

## FEATURE: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

### Designed to Inspire: A One-Year International Exchange of Academic Librarians

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**Abstract:** This paper, based on an exchange of librarians between academic libraries in Canada and Australia, describes the process of planning for and participating in an international job exchange. It highlights the benefits of the exchange and lessons learned from it and reflects on the opportunities for career development and renewal afforded by such a swap. This experience will be contextualized within the continuum of literature on library exchanges. By describing our successful exchange process, the authors aim to encourage more library staff exchanges.

### Introduction

After a seven months' exchange position in the University of Michigan Library, I feel moved to express myself on the subject of exchanges among librarians. It seems strange that the practice is not more common. College and university professors have been exchanging for years; why not librarians? . . . Nations, institutions, and industries recognize the value of interchange of ideas.  
Florence M. Craig, 1932<sup>1</sup>

International job exchanges are an excellent way to gain a fresh perspective on the work done in libraries. Given that student exchanges are prevalent and internationalization is a strategic mission of many universities, these broader campus internationalization priorities should motivate libraries to take part in international exchanges.<sup>2</sup> Academic librarians can advocate for this mission by participating in job swapping and sharing the experience with coworkers at their home institutions. Based on a one-year exchange of academic librarians in Canada and Australia, this paper provides an account of the logistics and experiences and reflects upon the benefits afforded and lessons learned from librarian exchanges.

This article's opening quotation, from a letter to the editor of the *Bulletin of the American*

Library Association in 1932, ponders the rarity of library exchanges. In fact, the literature confirms that, despite a multitude of reports of library exchanges<sup>3</sup> and some ebbs and flows over the decades, such arrangements remain uncommon.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, a lengthy international exchange (six months to a year, for example) is especially rare compared with swaps that last just a few days or weeks. In a survey of issues affecting international students and academic libraries, Diane Peters lists a number of opportunities for staff development in this area. These opportunities include library tourists; library field trips or study tours; job exchanges; formal partnerships between libraries or academic institutions; library consultancy; and volunteer work.<sup>5</sup> Karen Bordonaro puts library exchanges in the context of international librarianship. She defines “librarian roles in international librarianship” as including the functional roles of traveler/visitor, worker, humanitarian, educator, leader, virtual connector, and global resource sharer. She classifies “librarians engaging in work experiences in libraries outside their own country” as “workers.”<sup>6</sup> In a comprehensive report on staff exchanges in librarianship, Susunaga Weeraperuma defined a job exchange as follows: “An exchange ordinarily means that two or more librarians have come to an understanding to exchange their jobs for a fixed period; and at the end of that period the librarians revert to their old positions; [and] these exchanges may be international in coverage.”<sup>7</sup> The authors wish to encourage longer library exchanges for the benefit of not only the participants but also the library staff at both institutions.

In 2015, three academic librarians participated in a one-year exchange between institutions in Canada and Australia. The process began in April 2013, when Jennifer Thomas, liaison librarian at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Brisbane, Australia, reached out to Chief Librarian Madeleine Lefebvre at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada, via e-mail. The e-mail expressed interest in participating in a librarian exchange for 6 to 12 months and provided a few details about the institution and the housing offered. Two librarians at Ryerson who were interested in participating came up with the idea to share the exchange: the QUT librarian would spend a year in Toronto and the two Ryerson librarians would spend six

months each (separately but consecutively) in Brisbane. The Canadian librarians would bring their families with them to Australia. The librarians' home institutions would continue to pay their salaries; the librarians would swap housing and cars. Ultimately, due to delays in paperwork and documentation, the exchange took place from January through December 2015, corresponding to the Australian academic calendar, almost two years after the initial e-mail was sent.

