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And They Were There

Report of Meetings — SALALM and ALA New Orleans

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Report by Claire-Lise Bénard

Borders — geographic borders, political borders, linguistic borders, and even culinary borders — was the theme of the 2006 SALALM Annual Conference (“Crossing Borders, Latin American Migrations: Collections and Services from New Library Users”). It thus made perfect sense to hold the conference outside of our borders. This year’s SALALM Conference (Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Materials) took place in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic from March 19-22, 2006. The setting was lovely, with the conference hotel located right across from the Caribbean Sea. Because of the location, more panels/meetings than usual were conducted in Spanish.

As usual, the first two days of the conference were devoted to committee meetings. These meetings are an essential part of the conference as Salalmists report on projects and discuss national and international trends. Some included formal presentations while others consisted solely of discussions. Regional groups (LANE, Latin America North East Libraries Consortium; CALAFIA, California Cooperative Latin American Collection Development; MOLLAS, Midwest Organization of Libraries for Latin American Studies; LASER, Latin American Studies Southeast Regional Libraries Consortium) met as well as LAMP (Latin American Microform Project) and regular SALALM committees such as Reference, Cataloging, Bibliographic Instruction, Gifts and Exchanges, Serials, Libreros/Librarians/Publishers, etc.

I’ll report briefly on two committee meetings, Cataloging and Electronic Resources. Ana Cristán, from the Library of Congress, current chair of the Cataloging Committee, conducted the meeting in English and Spanish. She reported on cataloging rules updates and on IME1CC meetings (IFLA Meeting of Experts on an International Cataloging Code). She noted that the next set of cataloging rules will not be book-centered and will describe the cataloging universe from a totally different perspective. Rules will no longer be Anglo-American, but most likely still be Anglo-centric. She also reported on the Program for Cooperative Cataloging, which now numbers 63 international participants. She was glad to report that 50 Dominican librarians attended a SALALM pre-conference workshop on MARC21. The Electronic Resources Committee attracted a large crowd, over 50 people. Participants reported on digitization projects, open archive portals, the Cybera portal (www.cybera.de), and the redesign of the HAPI Website (Hispanic American Periodicals Index) based at UCLA. Committee members also reported problems with online newspapers, an issue that never seems to go away.

Panel presentations ran the gamut from Latin America collections in Europe and Canada, to librarians and book dealers, migration issues, digital projects, bibliographic instruction, and film. Lief Adelson and César Rodríguez presented two perspectives on the relationship between book dealers and librarians. At SALALM, this relationship is crucial. Unlike other library groups, book dealers are an integral part of SALALM. Adelson, Mexican book dealer, gave an overview of how the business has changed. Academic librarians in the US have less time to select and rely more on approval plans. Cooperative acquisition has also changed the environment for the vendor. One library may concentrate on one region, and another library on another. As a result, the vendor simply sells less books. Vendors also feel pressured to contribute bibliographic records, which are an added cost. Adelson concluded that to prosper, vendors need to provide more specialized servers and more personal attention to customers. César Rodríguez, from Yale, and Lynn Shirey, from Harvard, reported on their institution’s cooperative acquisitions pilot project. At first, cooperation was discussed in very broad terms: digitization projects, cataloging, inter-library loan, etc. Finally they decided to narrow it down to collection development. Both institutions have strong Latin American collections with the end result of a fair amount of cooperation. They have overlapping approval plans with some materials getting little use. Both institutions still want to collect core materials but only collect non-core materials for specific areas. They approached their respective faculty members and received muted support rather than enthusiastic support. They needed help from book dealers to change their collecting strategies and they picked two countries, Mexico and Chile. They divided Mexico geographically, Harvard collecting for the southern states and Yale for the northern states and Mexico City. Since publishing is centralized in Chilt, the country was divided by topic rather than geographically. The goal of the project is to reduce non-core duplication. In a nutshell, this is how it works: book vendors decide what is considered core versus non-core; they send non-core material to the other institution first (i.e., the vendor sends Harvard’s books first to Yale. Yale reviews the titles and decides if it wants some for its own collection. Yale then sends the books to Harvard). This process ensures that the vendor’s idea of what is considered non-core materials closely follows the bibliographers’ ideas of what is considered non-core. Both libraries hope to skip this fairly complicated first step once they feel that the system is working well. Vendors in the audience remarked that as they sell less duplicate copies, their profits will lessen. Others noted that the use of ILL will increase and that considering that the average ILL transaction costs an average of $60, it may actually be cheaper for libraries to buy the book. But others reminded us that the cost of ordering, cataloging, and shelving was higher.

