

Start Global Connections

September: The Wild Ricing Moon Month or Manoominike-Giizis

by Lorie Roy

I grew up in Carlton, Minnesota—population 810—the daughter of a high school janitor/school bus driver and a security guard who retired as a high school Indian-education aide. Our family traveled twice to Canada for memorable camping trips; travel to more distant lands seemed impossible. Since then, international connections have greatly



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informed my career. For example, I am a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Library and Information Resource Network and Te Rōpū Whakahaau:

Maori in Libraries and Information Management.

I recently attended the annual International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions World Library and Information Congress in South Africa. For most of us, the barriers to participating in face-to-face international events are funding, time, and competing responsibilities. Still, there are many low- or no-cost ways to start your international connections.

1. Attend international events during conferences. ALA Annual Conference events and programs offer opportunities to learn about international library issues and meet librarians from around the world. International libraries preconfere-

nces, poster sessions, and receptions are free for global guests and offered as ticketed events for others. Volunteer to staff the international visitors lounge.

2. Serve on committees. ALA's International Relations Committee and International Relations Round Table are involved in issues that impact libraries worldwide. Attend their open meetings. While only two or three IRC slots open up each year, IRC and IRRRT subcommittees often have vacancies. Visit the IRC (www.ala.org/ala/iro/internationalrelations.htm) and IRRRT (www.ala.org/irrt/) websites, read the annual IRC reports to ALA's governing Council, and contribute to the discussion at the IRRRT All-Committee Meetings.

3. Participate in the efforts of ALA chapters and affiliates. Your ALA chapter might have international initiatives. For instance, the Montana Library Association is raising funds to help build a school with a library in central Asia. ALA's ethnic affiliates, such as Reforma, the Chinese American Librarians Association, the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, the American Indian Library Association, and the Black Caucus of ALA, may also organize international events.

4. Meet with international librarians. Make sure that your local chamber of commerce, universities, and community service organizations include your library in planning the itineraries for international visitors.

5. Host international librarians. Often it only takes an invitation for international guests to visit.

6. Visit international libraries. If you are fortunate enough to travel internationally, contact ALA's International Relations Office for assistance.

7. Apply for travel grants, including those provided by the Fulbright Program or through your organization. Sometimes an invitation to speak at an international meeting will lead to some travel support from your library. Check out ALA's Bogle Pratt International Library Travel Fund and, for library school students, the Council on Library and Information Resources Rovelstad Scholarship in International Librarianship.

8. Participate in a sister libraries program. IRRRT provides advice on establishing a sister library relationship with an institution outside of the United States. Consider publication staff exchanges, or e-pen pals.

9. Read about international librarianship and write about your own experiences. IRRRT publishes the quarterly *International Leads*. Consider writing an article for *American Libraries* or for your state-wide library publication.

10. Support your colleagues in their international efforts. We can live vicariously through the experiences of others. Support your library colleagues in their international work by enabling flexible schedules and serving as a good neighbor. Call on them, in turn, to assist your efforts. ■

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