### **Making It Happen: Institutional Support**

It is easy to underestimate the importance of institutional support. Backing from colleagues, supervisors, department heads, and possibly deans or boards of governors is essential to make a job exchange happen, and it is necessary from the beginning of the process. At the time of the swap, QUT had almost 8,000 international students from 100 countries, was engaged in high-quality international research, and pursued collaborations with various institutes and centers to solve global issues. Similarly, Ryerson University had both an International Office and an International Student Services Office involved in promoting and supporting exchanges and providing students with the opportunity to “gain cross-cultural skills, build an international network, and engage with the world as a global citizen.”<sup>8</sup> Ryerson's academic plan includes a section on international outreach and engagement stating, “International partnerships with academic institutions . . . enable students and faculty to study and work abroad, deepening cross-cultural awareness and fostering global perspectives.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, support for exchanges in general was strong at both universities, an essential building block for success:

For any such scheme to become permanent, the idealism has to come from both ends. The senior people at both the receiving and the dispatching libraries must be imbued with the true spirit of internationalism. They must be citizens of the world with a strong faith that what they are supporting is really worthwhile, and that both short-term and long-term good will come from it.<sup>10</sup>

Ryerson's chief librarian had previously worked with librarians who had done international exchanges, and she forwarded the original e-mail to all librarians with the message

“Here’s an exciting opportunity for someone.”<sup>11</sup> The Ryerson Faculty Association, the bargaining unit for tenure-track and other faculty, librarians, and counselors at Ryerson, was familiar with faculty exchanges and expressed support immediately. A handful of Ryerson librarians had participated in exchanges in the 1990s, before the institution’s status changed from polytechnic to university and before librarians had faculty status. Librarians at QUT are classified as professional staff, and Ryerson librarians as faculty. As members of the faculty, Ryerson librarians receive annual professional development funds, which they can apply toward travel expenses. Institutional support at Ryerson included financial assistance from the library training and development budget to help with travel costs, visa fees, and extended health insurance coverage required for Canadian visa holders in Australia.

QUT Library also had a history of exchanges, with librarians in the past undertaking temporary transfers to Wales (the National Library of Wales), the United States (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and Canada (the University of Windsor), to name a few. QUT also strongly supported librarians undertaking professional development opportunities. During the time of the exchange described here, QUT Library also partnered with the Auraria Library at the University of Colorado Denver, signing a three-year exchange agreement committing to trade librarians annually (in a nonconcurrent, library visit format) in the years 2016–2018, with the goal of providing learning and collaborative experiences that would benefit both institutions.<sup>12</sup> The most important consideration for QUT Library was that the exchange duties should be comparable and the participants should not require training in a role new to them. Thus, the QUT librarians sought out fellow liaison librarians as potential exchange partners.

### **Making It Happen: Documentation**

Specific documentation may be needed to participate in an exchange, especially an international one. Legal exchange agreements, memorandums of understanding to cover labor contracts—that is, nonbinding agreements between the participating institutions outlining the terms and details of the deal, including each institution’s requirements and responsibilities—and

documentation for accompanying family members may be required. If these documents already exist, they need careful examination because visa applications vary widely between countries, and immigration rules change over time. Proof of medical insurance may also be required. Due to the time required to create and compile the information, there must be commitment at various levels in each participant's workplace. Everyone—colleagues, supervisors, and management—must be kept up to date on the application requirements and progress to ensure people do not forget the ideas and goals that inspired the project in the first place.

Ryerson librarians initiated the exchange process on their end by meeting with the Ryerson International Office for guidance on first steps and to confirm the required documentation. The participants from Canada needed a number of documents to support their visa applications, including a general memorandum of understanding as well as a more specific exchange agreement with the legal details. It took 13 months to collaboratively create the documentation required to apply for an Australian work visa, which needed the approval of legal counsel at both universities. The final exchange agreement included such particulars as accompanying family members, dates of the arrangement, type of work, salaries and benefits, leave provisions, insurance, conditions for termination of the exchange termination, codes of conduct, confidentiality, and intellectual property. The agreement was signed by university administration and the librarians.<sup>13</sup>

Australian visa application requirements were complex, which contributed to the delay in completing the documentation for this exchange. QUT had mechanisms in place to facilitate many student and academic staff swaps each year, but such arrangements did not exist for professional staff exchanges because the immigration requirements had recently changed. Thus, it took the Canadians many months to acquire temporary work visas from Australia's Department of Immigration and Border Protection (now the Department of Home Affairs). Canadian requirements were less complicated because a visa was not required. The application submitted to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada yielded a work permit within about

three weeks.

