FEATURE: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Resources to Inspire and Inform Global Engagement

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When “Global Perspectives” launched in July 2015, the intent was to emphasize the increasing internationalization of higher education and the essential role of libraries in global engagement initiatives. Through reading about such activities, practitioners could learn from other librarians’ experiences as they explored roles and responsibilities that made sense for them and their context. The timing was right because many colleges and universities in the United States were strengthening their global reach and interaction and developing worldwide partnerships with implications for the local campus. The number of international undergraduate and graduate students in the United States was substantial, and educational institutions invested in and expanded support of those students to ensure their success. Many of these institutional strategic initiatives involved the library, which stood ready to serve as a robust campus partner.

“Global Perspectives” is just one place to read about international possibilities. Several books published since 2015 deal with the global reach and services of college and university libraries. A selection of volumes is described here, chosen for their relevance to academic libraries and librarianship as well as their scope, currency, fresh perspective, broad interest, and wide applicability.

As worthwhile as reading about worldwide initiatives is, connecting with people engaged in such activities is even more valuable. Building relationships and interacting with colleagues complement and supplement reading. Therefore, following the reviews of selected books, this article offers a description of relevant discussion and interest groups to explore, all sponsored by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

Read about It: Select Recent Books

Academic library orientations can be exciting, vexing, useful (or not), and successful (or not). Whatever form they take, they have become almost universal because they form a cornerstone of other library programming and services to support students in their transition to, and success in, college. *Planning Academic Library Orientations* is a thorough account of current programs in academic institutions intended to introduce students to the library. The book is divided into 34 chapters, each describing a different library’s approach. The various methods are not presented as right or wrong but instead as a product of local need and the resources of the institution and its constituencies.

Most chapters are coauthored, which reflects one of the takeaways from the book: successful orientations, whatever their form, are collaborative and require partnerships and cooperation from both within the library and without. Most of the examples, not just those in the section “Partnerships,” describe joint efforts. The other segments are “Games”; “Marketing & Promotion”; “Targeting Specific Audiences”; “Technology”; and “Tours.” Each chapter helpfully includes background information about the institution described so readers can easily identify the colleges or universities that most closely align with their own. While subheadings may vary, most chapters provide background about the institution, its students, its past orientation programming, planning, and what it might do differently in the future.

The global dimension is provided by including programs in such countries as Australia, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates. This international scope is widened by chapters that highlight U.S.-based libraries providing orientations to specific populations, including students from other countries. Chapter 22, “Introducing New International Students to Privilege in Information Access,” describes one such program. It recounts how librarians at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, creatively filled a campus gap to assist in the success of students from other countries. To graduate, every student at DePauw must take a course that centers on privilege, power, and diversity. The university realized that learners without a grounding in American history and culture would find it difficult to participate fully in the course. In answer, the campus revamped part of its two-week Summer English Immersion Institute, which about half of new international enrollees attend. The librarians developed new activities based on the frame “Information Has Value” from the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. They started their program with an activity meant to introduce this idea and to engage students. They also led discussions about the value of information and related the concept to the discussion of citations, drawing useful connections. These topics were explored elsewhere in the institute and so required close coordination with other instructors.

Given the prevalence of orientation programs in academic libraries, this book belongs in the collection of any college or university library. It should inspire readers to revise, revamp, or redevelop introductory programs to better serve the community of learners.

A standard form of global engagement consists of services to support international students, the focus of this report. The author, a business librarian at American University in Washington, D.C., presents case studies for six U.S. academic libraries and their specific approach for assisting international enrollees, including creative collaboration, teamwork, collections, and instruction. The author interviewed librarians and gathered information about the six libraries and their parent institutions. The reporting by an objective researcher results in insights that might not have been identified or shared if librarians from the institutions had written the reports. The author chose the five universities and one college not only because of their efforts in providing services and support for students from other countries but also due to their varied type (private, public, community college, university, residential, and nonresidential) and, to a lesser degree, to their geographic diversity.

