFLA 2012 conference report. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 6(2), p. 142.

<http://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JIL/article/view/CC-V6-I2-2012-3>

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Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

# IFLA 2012: Helsinki, Finland conference report

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Can you imagine the noise almost 4,000 librarians in one room can make? At the IFLA 2012 opening ceremony in the Helsinki Exhibition and Convention Centre, at some points it was as rowdy as any Freshers' Fair I've attended. Yet during the welcome speeches there was quiet, and during Helena Ranta's opening paper, there was silence. Helena is a forensic dentist; she steps into war zones and identifies the victims of civil wars, rebellions and uprisings. Listening to her speak was both moving and humbling, yet she thanked librarians for creating environments where information is collected and preserved for future generations to learn from, so that just maybe, one day, the horrors she sees will be a thing of past. Well we can but hope.

When you are rushing through your day of meetings with staff and readers, it is easy to forget the purpose of what we are trying to do. In the British Library we are focused on our 2020 Vision, but it's the day-to-day work and the small steps we make that help us achieve the vision. What is so great about any conference, and in particular IFLA, due to its scale, is the energy and enthusiasm you gain and can absorb from others - from a colleague in Nigeria who celebrates encouraging children to read via e-books on a mobile phone to a cutting edge longitudinal study carried out by OCLC and presented by Lynn Sillipigni Connaway. The study followed UK and US students to investigate their motivations and forms of engagement with technology and information during the different stages of their education. Thankfully libraries, librarians and information literacy (IL) all feature as resources used by the students at each stage of their journeys.

Prior to the IFLA conference, there was a satellite conference focusing exclusively on IL, but the main conference also had a morning of papers hosted by the IL and e-learning special interest groups. The German National Library of Economics described how they are using 'micro-learning', giving learning and information in small units so that it can be absorbed quickly and used instantly. This new way of delivering online IL content forms part of the formal teaching programme. Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, presented an interesting paper on the challenges of developing an online IL course for distance learners, from both the librarian's and academic's perspective. There is so much to choose from at IFLA, and it was great to attend papers I wouldn't normally get a chance to go to. I'm not saying I went to anything on cataloguing or metadata; that is a step too far even for me! But I did attend some of the plenary sessions, where I heard Yrjo Engerstrom present his work on 'Knotworking' as a change laboratory for librarians, students and academics. In business terms, the laboratory brings together the client and partners to analyse the work and data of the library. Using this and the ideas of this group, over the course of hours, days or even weeks, the team develops a strategy and road map for future service development.

Now, anyone who knows me will know I couldn't possibly complete a review of a conference without mentioning the social events. At IFLA the exhibition opens in the evening of the first day of the conference, and it's a great opportunity to meet lots of international suppliers and network with colleagues over a glass or two of wine. The cultural evening was a buffet of Finnish food and beer, with a New Orleans band and a disco. Perfect.

IFLA is an amazing experience that I would recommend to anyone. Next year's destination will be Singapore, so watch this space!