Dear Friends,

Thank you for selecting me as the President of the Ethnic Services Round Table (ESRT) for 2008-2009. I appreciate the opportunity to work with all of you to increase our membership and awareness of the ESRT’s activities, and I would like to connect ESRT members via our website, so we can share efficiently our personal experiences in serving multicultural populations.

To achieve our mutual goal of a viable, growing, resource-rich round table each of us could:

- Identify and mentor potential members
- Make an effort to promote ESRT
- Attend general membership meetings and annual conferences
- Solicit ideas to enhance membership.

ESRT is your organization and you may want to increase your level of involvement! You can write an article for the Expand Your World newsletter, become a member of a committee, or decorate and serve at the Conference booth. Just choose an area of interest and let us know how you would like to participate. Here is a list of committees and projects:

**Nominating Committee.** Solicit nominations for candidates for the Executive Board.
*Contact: Alla Makeeva-Roylance*

**Conference Program Committee.** Assist committee chair with programs for next year’s conference.
*Contact: Izabela Bózek*

**Membership/Public Relations Committee.** Increase membership and enhance profile of ESRT.
*Contact: Michael Britz*

*Contact: Irina Kuharets*

**Awards Committee.** Solicit nominations for ESRT’s awards: the Multicultural Award and the Professional Development Award. *Contact: Susan Gitman*

I am looking forward to your involvement with the Ethnic Services Round Table in the coming year. Your suggestions for new projects and conference programs are also welcome.

Thank you for your membership!

Sincerely,

*Galina Chernykh*
ESRT Conference Recap
By Galina Chernykh
The New York Public Library

As 2008 NYLA/ESRT conference planner, I am here to tell you how the programs in Saratoga Springs went—and they were GREAT!

Take a look at some of the comments we received on the program “Libraries in Developing Countries”:

- “Very inspirational and applicable”
- “Thank you for all that you do!”
- “It's great to have a totally different NYLA program. Inspiring.”
- “I'm interested in trying to set up a service program in my school to support these efforts. I think some of my students would be interested in helping out. Congratulations on all you've done. It's truly amazing!”
- “Very inspirational, especially the presentation about Nicaragua.”
- “It was a wonderful program. I hope to be able to keep in touch with Jane.”

Here are a few comments we received on the program “Libraries Pave the Road to Citizenship”:

- “Don’t mean to gush…this was excellent!”
- “Program was very interesting, speakers were very helpful.”
- “Wish the program was longer.”
- “An excellent panel and an excellent workshop.”
- “Well presented.”
- “Thank you. Great ideas.”

By all accounts the NYLA 2008 Annual Conference in Saratoga Springs was a resounding success.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all of the participants who came to programs and also to all of those who had a part in planning, preparing, and presenting this conference. And, a huge Thank You to DEMCO for sponsoring the Tea Party.

ESRT participated in the Second Annual NYLA Diversity Fair with our popular DiversiTEA, sponsored by DEMCO.

The 2008 ESRT Multicultural Award was presented to Fred Gitner of Queens Library at the Annual Membership Meeting. ESRTyans help Fred Gitner celebrate his award. From left: Miriam Tuliao, Irina Kuharets, Brigid Cahalan, Fred Gitner, Susan Gitman, ESRT incoming president Galina Chernykh.

Sadly, the ESRT’s third scheduled program “Who are the Sikhs? Why Do We Need to Know?” was canceled. Our key speaker, Kevin Lee, was hospitalized after being attacked, beaten, and robbed in New York City on his way to pick up a car to drive to Saratoga Springs for the conference. Kevin was hospitalized. He is doing much better now, although he still has some hearing problems. On behalf of ESRT, I sent him a “Get Well” card and expressed our condolences.
Libraries Pave the Road to Citizenship

By Melissa Houlroyd
Brighton Memorial Library, Rochester, N.Y.

My first exposure to immigrant services in public libraries was when I read a case study about free English as a Second Language tutelage for adult learners in Michigan. It was called “Ripples of Impact” by Maria Souden and Sarah Wooden, in How Libraries and Librarians Help (2005). I was touched then, reading about how great it was for the people involved and the community at large.

