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## Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning: Past to Future

[Closing Keynote Address]

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### Abstract:

*This address reflects on the origins and development of the Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning Section of IFLA. The Section started as the Continuing Library Education Network Exchange (CLENE), then became the Continuing Professional Education Round Table (CPERT), finally it developed into the current Section. The contribution of Dr Elizabeth Stone and other early members is highlighted and suggestions are given for identifying trends that will allow the Section to move into the future successfully.*

**Keywords:** IFLA CPDWL Section

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Predicting what will happen in the future is always a challenge, but in some cases, it is pretty safe because it has little penalty if it is a bad guess. When it is for the distant future, one is seldom still around for those who heard the prediction to sneer if it was totally inaccurate. When we are correct with our prediction, people quote us at conferences. We are indebted to our founder for her prediction about an IFLA presence for continuing professional development.

As Clare Walker said, Dr. Elizabeth Stone was a visionary whose plans for IFLA and continuing education were quickly acknowledged. She studied continuing education as the topic of her doctoral dissertation (Varlejs, Woolls & Sheldon, 2003, p. 70) and through her efforts began the Continuing Library Education Network Exchange (CLENE). She was able

to gain funding to hold our World Conference on Continuing Education for the Library and Information Science Professions in 1985. She understood the need for a section within IFLA to help members around the world become aware of continuing education opportunities and to be able to plan and participate. At the close of the World Conference, the conferees proposed an eight-point plan of action that was presented to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Professional Board; and the Continuing Professional Education Round Table (CPERT) was launched. Dr. Stone's vision for a worldwide organization to focus attention on continuing education unfolded. We are now celebrating an anniversary and it is my assignment to create a forecast for the future.

Our future is tied to the world of information and at IFLA that world is tied to something called a library. However, we must agree that the "building" is no longer brick and mortar, but can be digital.

But how do we forecast our future? The section has been and is on a clear path to continue the vision of Dr. Stone and others who have followed and supported this endeavor. A new expert in the US, Miguel Figueroa, is currently the Director of the American Library Association's (ALA) Center for the Future of Libraries. This center was created less than two years ago, and he states that his project "focuses much of its work on identifying emerging trends relevant to libraries, the librarians, and the communities they serve." If we are going to be in the business of meeting the future, a start would be to look at how our section identifies trends because "they can be key to understanding what the future might bring. Identifying and organizing trends helps us think about the changes happening in the world and the potential effects they will have on our future." (Figueroa, 2015, p. 28)

## Identifying Trends

In the past, Dr. Stone, as chair of the Round Table, planned program meetings for the next three IFLA meetings, at which she surveyed those in attendance to confirm priorities for the Round Table. She created a newsletter, maintained a mailing list of over 600 persons, and initiated publications sponsored by CPERT. The *Continuing Professional Education: an IFLA Guidebook* was, as were many of the products, "often conceived and always implemented" (Woolls, 1991, p. viii) by Dr. Stone. Because she asked the membership, she learned their needs, which paralleled trends in the profession.

A committee chaired by Brooke E. Sheldon developed goals for the *IFLA Medium-Term Program 1992-1997*. One of those goals was to hold a second world conference in Barcelona. Stone's paper (Stone, 1993) for the second world conference listed highlights of CPERT and asked the conference to discuss means to achieve not only the 1992-1997 goals but also to

- increase CPERT collaboration with other professional groups
- develop a curriculum for CE coordinators/planners; and
- provide CE options for all those who serve in libraries.
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This became a reality with the Barcelona conference title, *Continuing Professional Education and IFLA: Past, Present, and a Vision for the Future*, anticipating a future for CPE in IFLA. But what about following the trends? It seemed that we were on the cusp of the explosion of distance education. The first general session of the Second World Conference featured seven papers on distance education, certainly a trend. Richard Smith (1993) reported the success of

his efforts to teach how to use the Internet, over the Internet, to students around the world in two and one half weeks. He ended with

Training users how to use the resources of the international network, Internet, has been a very rewarding experience. The success of the venture shows the way for others who wish to use this challenging means to share information for library and information science professionals worldwide. (Smith, 1993, p. 89)

Discussing competencies to meet the distance education trend followed on into the Third World Conference, and the methods to provide them continued to feature ways to provide distance education. Multimedia resources, desktop video teleconferences, CD-ROMs, and teleworking were introduced. This expanded at the Fourth World Conference into developing lifelong continuing education to be provided across space and time. At this conference, the Round Table officers found themselves facing the decision of IFLA to close all Round Tables.

As IFLA began to dismantle its Round Tables, Ann Ritchie, then Chair, skillfully moved CPERT into Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning (CPDWL). She explained, “The change of name signified a broader scope and placed an emphasis on a number of distinguishing characteristics which deserve some reflection. ... [E]ducation is only one of the ways in which individuals continued to ... grow... [T]he concept ‘workplace learning’ signified the inclusion of all the different types of development activities associated with the workplace.” Workplace learning activities “have an important contribution to make towards continuously improving the quality of the workforce and raising standards of professional practice.” (Ritchie, 2005, p.12).

In identifying trends and challenges to the profession, the section was responding to new roles in libraries, a “voyage of discovery” in the “exploration of new and emerging roles in libraries and about how we can prepare for these through our continuing professional development and workplace learning activities” (Ritchie, 2005, p. 13). Authors of the 25 papers discussed how to find out what training was needed, opportunities in the workplace, and developing courses. Curriculum or course development was a goal of the 1992-1997 Medium Term Program.

