

International Interactions? You're Invited!

By Katy Manck

For teacher-librarians, interactions are our bread and butter. From happenstance encounters to strategically planned meet-ups, sustained intellectual dialogue or a pithy quote that's just what you needed to hear, a child's grin as they check out their favourite book (for the fifth time this term) or a teacher's sigh of relief when you locate the resources they were too busy to find, we interact and interact.

But perhaps you're looking for something . . . more. Maybe you feel the need to grow beyond your school walls or state boundaries or national borders. So I'm inviting you to interact with the **International Association of School Librarianship!**



Since 1971, supporters of school libraries – from teacher-librarians to professors to educators to townspeople striving to have libraries in their children's schools – have made **IASL** a vital global community promoting research in school librarianship, reading and literacy, best practices, and collegial interactions.

IASL's peer-reviewed scholarly journal **School Libraries Worldwide** is in its 23rd year of publication, and plans are underway to move its archived volumes to an Open Access platform, as a complement to its current searchability in major databases.

Our annual conferences attract world-renowned researchers and area librarians who all benefit from top-level presentations, intriguing conversations, and time for fellowship. **IASL's 2017 conference 'Learning Without Borders' will be held in Long Beach, California, USA in August**, and IASL2018 will convene in Istanbul, Turkey, in early May 2018.

"The most valuable resource that all teachers have is each other. Without collaboration, our growth is limited to our own perspectives," says Robert John Meehan. This is even truer for teacher-librarians who are often the only information professional in their school. IASL's listserv continues conversations begun online or in person, allowing all members to contribute to our shared knowledge and perspectives on school library issues.

There's a folk saying in Texas: "All of us is smarter than each of us!" which I take to mean that our collective knowledge, opinions, dreams, and questions make us and our profession better as we contribute and interact, rather than keeping apart.

So here are a few 'international' interactions you can try as you add to the 'all of us':



Impact your students through International School Library Month each October which allows them to connect with their peers in other lands through IASL's Bookmark Exchange Project or Skype Around the World initiative. Check the **ISLM** page in August for this year's theme and discover new ways that we can all celebrate school libraries.

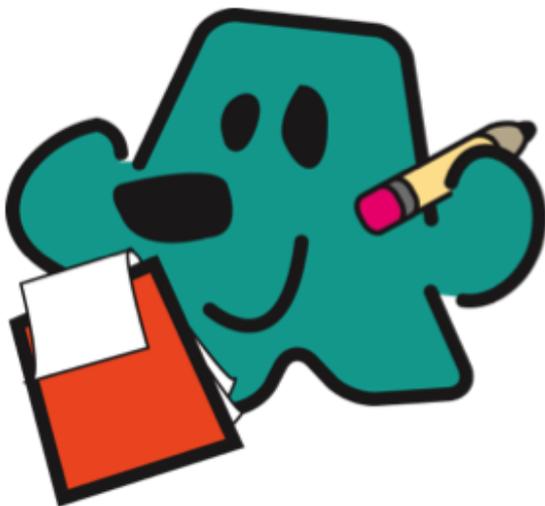
Take on a new interaction to **energise your professional practice**. We were delighted to hear from Merewalesi Vueti, Director, Library Services of Fiji, about the proposed formation of Fiji School Library Association (FISLA), and the IASL Secretariat is sharing resources to assist in this effort.

Do you have funding ideas for FISLA's hoped-for inaugural conference, time to mentor FISLA teacher-librarians, resource connections, or other ways to assist as they organise? When you contact me (Katy.Manck@gmail.com) or IASL Regional Director-Oceania, Dr. Susan La Marca (Susan.LaMarca@genazzano.vic.edu.au), we can put you in touch with Merewalesi Vueti as we help Fiji build its very own school library association.

Interactions that **nurture your spirit** can keep you going during tough times. Have you seen the **'Libraries are for everyone' art project**? A public librarian in a small Kansas town (USA) has created diverse and welcoming signage with wording in many languages (and is accepting translations for others) which you can use without cost. What home languages are spoken in your school? Imagine how welcome students, parents, and community members from Karen-speaking areas of Myanmar would be to see this sign at your school library!



A recent online conversation with an American author based in Egypt about her latest book included my reminder that **IASL's GiggleIT Project for global student writing through school libraries** would be great for her own children at their US-curriculum school (just as it is for your students of all ages and ability levels), complementing their present creative writing journal. As she excitedly passed that information to the teacher-librarians there, we began discussing other writing possibilities for students, and she lamented that local English-teaching schools had few if any books. A few emails later, and we've decided to propose a bilingual Arabic-English book creation project at the university where she teaches writing, supported by students at her children's school.



"To me, a school library is the field of rich soil in which the seeds of literacy should be sown. And when those seeds grow and bear the fruits of knowledge, the world becomes a better place," tweeted author Todd Strasser during AASL's April 2017 School Library Month campaign in the US with its tagline "because school libraries empower students".

How will your interactions – scheduled or serendipitous, online or in-person, TL-to-TL or TL to the world outside the library – make the world a better place as you empower your students, welcome everyone to your school, connect with your community, or nurture yourself?

To me, IASL exists "because every child deserves a great school library and a qualified school librarian" who is always learning and growing.

I invite you to become part of IASL and dive (or tiptoe) into rewarding interactions with your colleagues around the globe, online or face-to-face. Check us out at <http://iasl-online.org>.

References

AASL (American Association of School Librarians) (2017) 'To me, a school library is the field of rich soil in which the seeds of literacy should be sown.' - Todd Strasser #slm17 pic.twitter.com/ibaBb45jFH. Accessed April 9, 2017 at: <https://twitter.com/aasl/status/851193015100198912>.

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Katy Manck, MLS, is President of the International Association of School Librarianship. She has served as an academic, business, and school librarian in Texas, USA, and now recommends young adult books beyond bestsellers at <http://BooksYALove.com>.