I saw this NYLA program, Libraries Pave the Road to Citizenship, as a chance for me to learn more about that subject. I was surprised to learn that I would hear not only about libraries participating in teaching adult immigrants the English language, but also that there were libraries participating in aiding patrons with the naturalization process.

Some of the services they offer are U.S. citizenship classes, visa lottery assistance, immigration forums to keep immigrants up to date on various immigration topics, help with retrieving immigration application forms and setting up an email account, English language classes, and professional development. More information on these services can be found at <http://www.hplct.org/tap/Programs_services/programs_services.htm>.

As Ms. Naficy explained during the program, the U.S. Citizenship process is harder than ever. Immigrants have to read, write, and speak English at a third grade level; fill out countless forms; know U.S. history and government; and “have good moral character” (whatever they mean by that). She also explained that immigrants can no longer simply go to the immigration office. They need to go online to make an appointment, which means they also need to be technologically literate or know a library nearby that offers help. Luckily for the immigrants in Hartford, Ms. Naficy’s library is right across the street from the local immigration office. Immigrants sent to the library to use their computers often are introduced to the other services the library offers.

Elaine Giardino, Civics for Immigrants Project Manager, Literacy Volunteers of Westchester and Rockland Counties. (http://www.literacywestchester.org/)

Elaine Giardino illustrated the role her organization plays in aiding immigrant services at libraries in Westchester and Rockland Counties. Civics for Immigrants helps train library volunteers and staff on tutoring immigrants in preparation for the naturalization process (http://www.civicsforimmigrants.org/). They focus on the English language and U.S. history and government. The organization provides the trainers and the curriculum on which to base the tutelage, and the trainees take an extensive 2 day course.

Norma V. Menard, Executive Director, Literacy Volunteers of Clinton County. (http://www.lvaccc.org/)

Like Ms. Naficy, Norma V. Menard was born abroad and experienced the naturalization process. Ms. Menard grew up in the Philippines, earned a degree in social work, and met her future husband in the Peace
Corps. Eventually, they got married and moved to Clinton County in rural New York. She explained that when she was looking into becoming a naturalized citizen, a librarian in her local library played a large part in easing the process for her. Now she helps immigrants in the library that helped her, as the Executive Director of Literacy Volunteers of Clinton County (http://www.lva-cc.org).

I noted an interesting contrast between Ms. Naficy’s and Ms. Menard’s experiences. Ms. Naficy’s library is located in a highly populated part of Connecticut, whereas Ms. Menard’s is in rural New York. Therefore, the services offered in Clinton County are more tutor- than program-based. The patrons taking advantage of the service Clinton County libraries offer do so on a one-on-one basis.

The presenters in this program were fascinating. In addition, everyone who attended received Civics and Citizenship Toolkits, sent by Carlos Muñoz-Acevedo from the Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services (http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis).

I hope more libraries provide more services to aid immigrants in their communities. It’s important to provide services to that part of the population—to ease their way (with a process that sometimes seems designed to make people to fail), and to make the community a better place.

---

The European Book Club
By Brigitte Doellgast *

Chances are, you have heard about it. Or someone you know has heard about it. Sometimes we get the impression that there has never been a book club out there before. Even at the ALA conference in Anaheim and the IFLA conference in Quebec colleagues who had heard about it approached me. All this seems pretty amazing to someone coming from Germany, a country without a recent tradition of book clubs (Lesezirkel having been extinguished in the late 19th century). But knowing the huge interest that Americans show in book clubs, it seemed to be the perfect idea for a small project for the libraries of the European cultural institutes of New York to work together. As all of these institutes and their libraries have a distinctively different set of priorities, a book club seemed the ideal least common denominator: no or next to no costs; little intensive labor on the part of the participating institutes; and a good way of advertising our services to a broader community of those interested in Europe. Based on these prerequisites, the libraries of the Goethe-Institut (www.goethe.de/newyork), the Austrian Cultural Forum (www.acfny.org), the Instituto Cervantes (www.cervantes.org/), the Czech Center (www.czechcenter.com), the French Institute – Alliance Française (www.fiaf.org) and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura (www.iiicnewyork.esteri.it) agreed to go ahead with the idea of creating a European Book Club.