While the paperwork was in process, participating librarians used Skype to keep in touch and to meet with managers from both institutions to discuss work duties, the documentation progress, housing and car logistics, and travel dates. The formal exchange agreement document included a short description of the work and provided official job descriptions as appendices. Technically speaking, this was not a direct job exchange; it was a swap of expertise and professional practice. Both Ryerson participants are catalogers and part of the Collections Services team, as well as liaison librarians for various subject areas. They assumed the role of liaison to the Faculty of Creative Industries at QUT and did not do metadata work there. The librarian from QUT took on only the subject liaison portfolios as part of the Information & Learning Services team. Since the Ryerson librarians remained at their home institution for half of the year, each assumed the entire cataloging portfolio at Ryerson while the other was abroad. Thus, one significant advantage of splitting the exchange between two librarians from the same institution was that each Ryerson librarian could spend six months working closely with the QUT librarian at Ryerson. Collaboration was facilitated by the exchange librarians sharing office space at Ryerson. Their proximity provided a catalyst for many informal and spontaneous conversations about differences and similarities between the two libraries, universities, and countries. One significant difference was that team-based liaison work was the norm at QUT. Observations and lessons learned from this QUT liaison model went into a final report, which recently informed a reorganization toward a team-based liaison model at Ryerson.

### **Benefits of the Exchange**

At the time of the exchange, Ryerson librarians planned to formally review their liaison model and wondered what research support looked like at QUT. Spending 12 months abroad learning about liaison work at QUT was therefore a timely opportunity to spark thinking about services to researchers and students at Ryerson. Also during the exchange period, Ryerson opened a new library building featuring a makerspace lab with equipment and supplies people could use to

create, build, and invent things. QUT was investigating whether to add a makerspace of its own. Neither development was planned to coincide with the exchange, of course, but both provided timely learning opportunities for all three participating librarians. Other areas identified for trading ideas and exploration included librarians' teaching and learning skill development, curriculum mapping, quality assurance, and development of e-learning objects. Another unanticipated but well-timed research opportunity was offered to the QUT librarian to travel to Pennsylvania to conduct an oral history interview as part of a QUT Digital Collections project.<sup>14</sup>

Working abroad, even temporarily, provides a chance to experience the world in a meaningful way. The experience can lead to insights that go beyond those of a tourist as the worker becomes immersed in the culture and the local community. Extended periods working with people in a different library gives a fresh perspective on the work, even if the librarian uses many of the same systems and tools—as was the case with QUT and Ryerson. The work of librarians in academic libraries has evolved to include a variety of roles, including supporting the research needs of faculty and students from countries all over the globe. Working directly with researchers to support projects and priorities in their respective countries allowed all three participants to enhance their understanding of research and scholarship across cultures. Practical insights into the research life cycle in another country is a huge benefit of experiencing academic librarianship work on the other side of the world.

The experience of working abroad was especially impactful because it lasted many months. An opportunity to do work one knows well in a different country allows one to approach the work with new eyes. For example, the Ryerson librarians shared ideas learned in conversations about reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Australia during similar conversations at home. From these experiences, the authors are convinced that extended professional work in another country broadens one's outlook on both the world and the work. It brings new insights from across disciplines and cultures. Moreover, since libraries encourage learning and curiosity, exchanges seem a perfect fit for library staff.

Time away from usual routines and environment allowed for deep observations about similarities and differences between the two libraries. Comparisons between the organizational models were particularly insightful when the librarians at Ryerson considered new approaches to staffing liaison services. At the time of the exchange, QUT liaison work was organized by discipline and team-based, whereas Ryerson librarians assumed subject portfolios as individuals. Exploring the work of research support from an Australian academic perspective and participating in team-based liaison work provided much inspiration and many specific ideas for organizational changes in Canada. For the Ryerson librarians, the discipline-specific liaison work was rewarding in part because it allowed for a focus not split by functional or supervisory obligations: they could act on new ideas immediately.

