

Report on Contributions to and Reflections on the IFLA and AIFBD Conferences in France

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CIFNAL's 2014 travel stipend was a welcome and much appreciated contribution to my participation as a presenter at IFLA's 80th conference in Lyon and the AIFBD's satellite congress in Limoges. As a representative of the University of Alberta (Edmonton, Canada), I was able to contribute the unique perspective of working at a university with French and English campuses and libraries, as well as a strong library-specific international relations office. Both of my presentations, although on markedly different topics, had the common theme of partnerships.

My poster presentation, entitled [Disabilities and library accessibility: partnering for success](#), at Lyon's IFLA conference, explained how a partnership between the University of Alberta Libraries (UAL), Specialized Support and Disability Services (SSDS) and the Departments of Occupational Therapy and Industrial Design managed to assess library spaces for patrons with disabilities at the UAL's Coutts Education Library. It was a privilege to present this project to colleagues from around the world and enriching to discover other posters on similar topics such as digital publishing for disabled students, library services for patrons with dyslexia, braille literacy, and space planning. Exciting projects like the Bibliothèque nationale de France's (BNF) [Platon](#) platform, which provides electronic texts as alternate formats for library patrons with disabilities across France, suggested the possibilities of improvement for one's own national situation.



Photo of North American librarians at Limoges, AIFBD Congress, following author's talk (3rd from the left)

Limoges' post-IFLA satellite congress of the Association internationale francophone des bibliothécaires et documentalistes (AIFBD) was held from August 23rd to 26th 2014. As Western Canada's sole university library representative, my role was two-fold: to present a paper and to showcase the well-established francophone reality of the University of Alberta with its French campus and its membership in CIFNAL. The University of Alberta (UA) is in a unique position: it is the only university in Western Canada that has a francophone campus complete with its own academic library. The AIFBD conference attendees I spoke to were surprised to learn about the vibrant francophone library presence in Edmonton. In fact the collaborative

collection development effort between Stanford and Berkeley, presented at an AIFBD session, is not unlike the one that exists between the UA's French language and literature collection, which I manage on the main campus, and the one at the Bibliothèque Saint-Jean on the French campus. Focusing on our mutual collection strengths and developing a policy that avoids duplication and increases complementarity are effective ways of maximizing and extending the reach of our collection development efforts. The UAL with its strong collections and services in French and English is well positioned to be a bridge between Western Canadian academic libraries and francophone universities.

My session 9 [presentation](#) on the benefits of information literacy in teaching translation studies, which focused on "Confluences et compétences informationnelles," highlighted an important difference between the professional position of most francophone academic librarians and their counterparts in North American universities outside of Québec. The primary objective of my talk was to draw participants' attention to the benefits of librarian partnerships with faculty in terms of teaching subject-level information literacy, in this case translation studies. The talk itself was the result of a cooperative endeavour between Dr. Sathya Rao, a French UA professor, and myself. The premise emphasized the importance of librarians and faculty collaborating both in teaching and research on an equal footing. It became evident during the discussion period following the presentations that, for such a cooperative relationship to exist, academic librarians in francophone universities must benefit from the same academic standing that many librarians enjoy in anglophone North American universities. Perhaps this realization can become a catalyst for change and indeed the time may be right as some Quebec francophone academic libraries are exploring this very possibility.

It was evident, as well, that librarians in Limoges were taking interest in the same issues important to the librarians at IFLA. In particular, services to people with disabilities was the focus of one panel and provided me with an international context to my role as liaison librarian to people with disabilities at the University of Alberta. Similarly, concerns with access to information in African countries presented at AIFBD sessions are also at the forefront of partnerships that the UAL's [International Relations Office](#) has created in the past and will be building in the years to come. One last confluent interest of note was how the UAL, like other libraries in the Francophonie, is grappling with hybrid collections, where electronic sources are becoming the norm and library patrons are being given a more active role in selecting titles for purchase.



Photo of author at the BFM in Limoges

On a personal note, I traveled 22 km north of Limoges to the town of Oradour-sur-Glane to reflect on the Nazi massacre of its population 70 years ago during World War II. The interpretative centre and the eerily preserved historical town site itself purposefully lead visitors to internalize and meditate upon the horror of the events that occurred in 1944. A visit to the Musée de la Résistance organized a few days prior by the

AIFBD was also an excellent introduction to the Haute-Vienne department's struggle against Nazi occupation during the Second World War.

I would like to thank CIFNAL for generously supporting my attendance at the AIFBD 2014 congress in Limoges, France. It was a great opportunity for me to meet with CIFNAL colleagues I had not seen in quite some time and make new and valuable contacts in the international francophone librarian community. I look forward to any partnerships or requests that may arise from my presentations and attendance at the IFLA and AIFBD conferences.