But even looking at the success of existing book clubs, we were not really sure if we would get a lot of interest, for (as the readers of this article may have experienced for themselves) the facts pertaining to the reception of European literature in the United States are rather daunting: the average number of all translations of fiction into American English is around 400 per year. That means, when it comes down to German contemporary fiction, that an average of seven (7!) titles are translated each year. And the reason publishers give for this phenomenon is the lack of interest shown by an American readership in foreign literature.

With this as a backdrop, the group decided to advertise the book club not only via our e-mail newsletters but also by hosting a--of course fairly inexpensive--kick-off party. Yann Carmona, of the Alliance Française, who was very much involved in the book club by then, volunteered to organize a party in their beautiful library. But even before the party we were in for bit of a surprise: after the first announcement in the e-mail newsletters of the participating institutions, we were flooded with registrations. In the beginning, we had decided to limit the groups to around 20 participants - but within a few weeks every session had roughly 70 registrations, requested on the gmail address that Yann had established for the group. People registered in March for book club sessions in September and October! At the by then fairly superfluous launch party we could only inform a disappointed crowd that Yann had established for the group. People registered in March for book club sessions in September and October! At the by then fairly superfluous launch party we could only inform a disappointed crowd that we were solidly booked. Naturally, we never advertised the book club again (although it’s still mentioned on our websites), but e-mails continue to arrive fairly consistently, expressing excitement about the idea and an eagerness to join in.
How did we manage the success? (An awesome problem!) Luckily, all the directors of our institutions, on learning about the demand we experienced, became very supportive and agreed that we could invest more time in the project (a project that remains of extremely low cost). The first, “emergency” measure was that we offered a second session for each book. Then we put some time into developing ideas on how to channel the demand and manage the project in the future. To establish ourselves properly, Yann created a webpage for the book club (www.europeanbookclub.org). Now we are looking for partner institutions that want to establish their own book club under the European Book Club umbrella. Meaning: reading the same titles; incorporate participants into a general mailing-list; be recognized as a partner on the website of the European Book Club; and encourage members to communicate with others via a web discussion. For groups established in the New York City area, we can also offer our moderators to lead the sessions, or at the very least guarantee that someone from the respective institution will be present at the event (and who can also provide information about the services of the European cultural institutes). There is also the idea to webcast some of the sessions, so that people interested in European literature who do not have the possibility of joining a group could participate by listening to the discussion and posting or chatting about their ideas. Some of the participating institutes are also considering the possibility of bringing over the authors of the titles we read. And that led to the idea of next year, at the end of the book club season, organizing a “readers meet the authors” event.

For me personally, I have to say that it is truly thrilling to participate in this project and experience German (or Austrian) literature through the eyes of American readers. Participants are expressively enjoying a “more intellectual” kind of a book club, and are fascinated to get this close-up of Europe, a continent so close to the roots of the United States and at the same time so far away in many respects.

*Brigitte Doellgast, Library Director and Regional Coordinator at the Goethe-Institut, New York City*
original as well as in translation, and a Latin American who let us know of the enormous influence von Humboldt has, and the esteem he is held in, in all corners of that continent.

I salute Brigitte and the librarians at the five other cultural institutes for giving New Yorkers such a wonderful gift—welcoming us to your “lands” to share in dynamic, thoughtful conversations about superb books—and for lifting us far above our workaday worlds.

*By Brigid Cahalan, The New York Public Library

Showing You the Italian National Library
By Dave Wang, Queens Library

As we assign more and more of our time to serve library users, a hobby appears an increasingly important element in our librarian’s lives. Among several hobbies of mine, visiting libraries when I am given a chance is a favorite one. It is a fine thing to see how other libraries deliver service to their customers. Observation of their librarians’ information-delivering behavior is always entertaining to me. Even seeing a different library building makes me very excited.

It was in beautiful October, and I had a chance to visit Rome. The Italian National Center for American Studies invited me to Rome to make a presentation on Benjamin Franklin and Confucius’ Moral Philosophy. The Italian scholars, of course including librarians, believe that the humanities seem to suffer oblivion because of the rising power of digital technologies influencing everyday life; rethinking Benjamin Franklin’s moral life will help them to regain their strength in improving their virtual life.