The participating librarians had not only a valuable professional experience but also a wonderful personal journey. Traveling in a new country, discovering new foods, talking to people, and learning colloquialisms were fun and gratifying. Such exchanges provide advantages, Michael Hannon says, “not only in individual career development, but also in broadening the experience and enlarging the vision of other library staff.”<sup>15</sup> Discussions with colleagues at both institutions confirmed that exchanges would benefit any university staff who have the opportunity to work with and learn from exchange librarians, including teaching faculty.

### **Lessons Learned**

The challenges and complexities involved in arranging and organizing an international exchange are much discussed in the library literature. In a 1992 survey of international exchanges in academic libraries, Tony Kidd and Karen Roughton analyzed planning logistics and observed that “considerable initiative and perseverance are needed to arrange an exchange.”<sup>16</sup> While a number of such transfers occur after only six months of planning, the majority take over a year to come to fruition. The longest time reported to plan an exchange was four years. The highs and lows experienced by librarians who planned and participated in exchanges are summarized in this description by a public librarian from the United Kingdom



who participated in a 12-month exchange with a librarian from New Zealand:

Considering a job exchange means you are looking at a long haul trip—long before you set foot on a plane. The amount of information gathering, negotiating and paperwork involved is immense. A thousand things can go wrong. Tenacity, openness and a positive outlook will get you over most hurdles. Very few job exchanges were ever negotiated without some worries and disappointments. Yet very few job exchangees regret the experience, or come to see it as anything other than the most worthwhile thing they have done. Contacts made generally last a lifetime.<sup>17</sup>

From the Canadian perspective, one of the biggest challenges was determining what paperwork was required without clear guidelines and requirements. Suggestions for those considering an international job exchange are:

- Begin the process as early as possible because the time required to coordinate and document an exchange will take much longer than expected;
- Enlist the help of your campus international office or equivalent;
- Confirm the visa or permit requirement of the destination country;
- Ensure that staff in administration in both countries work with the same information regarding visa requirements;
- Keep track of the people at your institution who will provide support, sign required documentation, or both, such as a vice president or legal counsel;
- Expect delays, but do not let time lag. Follow up regularly to ensure the process continues to move along, since the exchange will require work on the part of people for whom it is not a priority;
- Stay in regular contact with your exchange partner or partners, before and during the project. For example, you might schedule regular video or audio sessions to talk about developments at each institution or library and within departments; and
- Provide regular updates on the paperwork, housing and car arrangements, and

local amenities.

Tips for making the most of the international exchange once it begins are:

- Prepare for months away from friends and the familiarity of home, including (or especially) climate differences. For example, in the authors' experience, February can be unsettling if one is unaccustomed to Canadian winters or Australian summers;
- Document the journeys and daily work life by keeping in touch with the home library, sharing photos and e-mail updates;
- Share information that situates your exchange experience within your institution's broader academic and internationalization goals;
- Schedule crossover time if possible, that is, at least a couple of days or so at the start of the exchange where both participants are in the same place at the same time. This could help with orientation at work and home;
- Do not underestimate the support network available for exchange participants, such as siblings, parents, neighbors, and colleagues;
- Carry newly learned traditions and experiences home to extend learning rather than letting the exchange terminate with the final date; and
- Task visiting librarians with a project of significance, in addition to routine daily work.

Another lesson learned is the importance of finding an exchange institution that is a good fit. While the pairing of Ryerson and QUT came together by chance, the authors believe that parallels between QUT and Ryerson helped account for its success. The institutions shared commonalities in the size of their student population, urban location, and applied programming with a focus on experiential learning.

Finally, do not underestimate the value and learning opportunities for home library staff

at each host institution. The exchange between Ryerson and QUT benefited people at both institutions who interacted with the participating librarians. The staff benefited from a new face, fresh insight into their daily routines, and both cultural and professional enrichment. This is echoed in the literature. Ann Lees says, "I am also deeply aware of how much colleagues apparently not directly involved in the exchange contribute to its success or failure."<sup>18</sup>