A panel was devoted to the exports of missionary books, but much of what was presented was also covered in the sessions on digitization and cataloging. A final panel was devoted to the role of the University Presses in an expanding world. And so, the conference was over. It was an enjoyable and intellectually stimulating event, and I look forward to attending next year’s in Argentina. As always, the annual conference of the Latin American librarians was a success.

From the University Presses

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joker, and so far I’ve been ignoring a big one: digital communications technologies and their manifold disruptions, for good and ill, of the whole scholarly communications enterprise. Scholars are finding new ways of doing research and of presenting their findings. University libraries have been developing new ways of providing access for their faculty and students, not just in the library, but in dorms, off campus, and even abroad. Legislators and the courts are struggling to amend and interpret the consequences of the new technologies for the laws on copyright, the First Amendment, libel and privacy.

And university presses, often in collaboration with libraries, and with funding assistance from the Mellon Foundation and others, are working to develop new methods of publishing and the new business models needed to sustain them. As in any period of rapid change and experiment, some of these projects will succeed and others will fail, but the vital thing is that all of us, the professionals dedicated to nonprofit scholarly communications, support each other in the search for new methods, new systems, new paradigms, so that whatever our future looks like, it is one we have built to serve our interests. Sometimes giving support to each other for a larger goal means giving up something that may appear attractive in the short term, and I’ll have more to say about some of those conflicts in future columns. But if we don’t work together, the future will be built for us by players with quite different interests in mind.

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gration: export of diseases, of money, of cooking, and of gangs. David Block, Cornell, reported on “Maladie sans frontières,” or the cholera epidemic of 1991-95. Not much was written on the epidemic that caused 750,000 people to be sick in Latin America since it had little impact on the United States. The Peruvian government denied that cholera was rampant and President Fujimori, against recommendations from the medical community, ate ceviche (uncooked seafood) in public to prove that it was safe. As a result, cholera had a particularly devastating effect on Peru, especially in the coastal regions. Molly Vitorte, Stanford, reported on remittances from the US to Mexico. Huge amounts of money flow to Latin America each year ($45 billion in 2004) and the money transfer industry is booming. It doubled in the last five years in Mexico alone. For many years, the business was dominated by Western Union, which charged a hefty fee. There is great competition today and the fees are much lower — and with ATM transfers, it is more difficult to track remittances. Good primary sources are central banks, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank. Gustavo von Bischoffshausen, from the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in Peru, discussed the culinary frontier in Peru, on how food and migration intersect through immigrant populations and tourism. Gabriele Toth, from Chicago State University, discussed the migration of Latinos from California to Central America. In the mid-1990s, the US began deporting gang members back to their original country. Often, these people had come to the US as children and do not speak Spanish. The increase in violence and crime in Nicaragua and El Salvador were devastating and overwhelmed local governments. It is estimated that there are 100,000 gang members in Central America and Mexico.

Another panel was devoted to Latin American collections. Hortencia Calvo, Tulane, reported on post-Katrina damage such as flooding, mold, recovery process, and the reorganization of academic programs at Tulane. Tulane will be fully recovered in 2008 and will host the SALA/L annual conference. François Beaulieu Thiboule, working at the Bibliothèque Nationale d’Haïti, reported on Haiti’s literary patrimony. She described the challenges of dealing with historical collections divided among three libraries.