Rome is always on the top list of the world-famous tourist cities. There are a hundred things and places a tourist wants to visit. My new Italian friends told me it would take me two weeks to see the main museums in Rome. Wow. I had only one afternoon of free time.

What should I visit? The National Library, yes; I wouldn’t sacrifice my hobby. I grabbed a map of Rome and quickly found the location of the library. Rome is not a big city compared with New York. It took me about half an hour by subway from my hotel to the library. Speaking English is not very popular in Rome, no surprise. I was wondering how I could communicate with the librarians working at the information desk. Luckily enough, two English students from the University of Rome came to visit the library. They voluntarily and happily interpreted for me. Through their interpretation I learned something about the Library. However, most of my knowledge about the National Library is from the Deputy Director of the Library, who can speak fairly good English.

The National Central Library of Rome was founded in 1876. It is under the jurisdiction of the Italian Ministry of Culture. It was designed as a research library. It is by the Legal Deposit Law entitled to receive copies of all printed materials in Italy. Provisions also include general interest materials about foreign cultures, paying special attention to documenting the influence of Italian culture in the world. The goal of the Library is “to provide the new capital of Italy with a comprehensive book archive intended as an expression of national culture.” Under the support of the Italian government, the library finds itself including a comprehensive collection of books and publications from other countries, with a special emphasis on Italian culture abroad.

As ancient Rome has developed into modern Rome, the library has experienced some changes. In 1975, a century after its inception, the Library moved to its present location in the Castro Pretorio archaeological area, where the military barracks of the imperial guard stood in ancient Roman times. The current library encompasses 50,000 square meters and consists of three interconnected structures: a ten-story book storage facility; a five-story structure which houses the administrative offices, the lobby, and the exhibition gallery; a one-story Readers Service building crossed by a large central hallway along which the reading rooms are located. Each reading room is equipped with a reference desk where patrons may request non-circulating publications from the stacks.

The Library currently holds over 6 million volumes plus about 8,000 manuscripts; approximately 2,000 incunabula; over 25,000 sixteenth-century publications; 20,000 maps; a collection of 10,000 prints and drawings – and in addition to those collected in book form, over 45,000 periodicals. The Library created the National Center for the Study of
Manuscripts in 1989 for the purpose of holding in one location all manuscripts on microfilm from Italian libraries and making them increasingly available to the public. The collection encompasses over 105,000 items on microfilm from the late 1950s to the present day.

It is not a children’s library! Admission to the Library is reserved to users over eighteen, and the librarians are very strict; users wishing to duplicate current issues of magazines must first obtain written authorization from the librarian. For admission to the Manuscripts and Rare Books, Special Collection, and Falqui reading rooms, special authorization from the librarian is required. The Library, however, invites its customers to be involved in their acquisition process. An acquisition proposal register is available in the Reference area, to those wishing to recommend books currently not in the Library collection.

One thing that interested me was that the Library maintains a general card catalogue area in the central gallery of the library. Of course in the Internet era the Library started its on-line catalogue in 1990. It can be accessed from the many terminals throughout the Library. The Library’s OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue), which is in Italian, may be searched at the following website:

http://www.bncrm.librari.beniculturali.it.

The Library provides some services including guided tours for groups or individual scholars. It also promotes cultural activities, and organizes and hosts exhibitions and conferences. However, the Library wasn’t accessible for users using wheelchairs until 2001 when an access ramp was created.

When you go, don’t forget to visit the coffee shop and bookstore in the lobby. I should warn you that although the Library is open Monday through Friday, from 8.30 am to 7 pm, and Saturday from 8.30 am to 1.30 pm, if you are there and wait for an extra 5 minutes, don’t be surprised, for it is operated in traditional Italian fashion. Perhaps they don’t think time is money like we do here in New York. For them, time is enjoyment. Why hurry?

