

Building Strong Library Associations - Australians play major role

Over the past year, IFLA has been working on the development of a new and ambitious training program for developing the capacity of library associations around the world. The Building Strong Library Associations (BSLA) program is underpinned by IFLA's vision "to enrich society and the library and information profession by building strong, sustainable library associations" and Australian librarians are at the forefront.

The principal goal of the BSLA program is help library associations and their members work towards the improvement of services to library users, to provide equitable access to information and to develop the library and information profession.

The program comprises a modular and customisable training package that focuses on library association development. It is aimed at library association workers, who may include leaders and office bearers, staff and volunteers. Parts of the program can also be adapted for delivery to wider stakeholder groups such as politicians, government officials and organisations working with library associations. Through cascade training, the initial participants in the courses will develop the skills and knowledge of their colleagues and associates within their own library communities.

Five modules have been developed:

- Library Associations in Society
- Building Your Library Association
- Sustaining Your Library Association
- Developing Strategic Relationships: Partnerships and Fundraising
- Libraries on the Agenda

Additional modules have been drawn from other areas of IFLA training, specifically on *Library Statistics for Advocacy* and

Copyright for Library Associations. The training materials have been designed for flexibility; the participants will be drawn from very diverse cultures, with different learning needs and diverse learning styles. Translation work will be undertaken to ensure that the materials can be effectively used with a wide range of language groups. An online platform has been developed to provide members with access to the learning materials.

The Australian library community is making a significant contribution to the BSLA program. The program is delivered through IFLA's Action for Development through Libraries Program (ALP), coordinated by Fiona Bradley. Fiona is energetically

managing all aspects of the BSLA project as it is rolled out in each country - an immense and challenging task. Together with a group of experts from a number of associations and countries, the content of the training modules was developed by Angela Bridgland and Christine Goodacre, who made virtual collaboration an art form. Additional material,

in the form of 20 case studies on library association strategies and achievements, were prepared by Gill Hallam, supported by Deb Ponting as research assistant. This work was enlightening - it was just fascinating to prepare these case studies that illustrated the world of library association activities, from ethical issues in Thailand and strategic alliances in Uganda to succession planning in American Indian library communities.

The first countries to take part in the programme are diverse: Lebanon, Cameroon and Peru. With the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Libraries Initiative the programme will also be rolled out in Botswana, Lithuania and Ukraine. A further three countries will be selected in 2011, including one from the Asia-Pacific region. Each country has a core trainer appointed by IFLA, supported by in-country facilitators from the organising team. The core trainers include former IFLA Presidents, Claudia Lux and Kay Raseroka, and library association executive Winnie Vitzansky (recently retired from the Danish Library Association). The core trainers all met for their own training sessions at the IFLA conference in Gothenburg, Sweden, in August 2010.

Gill Hallam, current director and past president of ALIA, has been invited by IFLA to serve as the core trainer for the BSLA activities in Ukraine following the sad and untimely passing of Bob McKee, just a few months before his planned retirement from CILIP and the beginning of his involvement with the BSLA program. Gill is also a member of the IFLA Standing Committee for the Section for Education and Training and is Convenor of the E-Learning Special Interest Group. Her new role takes Australia's involvement in the BSLA program from design and development to course delivery. Gill's work with the Ukraine Library Association will commence in early 2011.

Together with colleagues from round the world, the intellectual, educational and managerial contribution of the Australian library community to the BSLA program is recognised at an international level. To learn more about BSLA, access the learning materials or find out how to become involved in the programme, visit the IFLA website at <http://www.ifla.org/bsla>.

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Gillian Hallam

Adjunct Professor, Information Science Discipline, Faculty of Science and Technology
Queensland University of Technology
g.hallam@qut.edu.au