A panel on films was most enjoyable. Jesús Alonso-Regalado, SUNY-Albany, provided a list of Websites to see short films from Spain and Latin America. These sites are good ways for film makers to publicize their work. It included museum sites, network and library sites, and videoblogs. The panel would not have been complete without a film on Dominican baseball, the country’s passion. Laura Shedenhelm of the University of Georgia showed a short film on Dominican baseball and the problem of doping. The film is part of the Peabody Collection at the University of Georgia which holds over 2,000 radio and television entries related to Latin America, Spain, Portugal, and Hispanics in the US.

The 2006 conference attracted many librarians from the Caribbean. It also attracted a fair number of Canadian librarians happy to flee Canada and enjoy the Caribbean weather. SALA/L members were treated to several receptions, with local dances and speeches from Dominican government representatives. Members particularly enjoyed a reception sponsored by the Dominican government held in the Museo de las Casas Reales, an art museum in the colonial part of Santo Domingo. Next year’s conference will be in Albuquerque, New Mexico.


by Eleanor I. Cook (Appalachian State University, Boone, NC) <cookel@appstate.edu>

So What was ALA in New Orleans Really Like?

Sara Nelson, in her regular column in Publishers Weekly for July 19, 2006, summed up the ALA Conference experience in a nutshell — pretty much business as usual. And yet, it wasn’t.

When I arrived on Thursday, there were perky girls in bright yellow polo shirts and khaki shorts running around in the airport being really nice to us. I had booked my round-trip airport shuttle over the Internet ahead of time and that turned out to be a good idea. The efficient and friendly welcome at the airport set the stage for the entire visit — everyone was happy to see us and it showed.

When I arrived at my hotel, I found that the bar and the breakfast buffet usually available were not operational. The staff sheepishly apologized — but I really did understand — I was just happy to have a decent room where almost everything worked. Except a few things — for example, the telephone messaging system was not working at all. I was happy though since our room had nice linens, soap and shampoo, and the AC actually worked. That was all my roommate and I cared about and so it was fine, and at the government rate of $96 per night we were not complaining.

I spent Thursday afternoon exploring the French Quarter, in an attempt to gauge how it had fared — and found it somewhat the same. What I noticed was different was fewer people, more storefronts closed or in the process of being renovated, and higher prices for everything. I stopped at a hole-in-the-wall cafe for a dish of crawfish etouffee that for a mere $12 gave me a perfect roux but more celery than crawfish. Disappointing, but the waitress was sincere and I left her a good tip.

Swinging through Jackson Square, the place was immaculate but empty. I headed back down towards the business district and strolled through the River Walk, which seemed unchanged but eerily empty as well. There I ran into a very cute young guy at a kiosk selling lottery tickets and manicure implements, who charmed me into buying riduculously overpriced indulgences. He had been in the US (and New Orleans) for all of two months, so he said, and was originally from Israel. I didn’t ask how this came to pass, and wasn’t sure I wanted to know, but he was totally delightful and so I sent other colleagues his way. I hope his excellent sales skills take him far.

A number of the stores at the River Walk were open for business, but shockingly, the food court was almost empty — only four to five food establishments were open the entire time. ALA was happening. This caused some long lines at the Mexican and Pizza spots, but since I happen to like sushi, I had that twice for lunch and there was never a line there.

And not a single “Cajun” food court place was open, which seemed totally weird.

The part of the Convention Center nearest the River Walk was not open — that was the part damaged by storm refugees in the aftermath of Katrina. But the area outside it was clean and free of any evidence of the misery that occurred there.

While there were a number of high-profile restaurants still not open, many others were, and the highlight for me was returning to two of my favorite New Orleans eateries: Mother’s, and Pascal’s Manale. Both of these restaurants have been around for years. Physically, Mother’s escaped serious damage, although its staff suffered great losses personally and I suspect the FEMA trailers in their parking lot are what some of them are calling home for the time being. Mother’s hours have been greatly cut back, which was true of a lot of places. Finding something open for any meal on Sunday was the challenge.

