

*IFLA CPDWL Satellite meeting:
Librarians and information professionals as (pro)motors of change:
immersing, including and initiating digital transformation for smart societies
Date: 20 – 21 August 2019
Location: National and University Library in Zagreb, Croatia*

NPSIG IFLAcamp – a place for collaboration and the exchange of ideas

Antoine Torrens

Director of the City Libraries of Compiègne, France
E-mail address: antoine.torrens@hotmail.fr

Marija Šimunović

Librarian and coordinator at the European Documentation Centre – Faculty of Economics & Business, University of Zagreb, Croatia
E-mail address: marijasimunovic@gmail.com



Copyright © 2019 by Antoine Torrens and Marija Šimunović. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

Abstract:

This paper will present a small organisational unit within IFLA organisational structure that allows every new professional to participate, organize and exchange ideas. The paper will give insight to the NPSIG and IFLAcamp (un)conference short history, organisational model and present examples of people and their participation in NPSIG or IFLAcamp. Through a 6-minute video clip, we will question a few real people stories and consider how this type of event may help information professionals build their own skills, develop new ideas and implement them in different countries on different continents.

Keywords: NPSIG, new professionals, unconference, IFLAcamp, professional network.

Introduction

Working as an information professional also means being part of a professional community, that is to say, attending events, lectures, trainings and conferences. These events help librarians and information professionals widen their knowledge, enlarge their network and strengthen their skills. It gives them an opportunity to meet library professionals, exchange ideas about their work and identify new trends in the library field. Far from the idea of the librarian as an

incarnation of conservatism and permanence, a new model of entrepreneur librarian can't be separated from look at international experiences (Pun, 2015, p. 8).

At the same time, finding the right path into the professional jungle is far from easy for librarians, especially when this jungle is international. Librarians arriving in that new context may feel a bit lost (Jarno Laakso in NPSIG Video for the Australian New Librarians Symposium, s. 11) and need a structure to give them a leg-up in this new world.

Library associations are a key player in the professional community at a local, national as well as international level, and can provide professionals with a chance to meet other professionals, learn from more experienced peers and acquire, for instance, organization and communication skills. Individuals can be involved in regional, national and international level in different programs or events.

This paper will talk about small organizational unit within IFLA – namely IFLA New Professional Special Interest Group and efforts of the new professionals worldwide to exchange their ideas, to share the knowledge and experience, to widen professional network and to collaborate even for people on opposite sides of the world.

IFLA New Professionals Special Interest Group (NPSIG)

Historic update

IFLA NPSIG was founded in 2004 during the IFLA Congress in Buenos Aires by Loida Garcia-Febo (Puerto Rico, USA), Andrew Cranfield (Denmark) and Stuart Hamilton (United Kingdom). It was defined as an open global network for library and information science new professionals and supporters. Structurally NPSIG is a special interest group within the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), affiliated with the Management of Library Associations Section (MLAS). NPSIG is led by its two Co-Convenors and its Information Coordinator. Together with a global network of enthusiasts they drive the activities of NPSIG, all on a voluntary basis. The group always welcomes new members and supporters who are encouraged to join the informal network and to contribute to the group's online and on-site activities.

NPSIG is an initiative for and by new professionals. Its main goal is to welcome new information professionals to the library field by hosting virtual and in-person workshops, information sessions, and conference events. The group meets during IFLA Congresses and other international events where they organize sessions and workshops. The group's leadership and members are also very active coordinating virtual meetings and online collaborations.

NPSIG has had a large number of people involved in it since 2004. From their beginnings until today they hosted numerous webinars and conference sessions in more than 18 different countries, hosting many of satellite conferences, presenting virtually and directly at international LIS conferences, collaborating in partnership with other IFLA bodies and library associations, with a very successful social media presence on many platforms connecting the global library community (they won several awards *IFLA Communicator of the Year*) and establishing a successful two-day “unconference” IFLAcamp as a preconference of IFLA WLIC.

Personal experiences

Throughout its history, NPSIG has had a big impact on many people - as library professionals and as human beings. In our short video presentation, our colleagues and friends from around the world talk about their experiences with NPSIG and how these experiences have influenced their professional development, careers, interests and even their private life. We all know that when people collaborate and work well together, they eventually become good colleagues and friends. So we can claim that *A side effect of being a member of NPSIG is a high risk of finding a new point of view and gaining new lifelong friends and partners in professional development.*

IFLAcamp as an event

IFLAcamp is a two-day satellite meeting in the form of an unconference that provides plenty of space for spontaneous sessions and group discussions. IFLAcamp can be attended independently of the IFLA Congress and participation is free of charge (but registration is required). The participant-driven approach allows for active involvement of all attendees and including all kinds of topics of interests. The first IFLAcamp was held in 2012 during the IFLA Conference in Helsinki, Finland, and it was a fresh and new event concept held by and for new professionals in the library field. Since then, there have been six IFLAcamp unconferences held as a satellite meeting or preconference of IFLA WLIC.

