A Message from the President

Time is flying and we are getting closer to the 2009 NYLA Annual conference every day. Register for the conference soon for the early bird discount. We hope to see you there! The ESRT Program committee, under the leadership of Izabela Bozek, has arranged impressive programs. If you would like to help at the programs or ESRT booth, contact Izabela at i.bozek@brooklynpubliclibrary.org.

Thank you for being part of NYLA and ESRT!

Sincerely,
Galina Chernykh, ESRT President, 2008-2009

A Special Announcement

On Sunday, May 24, 2009 David Cohen, librarian extraordinaire, celebrated his 100th birthday with a large group of family and friends at his current residence, Flushing House in Queens, NY. David has accomplished many great things and has gotten a whole raft of awards, including Honorary Membership in the American Library Association (2007). But to all us at the Ethnic Services Round Table, he will first and foremost be the founder of the Round Table, its president for several terms, and an ardent supporter and encourager of all ESRTyans who have known him these many years.

We love you, David!

**Lines from London,** by Galina Chernykh

This past January I visited London, and no librarian’s trip to London would be complete without a stop at the new British Library at St. Pancras.

As the national library of the UK, the British Library receives a copy of every publication produced in the UK and Ireland. Its collection of over 150 million items includes manuscripts, maps, newspapers, magazines, prints and drawings, music scores, stamps, and patents.

At the heart of this large and imposing building is the King’s Library, a 60,000-volume collection housed in a six-story, glass-walled tower. One of the most noticeable items in the entrance hall is the book bench. The book symbolizes learning and wisdom, while the ball and chain symbolizes the necessity of preservation. I felt privileged to sit upon it.

For me the most fascinating aspect of the library is the Sir John Riblat Gallery’s *Treasures of the British Library.* It is a permanent display of the most outstanding works possessed by the British Library, and has an incredible "Turning the Pages" interactive display system. By touching the screen, you can virtually turn the pages of treasured books, including the Magna Carta, the original *Alice in Wonderland,* and sketches by Leonardo da Vinci!

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**Reaching Out to Immigrant Jobseekers**

by Liana Alaverdova,
Assistant Division Chief, Education & Job Information Center, Brooklyn Public Library and
Debbie Wibowo,
Communication and Outreach Associate, Upwardly Global

When I (Liana) immigrated to the U.S. from Azerbaijan in 1993, I thought I knew something about this country. But what I knew had come mostly from books and Hollywood films; nothing had prepared me for the cultural shock I would experience.

My family and I entered with refugee status, so we were able to get help from New York Association for New Americans (NYANA), a nonprofit organization which has since closed. NYANA provided English language and culture classes, in which I had my first lesson in the proper way to shake hands in the U.S. I attended graduate school to become a librarian and soon realized the significant differences in the job search process in the U.S. as compared with my country. In Azerbaijan, most people I knew got jobs through word of mouth, or were assigned certain jobs by the government. The art (or science?) of job searching in the U.S., including going to interviews, writing resumes and cover letters, sending thank you letters, and networking is something that immigrants have to learn, absorb, and make our second nature. Good advice can make a real difference in someone’s life.

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The Queens Library, Brooklyn Public Library, and the New York Public Library have all offered career-related advice to many immigrants. The libraries have extended their services by partnering with Upwardly Global to offer workshops that help immigrants learn the skills necessary to navigate their job search. Upwardly Global is a non-profit organization that offers free career support programs and services for skilled immigrants who meet the following criteria: have permanent work authorization (i.e., green card or refugee/asylee status); have a minimum 4-year university degree and 2 years of professional experience from outside the U.S.; have arrived in the U.S. from a developing country within the past 5 years; and, have an adequate level of English proficiency.

Upwardly Global provides valuable resources for immigrants by means of workshops including “How to Use Your Foreign Degree in the U.S.,” “Interview Skills for Immigrant Professionals,” and “Networking Skills for Immigrant Professionals.”

Debbie Wibowo of Upwardly Global says, “According to a recent study by the Migration Policy Institute, more than 1.3 million college educated immigrants living in the U.S. are unemployed or underemployed because they are not familiar with the U.S. job traits. When these factors are combined with U.S. employers’ lack of knowledge regarding foreign higher education systems and cultural differences in communication styles and workplace norms, it is not surprising that skilled immigrants have such a difficult time rebuilding their careers.”

She adds, “Upwardly Global works to break down those barriers and our success is the result of a two-pronged approach. We offer comprehensive job search and mentoring services for immigrant jobseekers and we initiate innovative, in-depth partnerships with companies who are interested in tapping the extraordinary talent of this hidden talent pool.”

The collaboration between Upwardly Global and the libraries in New York City has resulted in a positive impact on the immigrant communities.

For more information, please visit www.upwardlyglobal.org.

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**ESRT Member Speaks about Benjamin Franklin and the China Connection in London**

ESRT member Dr. David Wang of Queens Library at Hollis was recently honored to present his pioneering study on how 18th century Chinese culture influenced Benjamin Franklin’s thinking. The presentation was given in London’s Benjamin Franklin House, where the statesman lived from 1757 to 1775. For more information, see http://ideas.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/29/franklin-and-china, and David Wang’s blog at http://foundingfathersandchina.blogspot.com/

Dr. Wang speaking in London

Further reading:

Prof. David Cohen celebrated his 100th birthday on May 24, 2009

ESRT Officers 2008-2009

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Do you have an idea for an article or some special news to share with your fellow ESRT members? Send it to Elizabeth Olesh for possible inclusion in the next ESRT newsletter. Contact Elizabeth: <elizabeth@nassaulibrary.info> or (516) 292-8920 x237.