Each profile includes host institution information, such as mission and demographics, a library overview, a description of the international student population, the library’s support for that group, the reflections of the interviewees (including challenges and recommendations), and a conclusion. This consistency helps readers scan to see if the profile is relevant to their interests. Some program descriptions seem less substantial than one might need for a full understanding of what that library does. The reflections of the librarians as they describe challenges and recommendations are valuable to anyone considering a particular approach. The inclusion of two libraries (Virginia International University in Fairfax and Parkland Community College in Champaign, Illinois) serving nonresidential students is striking. However, the book fails to explore this fact, a missed opportunity because serving a commuter population adds a frequently overlooked dimension of services to any group, including international students.

Profiles of Academic Library Services for International Students is not a must-have report for a collection on international student support by libraries because the $104 cost is out of line with the book’s content and its 57-page length. However, it is worth requesting through interlibrary loan because it includes an objective view of services for students from other countries by a variety of institution types and sizes serving different types of learners.


The editors of this 12-essay volume are all past recipients of grants from the Fulbright Program of international educational exchange. Constantia Constantiou received a Fulbright Scholar Award to Cyprus, Michael Miller a Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad in Morocco and Tunisia, and Kenneth Schlesinger a Fulbright Senior Specialist Grant to South Africa. The three editors recognize the role their international experiences played
in their leadership and development as librarians. The book’s essays are written by people who have participated in formal library programs outside the United States, underscoring the contribution of those experiences as well as how global operations exemplify the value of service in librarianship. The essays, mostly first-person narratives by U.S.-based academic librarians and administrators, convey the professional and personal challenges and opportunities as well as the short-term and longer-term implications of an international exchange for the individual, the community partner, and the person’s home institution. *International Librarianship* emphasizes three prongs it views as necessary for successful global experiences: disciplinary expertise, cultural competency, and emotional intelligence.

These essays describe the location of the experience, the formal programs, the activities undertaken, the personal aspects, and how the experience affected the librarian’s or other author’s professional and personal development. The book includes sections on academic exchanges, Fulbright experiences, information literacy and access, international partnerships, and training models. Unlike other books described here, the entries do not recount a current or, in some cases, even a recent journey for the authors. Therefore, the passage of time has enabled them to include insightful observations of how their experience changed them and how they revised their views and professional activities after their return home. One author notes greater sensitivity regarding international visiting scholars on campus and has become active professionally in that arena due to her partnership with the University of Hong Kong (p. 23) Another essay acknowledges keen attentiveness to international students on the U.S. home campus and describes efforts to lessen the challenges faced by that population after participation in a faculty exchange between the City University of New York and two Shanghai universities. (p. 36)

These essays should be read by any American academic librarian applying for one of the Fulbright programs or participating in a formal arrangement or exchange, whether sponsored by their campus or an outside agency. This readable book inspires a focus on the recognition and development of the professional and personal skills and competencies required for success in international librarianship.


The research and work of dozens of U.S. and Canadian authors join to provide a comprehensive volume that epitomizes, in many respects, the breadth of international work and global engagement in and by academic libraries today. In some ways, *The Globalized Library* itself serves as a map to activities in this area. What sets this book apart is its attempt at comprehensiveness. Depth comes from the several chapters devoted to each of five categories: “Information Literacy”; “Outreach & Inclusion”; “Collections & Digital Humanities”; “Establishing Libraries & Services Abroad”; and “Career & Professional Development.”

While many of the entries are case studies, their overall tone is scholarly and their treatment of the subject is grounded on a research-based foundation, such as interviews or a survey. The chapters, nevertheless, remain readable and understandable. The “Col-
lections & Digital Humanities” section, in particular, adds value by updating the notions of collection development and work in area studies. While area studies still often falls within the purview of the research library, these chapters, taken together, form a picture of current practices that focus on collections as service and as the springboard for engagement and outreach.