The profession had been developing leaders, but perhaps not rapidly enough. Leadership institutes were formed in the US, with ALA’s Snowbird Institute for emerging leaders. Some other US state associations also began offering these experiences. The title of the Seventh World Conference *Continuing Professional Development: Pathways to Leadership in the Library and Information World*, matched IFLA’s theme, “Libraries for the Future.” Section Chair Jana Varlejs stated, in her welcome, “Our focus is on developing the leaders for the libraries of the future, because we believe that libraries and their related organizations can be only as effective as their leaders.” (Varlejs, 2007, p. 11)

While the Section has been able to identify trends, how is the section organizing and responding to trends? How will the section continue to be able to identify trends to predict the future?

## **Organizing and Responding to Trends**

Figueroa explains the reason for the “Trend Library” ALA and the services it will be offering to members:

The trend library ([ala.org/transforming-libraries/future/trends](http://ala.org/transforming-libraries/future/trends)) is designed to provide the library community with a centralized and regularly updated source for trends—including how they are developing; why they matter for libraries; and links to the reports, articles, and resources that can further explain their significance. (Figueroa, 2015, p. 29)

For our future, information shared by this office can be used to match the trends identified by CPDWL leadership to Figueroa’s first five trends: anonymity, collective impact, “fast casual”, resilience, and robots.

The first, anonymity, will take some creativity to see how we might use programs to help professionals since it is all about providing a welcoming facility. The internet has provided the means for us to pour out our souls while remaining faceless to the multitude of “listeners” who are reading the anonymous app. It truly encourages the shy to tell all. However, if persons do connect over the internet in any capacity, they will need a safe haven to meet the person with whom they have been “talking.” Our information centers must welcome those persons who meet and greet electronically and then want to meet in person, whether for social events or for shared research projects.

The second, collective impact, is the process of communities working together to solve social problems that can be impossible for single organizations. The practice of communities, even widely divided, working together to solve problems is not new and, with the opportunities provided through electronic communication, the gap has narrowed. CPDWL can help professionals learn the best ways to use electronic communication to gather communities through keeping members aware of the newest forms of community, as well as the interpersonal skills needed to build communities.

To be “fast casual,” our information centers must link necessary “menu” options with APPS to our resources, and other advances in technology, that will appeal to the users who live in more in a digital world. Our information centers must transform into those spaces that provide the needed resources when and where they are needed and then we need to build the APPs to provide access. Teaching our members how to build APPs is critical.

Another trend, resilience, has to do with how one recovers from natural disasters, weather and economic disasters, and terrorist attacks. CPDWL needs to offer professional development opportunities that will help members learn about how, not only to provide resilience, but to help others learn how to be resilient.

The last trend described is robots or collaborative robots (CoBots) which will be improved over time. Figueroa sees them as helpful in retrieving and sorting materials, again in a library building. Determining what robots and CoBots as well as drones might do in an information setting needs to be discussed and any examples of best practices need to be shared.

However, none of this will work if we don't add new people to our group and keep retraining those in our section and in our information profession. The need for retooling our members has been ongoing over time. Our Eighth World conference focused attention on *Strategies for Regenerating the Library and Information Profession* and included sessions on recruiting, mentoring/coaching, leadership, changing demands in the workplace, evolving career trajectories, and some critiques of library education from the field. One of our regular conference sessions discussed succession planning.

## **The Future**

The future is always tied to the past lest we blunder on repeating past mistakes. In her introduction of Malcolm S. Knowles at our First World Conference, Brooke Sheldon explained that the Task Force for the conference knew they

would have to take into account with is happening with the way we learn... For one thing, the new technology -- electronic learning -- is more flexible, more participatory, in that it gives the user more power, more choices, so that we are moving further and further way from the traditional teaching environment. (Sheldon, 1985, p. 11)

The degree to which Sheldon's electronic learning has effected the way universities, conferences, institutes, and self-directed learning is evident in the conference papers here in Cape Town. How wise these conference planners have been to choose their theme, "Taking Charge of Your LIS Career: Personal Strategies, Institutional Programs, Strong Libraries."

Professional development is one of those necessities for all professionals who need to keep current with trends, new applications, and our Section is the leader in this endeavor. The changes in technology will continue to challenge those who help others find information. The distance between the haves and the have-nots will not be as great as access to information becomes easier with new technologies.

In the present, the political climate is such, in some areas, that those in command work to limit access to information beyond that which their government chooses to provide. Understanding and implementing any technology that will help our users have access to information will tear down those barriers where political limits to access as well as limited resources have limited access to information.

Figuroa plans to add to his trend library any changes "in trends across society, technology, education, the environment, politics, the economy, and demographics" (Figuroa, 2015, p. 29). These are areas where the Section might focus, but to truly understand what CPDWL needs, one should return to one of Dr. Stone's good plans, to ask those at the conference what they think CPDWL needs. With that in mind, would you please, before you leave, jot down one or two things you will be doing to set up your personal learning network and how CPDWL can help you meet your goals? CPDWL will continue because of the strong leadership in place. They can start planning the next preconference. They can start inventing ways for the Section to help.

Having discussed the future with the continuing bombardment of new technologies, we should return to Elizabeth Stone who cautioned

But in our frantic rush to share and make use of the new technologies and reach huge numbers of persons around the globe, let us be sure to remember and apply the basic principles of adult learning enunciated to us by Cyril Houle, Malcolm Knowles and Alan Knox, and the practices of leaders in the art of distance learning from The Open University, the University of Tubingen, and the University of South Africa.” (Stone, 2001, p. xii)

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning  
The end is where we start from. (T.S. Eliot, “Four Quartets”)

Thank you.

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