Two Poems by Liana Alaverdova*

inventory of things left behind

Things left behind: one casserole, enormous, Ideal for pilaf; great-grandma’s samovar In brass, antique (or nearly), with medallions; Assorted works of art: still life with melon; My portrait (in batik); some child-sized chairs And table (made by Papa for my daughters); Fat dictionaries (dog-eared); schoolbooks, texts In like condition; reproductions, one (My grandpa’s favorite) depicts Columbus Disputing with professors (God knows what for); Striped mattresses, large-sized, handmade by old Elmira Next door (who washed and dried the wool then beat It with a stick), who’d sit on our veranda And talk incessantly about her grandsons (Who cared nothing for us nor we for them, And yet somehow we always listened, even responded); thus we’ll list: one neighbor, also Veranda, one, glassed-in, but needing repair (The money for repair required elsewhere), Whence we had: view of yard with parched acacias And stunted pine (which clearly could not thrive In Baku’s heat). We left behind as well: Bazaar, one, rich in languages and smells With vendors, brazen and devoid of scruples Alike as brothers, each one black of mustache And white of smile (not toothpaste, but genetics). Let’s add: one boulevard, discreet eyewitness To adolescent gropings; one cinema To which we flocked, athirst for spectacle, And sat in stuffy dark for hours on end Not knowing then the value of those hours. Put on our list as well: one childhood friend, The house she lived in too, though old and damp, With courtyard like a well and well-worn steps Predating even Great October, clearly. Let us complete the list with family graves. The wind alone now strokes the granite stones And only rainfall washes them with tears.

What then do we regret?

IN A RUSSIAN CAFÉ

To Valerian Korennaya

In by no means the best New York Russian café, Where they’ll offer you kasha (not bad, by the way), But asparagus – never, not even in May, Were the owner himself to implore it;
Where the waiter makes clear that it pains him to serve
And the smoke takes its toll on libido and nerve.
And it’s crowded and dark, so that any small swerve
Of the hand spills your wine when you pour it;

While an actress sang songs in a throaty, low voice,
Some guy chewed a radish in spite of the noise,
And another kept eyeing the girl of his choice,
Although listening, too, with respect.
While she sang in a bar, not beneath a church dome,
I recalled the girl singing in Blok’s famous poem
The last line of which reads, “You can never go home.”
(In this case, some Ring Road or Prospekt.)
As she sang to us, we could forget for a while
That the weather outside was cold, icy, and vile;
That New York to us was a land of exile
Where each street sees a drug deal go down.
As she sang of lost love and of how her heart broke
Patrons cried in their vodka, their wine, or their Coke.
Were these tears a sweet gift or some kind of cruel joke?
Many smiled as they wept, though some frowned.
And when we had heard the last verse with regret,
Half the room reached at once for their next cigarette
And a serious line formed outside the toilet
As again we could move, talk, and laugh.
Ardent fans soon surrounded the girl on the stage
As if pressing her hand would their feelings assuage
And her pen flitted moth-like above every page
As she gave all who asked autographs. Then a critic,
inspired, began a tirade,

Since we knew that the spell wouldn’t last if we stayed,
But, like all of our past, would blur, alter, and fade,
We decided we should make a start.
Going back in the subway, cold, tired, half-dead
I could still hear her singing those songs in my head.
I sat upright but wanted to bow down instead
Before Morpheus or before Art!

*Liana Alaverdova, Brooklyn Public Library

---

Do you have an idea for an article or some special news to share with your fellow ESRT members? Send it to Elizabeth Olesh by Friday, April 3rd for possible inclusion in the next ESRT newsletter.
Contact Elizabeth:
<elizabeth@nassaulibrary.info>
or (516) 292-8920 x237.

---

ESRT Officers 2008-2009

Galina Chernykh, President <gchernykh@nypl.org>
Izabela Bozek, Vice-President-President Elect / Conference Programmer <i.bozek@brooklynpubliclibrary.org>
Alla Makeeva-Roylance, Immediate Past President / Nominating Committee Chair,
<a.makeeva@brooklynpubliclibrary.org>
Fred Gitner, Treasurer <fred.j.gitner@queenslibrary.org>
Louis Muñoz, Secretary <l.munoz@brooklynpubliclibrary.org>
Michael Brice, Member-at-Large / Membership & Public Relations Chair <michael.brice@queenslibrary.org>
Susan Gitman, Member-at-Large <sgitman@nypl.org>
Irina Kuharets, Member-at-Large / Publications Chair <ikuharets@nypl.org>
Elizabeth Olesh, Newsletter Editor <elizabeth@nassaulibrary.info>