IFLAcamp events:

1. IFLAcamp “New Professionals Now!” held in Hämeenlinna, Finland from 9 – 10 August 2012¹,
2. IFLAcamp2 held in Li Ka Shing Library, Singapore Management University, Singapore from 15-16 August 2013²,
3. IFLAcamp3 held in at the National School of Information Sciences and Libraries (Enssib) in Lyon, France from 14-15 August 2014³,
4. IFLAcamp4 held at OCLC Headquarters in Dublin, Ohio, USA from 11-12 of August 2016⁴,
5. IFLAcamp5 held at at Dolnośląska Biblioteka Publiczna im. Tadeusza Mikulskiego — the Regional public library of Wrocław in Wrocław, Poland from 17-18 august 2017⁵,
6. IFLAcamp6 held at Raja Tun Uda Library, Shah Alam, Selangor - Selangor Public Library, Malaysia on 23-24 August 2018⁶,
7. IFLAcamp7 is going to be held at Municipal Library in Ilioupoli, Athens, Greece on 22-23 August 2019⁷

During past IFLAcamp events, new professionals have had the opportunity to encourage each other on numerous subjects, themes, scratches, ideas, collaborations, new projects and, of course, networking.

¹ <https://npsig.wordpress.com/archive/iflacamp-wordpress-com/iflacamp-2012/schedule/> (July 10, 2019)

² <https://npsig.wordpress.com/archive/iflacamp-wordpress-com/iflacamp-2013/> (July 10, 2019)

³ <https://npsig.wordpress.com/archive/iflacamp-wordpress-com/iflacamp-2014/> (July 10, 2019)

⁴ <https://npsig.wordpress.com/iflacamp-2016/> (July 10, 2019)

⁵ <https://iflacamp5.wordpress.com/> (July 10, 2019)

⁶ <https://iflacamp6.wordpress.com/> (July 10, 2019)

⁷ <https://iflacamp.wordpress.com/> (July 10, 2019)

IFLAcamp participants have ridden bicycles on the beautiful streets of France and Poland, participated in library flash mob on Wroclaw town square, visited numerous libraries, met local colleagues and bridged cultural and professional differences and challenges.

IFLAcamp as a tool to identify trending topics

The library world has been facing huge transformations in the past decades and will need to deal with new challenges in future years. Therefore, identifying fresh directions for librarians to think and act on seems necessary.

A leading principle of IFLAcamp events, based on a bottom-up approach, is that a large part of their time is not pre-defined by the organizers, but decided on-site by the attendees. Using various voting procedures IFLAcampers usually propose topics, then vote to decide which ones they want to discuss during small group sessions. This principle has been used in many “camp” events but also in other library events such as Bobcatsss or Next Library.

Below are the topics proposed by the attendees at IFLAcamp #6 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia:

- Personalized service: how far should we go? Are audio books relevant as a library collection ?
- Implementing the Sigma method in libraries
- Teaching – How do you do it in your country ?
- Formal or non formal education ?
- Will artificial intelligence (AI) become a threat or an opportunity to the library industry ?
- « Perpustakaan desa » to hold local / historical / cultural heritage
- Can IFLA have ambassadors in libraries around the world?
- How can libraries transform – unconventionally ?
- Special collections in special libraries – the advantages
- Reference management tools – when to introduce them ? 1st year or later ?
- Doctors has Dr. Engineer has Ir. When will librarian have Lr. ?
- Reference collections : what do users really need ?
- Are people attracted to the library by books or by other features such as a multimedia section, edutainment, etc. ?
- What librarian skills are needed for today’s libraries ?
- Libraries versus Google ?
- Shall librarians play a role as knowledge counselors ?
- Multitasking in the new era
- Video and photo skills
- Reach the hard to reach
- Invisible librarians
- Knowledgeable, historical or both ?
- Digital library vs. conventional library
- Should a librarian be an expert in any social media platforms ?
- Marketing the library (FB ads, IG ads, Google Ads) ?
- Are printed materials (books, articles, manuscripts) still relevant in a world of online references ?
- Library for business
- Implementing librarians in public schools
- Books vs gadgets (smartphones, etc.)

- Who is more knowledgeable ? A young librarian or a senior librarian?
- What kind of activities do libraries organise during school holidays?
- Counselling centre in libraries?
- How can libraries help people with disabilities in their social life?
- Should libraries be involved in any scientific research?
- Should librarians write more and contribute with new ideas, instead of being simple keepers of information?
- How do we provide an ROI Report that would provide upper management with a better understanding towards the need of resources?

Conclusion

IFLA NPSIG is an open network of new professionals in the library field, with the aim of being made by new professionals for new professionals worldwide. Among other types of events – webinars, WLIC sessions, national conferences, etc., IFLAcamp is designed as an opportunity for professionals to connect and cooperate with colleagues at an international level in order to improve their skills, network and ideas so that, ultimately they fill their primary goal to innovate the library field, and to make it relevant to its users, and continue to improve the development of society.

References

Pun, R. 2015. “Becoming the entrepreneur librarian: building skills, networks and experiences abroad”. In: *Taking Charge of your LIS Career: Personal Strategies, Institutional Programs, Strong Libraries*, 12–14 August 2015, City of Cape Town, South Africa.

<http://library.ifla.org/1919/>

Finegan, A. Chiappara-Estevez, L. and Torrens, A., 2019. “[Australian] New Librarians Symposium – NPSIG Video 1”. In: *Collaborating across borders with the New Professionals Special Interest Group*. July 6th, 2019, Adelaide, Australia.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfhX9cijFh8&t>

NPSIG Activities Annual Report September 2016 – August 2017. Available at:

<https://npsig.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/npsig-report-september-2016-august-2017.pdf>

NPSIG Activity report 2012. Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/npsig/npsig-report-wlic2012-updated>