ALA devotees of Mother’s discovered that since it did not open until 7:30 am, they needed to get in line prior to that in order to either get something to go for that 8:00 am meeting or else not worry about it and stay for the blackened hair and grins and biscuits and the heck with that meeting!

Pascal’s Manale, in the Garden District, was not so lucky and flooded 18 inches into the building during Katrina. Fortunately the owners had what it took to complete a total renovation and it looks better than ever, and not all that different. Our waiter admitted that they continued on page 80

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Drinking From the Firehose — Two Responses to “Top 10 Suggestions to Publishers of E-Journals.”

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Column Editor’s Note: I am pleased to include here two responses to my column from the April 2006 issue of ATG (pp.70-72). And thanks to the Charleston Report (May/June 2006, p.4) for the instant replay of the essence of that column!

Robert Boissy, Manager of Agent Relations at Springer, and Linda Beebe, Senior Director, PsycINFO, at the American Psychological Association, have taken me up on continuing the conversation. Bob replies directly to my original ten items, while Linda contributes ten of her own. Thanks to them both for their thoughtful observations! — EC

In reply to Eleanor Cook, by Robert Boissy:

1. Sorting of titles. I think this means you want publishers to adopt a policy where they do not have journal titles with initial articles like “The” and “A” so that you get a cleaner spreadsheet sort on the full title field. Such a change would remove the need to include a “sorting title” column in the spreadsheet, which some publishers take the time to do now. Removing the article(s) or using a sorting title avoids the problem where titles beginning with “The” are in the T's and titles beginning with “A” or “An” are in the D’s. Interior articles are already handled fine in spreadsheet sorts, so “for” sorts before “of” and so on. While this recommendation sounds good, there is something about putting “The” at the start of a journal title that appeals to the publisher's sense of exclusivity and selectivity, so I have a feeling that the route to take is to ask for a sorting title column in your lists that leaves off initial articles. Many of your publisher lists may already have such a column, and it may be hidden on the spreadsheet you receive, so look for it. Popular spreadsheet software will always sort titles beginning with “The” in the T’s.

2. Licenses. First of all, we need to decide whether we want simple licenses, or if we want to eliminate licenses altogether. Keeping it simple is a somewhat more attainable goal at this point. With the advent of more license sharing and analysis as part of workshops and license exchange standards, it seems likely that even if licenses are not shortened appreciably, the elements of the license will become more recognizable and manageable for all. If we ask our lawyers and our publishers to get together and shorten the document, we are both likely to get a large bill and a longer license. So forget that. However, we ought to be able to get from the 12 pages of terms and conditions you cited to six pages if we work cooperatively. Barring that, we could always use the legal trick of making the document shorter by making the font smaller. One overlooked aspect of licensing is the need for lists of journals and specific financial details in the document. I think we need the financials, but I wonder if the lists of journal titles really need to be part of the document. If they do, all larger publishers are doomed to have long licenses.

3. Title changes. In my current position I have had a chance to work with editors considering title changes. I typically try to discourage them unless they meet certain conditions, e.g., the change signals a true change of direction or emphasis for the journal, the change signals a major update from an old research approach to a new one, and the actual wording change to the title is significant. Few publishers understand the cataloging implications, though the fulfillment implications are well understood by the publisher fulfillment staff. This latter group works hard to get the word out about title changes for fear of losing subscriptions due to the change. It is easier to inform the major subscription agents than to inform the universe of libraries. I keep asking myself what role the ISSN agency might play in informing libraries about official title changes. They know when a publisher title change warrants a new ISSN, but they do not know who subscribes. The best we could do is broadcast changes, and then act as a verifying source after the fact.

4. Change of publisher. This is a hot button for those who do sales for publishers, as well as library subscribers and agents. However, it is surprising how low key this kind of information is within the typical publishing environment.