### **Library Exchanges through the Decades**

The remainder of this paper situates this experience within the broader context of library exchanges. Exchanges among library professionals happened at least as early as 1932<sup>19</sup> and occurred with varying frequency depending on the decade (see Figure 1). In a letter to the editor of the *Bulletin of the American Library Association*, librarian Florence Craig observes that it is surprising and unfortunate that exchanges among librarians do not occur more often. She writes, "A year in another library would do much to stimulate countless library workers, giving them wider outlooks and creating contacts which would promote a greater spirit of cooperation in the library world."<sup>20</sup> In 1979, John Jeffries asked: "Well, if the advantages are so obvious, why is it that exchanges are not more common than they are?"<sup>21</sup> One factor may be, Nancy Keane suggests, that library exchanges are little known among library staff: "One reason is that they are simply not all that common. There is not much written about exchanges in the literature. Librarians do not hear much from those who have been involved in exchanges so the alternative may not occur to them."<sup>22</sup> Kidd also refers to the infrequency of exchanges in libraries. In 1995, he wrote, "Over the last 15 to 20 years, international exchanges of library staff have become, if not an everyday occurrence for most libraries, at least something that is not looked on as totally unthinkable" though still essentially rare.<sup>23</sup> In 1977, the MEILLEUR report (named for the French word for better and an acronym for Mobility of Employment, International, for Librarians in EUROpe) called for an increase in library exchanges between European countries. The report looked at professional staff exchanges and temporary assignments between libraries in Western Europe and surveyed opportunities and difficulties in promoting exchanges.<sup>24</sup>

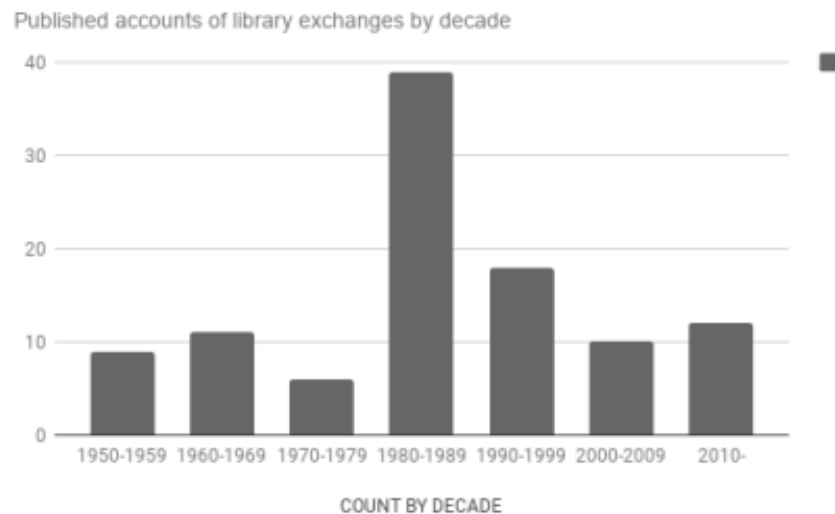
Another reason for the relative infrequency of library exchanges is the lack of central organizing body. “A great difficulty which has prevented widespread participation in exchanges is the lack of a central office through which they can be arranged.”<sup>25</sup> Multiple attempts throughout the 20th century by various library associations sought to provide some structure and support to facilitate international exchanges, often with little success. These efforts are well detailed in both the MEILLEUR report and a book chapter by John Roe.<sup>26</sup> As early as 1927, shortly after its founding, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) established “a Committee on Library Exchanges and continued to consider the matter, off and on, until the late 1950s.”<sup>27</sup> Developments in this area led to the formation in 1983 of the Bureau for International Library Staff Exchange (LIBEX). The first LIBEX-facilitated swap took place in 1984 between the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and the National Library of Canada in Ottawa. Data collected in the early years of LIBEX on the applications submitted from 11 countries show that exchanges were most often initiated by individual librarians rather than libraries. In the first few years of LIBEX, 138 requests for exchange came from individual librarians and only 5 from libraries.<sup>28</sup> While LIBEX helped facilitate a number of exchanges over the years, and reports in the literature do credit LIBEX, the most successful route appears to have been and continues to be direct contact. That was how the Ryerson/QUT exchange was initiated. Direct contact seems to have been the most successful in previous decades as well, despite attempts to create more formalized exchange bureaus. In 1987, Hannelore Rader said: “At this time few formal international job exchange programs exist for librarians in the United States . . . The majority of the exchanges are arranged on a person-to-person basis with approval from employers.”<sup>29</sup>