*The Globalized Library* is a valuable addition to any academic library engaging with international students or involved globally in any way. Its contents are certain to inspire conversations as libraries look for ways to serve innovatively in an increasingly worldwide and interconnected higher education landscape.


Two categories of American academic libraries operating outside of the United States readily come to mind. They are (1) libraries serving a branch campus of a U.S.-based university; or (2) libraries at an autonomous, private American-style university such as the American University in Cairo, Egypt. This volume concentrates on the former but includes some of the latter. United States universities operating branches in another country are arguably the most substantial investment and symbol of a university’s commitment to global engagement. *Bridging Worlds* deals primarily with that undertaking and with the experience of New York University (NYU) and its campuses in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates and in Shanghai, China. Chapters also deal with the American University in Cairo and Northwestern University in Qatar. Since the chapters cover a range of subjects and operational areas of librarianship, they provide food for thought and valuable insights for anyone who works in a U.S. branch campus, provides support for one while working at the home campus, or holds a job in an American-style campus library abroad.

The book’s 15 chapters are divided into five sections: “Designing and Envisioning the Library Ahead”; “Delivering Global Access Services and Technology Support”; “Building Collections Abroad Collaboratively”; “Developing Reference and Research Services of International Campuses,” which includes instruction; and “Providing Technical Services in a Global Context.” The chapters provide readable, accessible discussions on a breadth of operations and activities of academic libraries. Many segments underscore that home campuses play a vital role in the establishment and ongoing library operations of a branch campus library, including collections and acquisitions, technology, interlibrary loan, and other activities. This volume is a solid guide for anyone working to establish, support, or work at an international branch campus library of an American institution.

**Speak Up: Discussion and Interest Groups to Explore**

Reading about academic library global engagement is useful, but relationships and discussions are also key for people who want to develop new competencies and ideas. ACRL has three discussion or affinity groups either newly launched or being reimagined to support collaboration and the sharing of information regarding academic library ac-
tivity with a global aspect. All groups are open to participation, at least on some level, by nonmembers of ACRL.

The Global Library Services Discussion Group became an official ACRL group in July 2018. It recognizes the growing community of librarians in the United States working with users overseas through university global partnerships, study abroad programs, or libraries’ international alliances. The group’s mission is to connect global services librarians across the world and provide guidance for best practices in public services, technical support, intercultural training, and more. This organization is for librarians who may travel some but work primarily in their home institution to support patrons working or studying in other countries. For more information, see http://www.ala.org/acrl/global-library-services-discussion-group.

The ACRL International Perspectives on Academic and Research Libraries Discussion Group promotes awareness of and dialogue about the international, transnational, and global dimensions of key issues affecting academic and research libraries. It aims to promote comparative study of academic libraries and to support collaboration among academic and research librarians on issues benefiting from an international perspective. In addition to an electronic mail discussion list, the group hosts webinars that connect academic librarians working or conducting research outside the United States to present and talk about their perspectives with the group. The webinars aim to foster connections and share new perspectives and partnership opportunities. More information is available at http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/discussiongroups/acr-dgiparl.

For the past 10 years, the ACRL Academic Library Services to International Students Interest Group has been a forum for librarians to discuss issues related to all types of academic library services, including instruction, outreach, reference, collection development, and programming, offered to patrons from other countries studying or working in the United States. The group also strives to develop guidelines and guidance to resources to assist librarians with providing quality services to this population. The interest group usually meets at the American Library Association Annual Conference. In the past, the meetings have been primarily discussions, but the format has changed to feature expert speakers and practitioners with experience serving international students on their campuses. To learn more, see http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/interestgroups/acr-igalsis.

Please Share Your Stories

Accounts of successes and challenges related to global engagement by academic librarians are readily available in books and elsewhere. However, while identifying and reviewing resources, I could not help but think of the gaps. If you have something to write about that emphasizes an international aspect and that should be shared, please contact me, and we can explore the options.

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