

Dear Friends and Colleagues

Thank you for your messages. I'm sorry that I'm not able to reply to each of them individually, but I will – eventually! – if you respond to this one. This is the seventh instalment (STU) in the second series of my Library ABC, together with a brief report on my professional and scholarly activities during 2024.

I am happy to report that Monika and I, and our sons and family, are well.

It has been a busier year than we had imagined. Since no IFLA World Library and Information Congress was held, and since my research funds were depleted, I was not anticipating any overseas travel. However, the University of Pretoria found some funding that enabled me to continue my archival research into the history of IFLA. IFLA's Library History Special Interest Group (LibHist SIG), is preparing for IFLA's centenary in 2027, and for several years now, most of my research has focused on the history of IFLA. This year this resulted in two articles in [IFLA journal](#) (Lor 2024c; 2024b) I have three more contributions in the "pipeline", two of them on IFLA during the Belle Époque period (see Mons, below) and one on relations between IFLA and the FID (Fédération Internationale de Documentation, later [International Federation for Information and Documentation](#)) in the latter's final years before its dissolution in 2002. I am also sketching out a chapter for the scholarly book which is planned to mark the anniversary.

To this end I spent two weeks in The Hague, the first in the archives of the [UDCC \(Universal Decimal Classification Consortium\)](#) to search for material on the FID, and the second week in the IFLA archives, continuing my recent research there. Both archives are held in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the National Library of the Netherlands, where IFLA's head office is located. After The Hague, I spent four days in Mons, Belgium. Here I consulted archival sources in the [Mundaneum](#), a fascinating institution. The archives of Paul Otlet, preserved there, are of interest not only to historians of libraries and information science, but also to students of the [Belle Époque](#) and the politics and the intellectual climate of the early 20th Century, particularly as reflected in the development of transnational civil society. In 1907 two visionary pacifists and internationalists, [Otlet](#) and Henri la Fontaine (1913 Nobel peace prize winner) founded the [Union of International Associations](#), which still exists today. I was privileged to page through many of the folders and read Otlet's writings. .

Still in the field of library history, but on a different topic, I contributed an article to a special issue of [Library Trends](#) honouring a pioneer of international librarianship, [Mary Niles Maack](#) (Lor 2024a).

In December I paid a brief and unexpected visit to [Qatar](#), having been invited to deliver the keynote address (on "The evolution of global librarianship: reflections and future perspectives") at a ceremony held at the very impressive National Library. The ceremony marked the signing of an agreement in terms of which the National Library of Qatar hosts the newly created IFLA Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa. At a seminar the following day I also presented a three-part lecture on "Approaching a century of leadership: IFLA's journey from a 1920s "gentlemen's club" to the 21st century "global voice of libraries". This visit was a very interesting experience. Qatar is wealthy and has an excellent infrastructure. Everything works and is well maintained – quite a contrast with South Africa, I'm sorry to say.

During the year I contributed four instalments of my column Global Gleanings in *LIASA-inTouch*, and I did some further work on the Italian translation of part of my book on International and Comparative Librarianship, which is due to appear on 8 January 2025, and carried out various routine academic tasks.

A year or so ago, I wrote that Monika and I still want to do some exploring in the wilder parts of southern Africa while we are both still fit enough. With this in mind, we undertook a month-long road trip up SA's West Coast, all the way to Alexander Bay and the Namibian border, visiting remote fishing villages and enjoying the wide-open spaces and seascapes vistas of this arid, sparsely populated region.

With that I've run out of my allotted page. On the next page you will find my Library ABC for New Year 2023, with my warm greetings and good wishes for health, prosperity and fulfilment for you and yours; and for good sense, civility and peace, in 2023.

Peter

References:

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