LIBEX remains “a clearinghouse for library and information staff who are interested in arranging a job exchange.”<sup>30</sup> In April 2018, its database listed 328 staff profiles, including 31 people from Australia and 38 from Canada. Of these, 163 profiles were academic staff, 82 public library staff, 29 school, and 24 government, in addition to profiles for library staff in

government, not-for-profit, commercial, and health libraries. The database is searchable, but geographic names are not standardized. For example, one must do separate searches for “UK,” “United Kingdom,” and “England” to find potential exchanges in that country. The site includes definitions for four levels of staff to clarify the differences between senior librarians, professional librarians, and support staff. At the time of this writing, activity on the discussion forum was low, with the latest post appearing on July 2017. Beyond LIBEX, other exchange-related support is generally country specific. For example, the German-North American Resources Partnership (GNARP), a project of the Global Resources Network, includes a Librarian Exchange Working Group. This group “aims to promote and intensify the professional exchange between librarians from Germany and the United States”<sup>31</sup> by hosting a clearinghouse for opportunities and information about funding. The International Relations Roundtable (IRRT) of the American Library Association (ALA) maintains a site with information about opportunities and funding for American library staff interested in an exchange.<sup>32</sup> A local library association might provide guidance or support for members looking to identify a potential partner. However, the most time-effective means to embark on an exchange may be to write directly to individual libraries,<sup>33</sup> and personal contact is, in the view of the authors, an essential part of pursuing this experience.

In considering library exchanges through the decades, one trend that emerged from the literature was a significant increase in exchanges in the 1980s. By decade, there were approximately 6 published reports of exchanges in the seventies, 39 in the eighties, 15 in the nineties, and 10 in the first decade of the new millennium. A number of articles mention the economic climate and limited job mobility for librarians as motivators for an exchange. Roe explains: “Because of the economic situation which has curbed much of the career mobility previously enjoyed by librarians, professional stimulation and growth gained by changing the place of employment can also be experienced by work exchange programmes.”<sup>34</sup> Other authors say, “[In] a period of job market stagnation it is a way of changing one’s job and gaining much valuable experience in the process,”<sup>35</sup> and “With the stagnant job market and no new members

of staff, it was a way to experience the benefits of a new job and working environment.”<sup>36</sup>



### Library Exchange Research

Researchers have done a number of empirical investigations into library exchanges over the years, beginning with the previously discussed MEILLEUR report. The study most often cited is Kidd and Roughton’s 1994 article “International Staff Exchanges for Academic Libraries.”<sup>37</sup> As mentioned earlier, Kidd and Roughton surveyed library directors and international exchange participants in 1992 in what may be the only formal survey on the topic. They surveyed 109 library directors in the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as 120 members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in North America. The survey included separate questionnaires for library directors and staff who had participated in an international exchange. The questions gathered information from 40 participants ( 27 from the U.K. and Ireland and 13 from North America) on the following topics: destination and length of exchange; exchange participant demographics; exchange provenance; exchange logistics (financial and living arrangements); type and rank of librarians on exchange; professional benefits for exchangees; personal benefits for exchangees; promotion prospects; motivation and performance benefits; and disadvantages and drawbacks of such arrangements. Kidd and Roughton solicited experiences and opinions of library directors in the areas of performance of exchange staff; benefits of international

exchanges; disadvantages and drawbacks of exchanges; and reasons for not participating (when no exchanges had taken place). Their findings confirmed that the majority of reports on international library staff exchanges took the form of case studies, offering “a mixture of personal and professional observations.”<sup>38</sup> Most importantly, there was little assessment of what types of exchange work best and the impact of such job swapping.<sup>39</sup>

