

## Feature Article

### Maritimes to the Midwest: Reflections on the 2016 IFLA World Library and Information Congress

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With the support of the APLA Memorial Award and an ALA National US Committee Fellowship Grant, I was able to attend this year's International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) World Library and Information Congress in Columbus, Ohio. Having only attended APLA and OLA Library Conferences for a day or two at a time, both as a presenter and attendee, attending the IFLA Congress was an exciting, inspiring, and very rewarding experience.

The IFLA World Library and Information Congress offers a multitude of business and committee meetings, plenary sessions, and professional sessions, spread amongst various venues. These venues include public libraries, academic libraries, the Columbus Convention Centre, and the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). Most sessions and meetings were open to all; attendees were encouraged to sit in on as many as possible. This year's Congress focused heavily on encouraging new membership, new ideas, and bringing new life to the IFLA membership. Of the 4,000 plus professionals in attendance, 850 were newcomers like myself. The opening address by President Donna Scheeder repeatedly mentioned advocacy for the profession, transparency, and inclusion. I have since spoken to a few colleagues who have attended in the past or heard that the Congress was a "white paper" event. Most were pleasantly surprised that the 2016 Congress was an active, hands-on event encouraging new membership and new ideas.

While in Columbus, I attended as many sessions as possible and chatted and networked with librarians from around the world (attendees from Bhutan, New Zealand, Switzerland, Trinidad, Ireland, Taiwan, Sweden, and the United States were all regulars at my hotel breakfast table). While imposter syndrome and a feeling of information overload both periodically reared their heads, I found the sessions interesting, engaging, and informative. David S. Ferriero, Archivist of the United States, discussed the 13 billion pages in the US Archives, the wiki editathons he hosts and his love of Wikipedia. Marie Østergård, of Aarhus Public Libraries in Denmark, inspired her audience with images of the new Dokk1 and descriptions of the planning and implementation of this third space (98% self-service facility, open with no staff between 7-10pm, 100 automated parking spaces, and 4000 visitors a day). Representatives from SAGE and the Library of Congress gave tips on getting published in professional journals (edit, edit, edit) and using Kudos.com to promote your work. Author and celebrity Wes Moore's emotional plenary

session was a highlight. Wes turned his life around and extolled the impact of literacy and libraries on children and youth facing inner-city challenges. I urge readers to check out the book “The Other Wes Moore”.

My favorite session was the IFLA President’s session featuring a panel consisting of Mark Surman, Executive Director of the Mozilla Foundation, Google’s Fred Von Lohmann, Jack Cushman from Harvard University, and Maura Marx, Deputy Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services . Maura Marx talked about Michelle Obama’s Open eBooks app and the Mukurtu open source aboriginal platform. Mark Surman discussed global apps, guarding the open nature of the internet, copyright in the age of Instagram and Twitter (who knew Eiffel Tower selfies were illegal?), and Mozilla Maker Parties. Fred Von Lohmann covered publishers and copyright, online text and the visibly challenged, and the “radical change” coming from the next billion Google users. Jack Cushman discussed digitization and Harvard’s H20 program wherein professors create their own textbooks. Jack encouraged information professionals with his mantra: “If it’s complicated, make it simple. If it’s boring, make it weird. If it’s not broken, break it”.

The IFLA social events were unique and entertaining. The opening session featured a history of Ohio and included a video address from John Glenn, a welcome message from President Obama, trapeze artists, a men’s choir, a youth hip hop band, a fashion show, and a drag queen lip synching to Adele. A tour of the local public library highlighted its unique children’s area, topiary portrait garden and a beautiful original exterior Carnegie façade encased within its new modern structure. The Cultural Evening took place at the Columbus, Ohio Center of Science and Industry (COSI) and included music, strolling performers, a silent dance party, thematic food areas, a high wire unicycle ride, and opportunities to network or relax.

The 2016 IFLA World Library and Information Congress was a whirlwind of information, networking and learning, and quite possibly a once in a lifetime opportunity. One important take away for me from the whole adventure was to always check my APLA emails. Lynne Somers forwarded an email to the APLA Listserv from the ALA requesting fellowship applications to attend the Congress. Had I not replied to that call, I would have missed out on an amazing experience.