Only a handful of studies on library exchanges have appeared in the last several years. One comprehensive study on the effectiveness of knowledge transfer during international library partnerships was completed as part of doctoral work in 2008. Rebecca Leigh Miller Banner conducted research for her dissertation looking at how professional knowledge is transferred across national borders in the context of library twinning initiatives rather than library staff exchanges explicitly. In her literature review, she notes that “while staff exchanges frequently are a component of international partnerships, many are not a part of any larger, enduring partnership program.”<sup>40</sup> In 2012, music librarian Ines Pampel conducted a survey during the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres (IAML) Conference in Montreal on the topic of exchanges for music librarians.<sup>41</sup> Her survey solicited feedback from the audience to gauge interest in participation in exchanges as well as ideas about professional exchanges.<sup>42</sup> Pampel also recommends ways to support exchanges and exchange programs.<sup>43</sup> In 2013, Steven Witt, Laurie Kutner, and Liz Cooper embarked on a study of academic library contributions to campus internationalization initiatives, which supplemented existing data from the American Council on Education (ACE) on internationalization initiatives in higher education.<sup>44</sup> Results of their research reported that involvement in “internationalization-related initiatives” included “facilitating international exchange programs with partner institutions including sister library programs”<sup>45</sup> and “potential for increased international library staff exchanges,”<sup>46</sup> the latter when asked to describe “the potential they see for further, future engagement by the library in internationalization and global education efforts on their campuses.”<sup>47</sup> In 2016, Karen Bordonaro surveyed librarians for their

personal views on and definitions of international librarianship, including exchanges.<sup>48</sup>

In terms of areas for future research on library exchanges, Gillian Riley identified a gap in the literature in 1991, reporting that “the literature review may provide too positive a view of job exchange for two main reasons: i) only the successful ones are written up; ii) little research has been done in this area, hence those who have tried to exchange without success have largely not been reached by researchers.”<sup>49</sup> Indeed, during the time of this exchange, two other attempts at exchanges with librarians at QUT failed. One fell through for lack of an exchange partner and one due to a change in library leadership. The two failures speak to two critical factors in organizing a successful exchange: securing institutional support and finding a willing exchange partner.

### **There Should Be More Exchanges in Libraries**

The benefits of this particular exchange have been described earlier. Further, a synopsis of benefits selected from the literature serves as a call to increase the number of library exchanges. Kidd suggests that “there are sufficient rewards, both for individuals and for libraries, to justify rather more effort and encouragement being spent on [library exchanges . . . with the hope that] this article might help one or two more library staff to think about the possible benefits of an exchange abroad.”<sup>50</sup> Indeed, in reporting on international library staff exchange programs between the University of Colorado Denver and Linnaeus University in Sweden, the authors confirm that the exchanges have

enhanced creativity, generated ideas, furthered innovation, and fostered relationships that enrich staff members’ ways of experiencing the world more deeply and broadly. Cultural competence and internationalization confidence has thereby been enhanced among exchange participants, who now readily express increased appreciation for variation in workplace assumptions and professional practices.<sup>51</sup>

A further benefit identified by these authors is that such experiences promote “developing library staff and creating a library culture that can respond to an internationalized



campus and world are important steps.”<sup>52</sup> At the 71st IFLA General Conference and Council in Oslo, Norway, in 2005, Sidsel Hindal delivered a paper on job exchange arguing that international experience contributed to five areas: (1) inspiration, (2) network building, (3) knowledge sharing, (4) capacity building, and (5) personal development.<sup>53</sup> Exchanges offer an opportunity to foster international research partnerships among librarians and encourage collaborative research projects across borders.<sup>54</sup> Finally, given that library staff are active intermediaries between users and resources, continuing training focused on services to multicultural communities is imperative. Cross-cultural communication and sensitivity, antidiscrimination, cultures, and languages should be ongoing conversations in libraries.<sup>55</sup> Librarians can support these conversations by participating in work exchanges and sharing their experience with colleagues at home.

### **Conclusion**

Library exchanges have occurred for decades but remain relatively rare. Although planning for an exchange requires a huge investment in time, commitment, and institutional support, a temporary international job swap is a formative experience, both professionally and personally. Working with an exchange librarian gives the library staff at host institutions a new face with ideas and experiences from another country. The experience makes those involved better equipped to address challenges when navigating new environments. This paper advocates the inherent value of exchange among librarians, and perhaps in doing so, will inspire other libraries and librarians to seek these exchanges and increase their occurrence.

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