

Fulbright Senior Specialist Program - Library Science

by Emil Levine

I was recently fortunate to participate in the U.S. Department of State Fulbright Senior Specialist Program (www.cies.org/specialists/) designed to provide short-term academic opportunities (two to six weeks) for U.S. faculty and professionals. These shorter commitments give specialists greater flexibility to pursue their current academic or professional obligations.

Goals of the Fulbright program are the following:

- Increase the participation of leading U.S. scholars and professionals in Fulbright academic exchanges
- Encourage new activities that go beyond the traditional Fulbright activities of lecturing and research
- Promote increased connections between U.S. and non-U.S. postsecondary academic institutions

Program enrollment is quite simple. Once an institution's request for a specialist has been accepted, an appropriate institutional representative within a country must nominate you (the specialist) and submit a statement of work (assuming, of course, your coordination and mutual acceptance). This process is coordinated with the U.S. embassy within that country. While this process sounds complicated, it can occur very rapidly. (The secret to efficiency is not what you know, but whom you know, either in a foreign institution or within a U.S. embassy.)

Remuneration is \$200 a day, and the nominating organization will

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provide housing, meals and transportation within country. The Fulbright Program pays for transportation from the United States to the project site.

University of Vilnius Library, Lithuania

I conducted such a project at the University of Vilnius Library, Lithuania, in mid-May of this year. The appointment involved promoting acceptance of the changes a digital library and digitalization bring to a traditional, academic library. My task was made much easier due to the work of another Fulbright senior specialist, Barbie Elene, who carried out two three-week projects there before I arrived.

The "statement of work" from the library included the following provisions: [We expect the senior specialist to] work closely with the staff of the University Library as we move from a traditional environment to one more suited for the current day. Many of our long-term staff are resistant to change, and we look to the senior specialist not only to make them feel comfortable with the changes that must come, but to look for changes that they can make in their own work and that of their departments. The organizational structure of the library may have to change, and we seek advice on to how to accomplish this with a minimum of disruption.

We look to the senior specialist to help us determine what needs to change in restoration, conservation, digitization, exhibitions and digital library creation; how best to implement those changes, and how we can continue to improve and grow once the specialist has departed.

We are creating a digital library – it would be useful to hear the specialist's practical suggestions on how to create a digital library and how others have implemented changes in restoration, conservation, digitization and exhibitions.

The staff of the library consists of approximately 130 members, many holding an MLS or equivalent from the University of Vilnius or other institutions. They certainly did not need training in library science! The



Emil Levine in training exercise for teamwork. The exercise involved building an exhibit on the history of basketball (national sport) in Lithuania, and each staff member raised a hand when they had an idea, and then received the ball.

project involved, therefore, training staff in change management and in how to motivate staff to embrace a new environment, most importantly for a rather large restoration operation.

The Director General of the Vilnius University Library, Professor Audronė Glosienė, has served in various positions, including head of the Faculty for Library Science (part of the Communications Faculty). She is well known in Europe and the author of many papers. The university is also building a new campus with a second library at this site. These changes will provide new challenges and opportunities. Professor Glosienė's 2006 vision for the new library includes the statement "The Challenge of Change - Shake up, then Inspiration." (The report includes several pages in English, www.mb.vu.lt/apie/2007CD.pdf and is recommended reading.)

My activities, therefore, involved a change management project, a change influenced by technology. This problem required the classical "black box" approach, that is, someone outside the organization supporting what the staff already knew.

Project Results

The executive summary submitted at the end of the project explains the results of my investigation:

- A. The library staff are highly motivated, well trained and ready for changes.
- B. As in most organizations, staff (especially long-term) are resistant to change. The challenge concerns not only how to make staff feel



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comfortable with the changes, but to involve them in the change process so that they "buy-in" to the process (which they help design).

(The buy-in concept was introduced several times, including in a team-building exercise. This included a basketball game (the national sport of Lithuania) of all key staff, each passing the ball to another, after asking for help and getting a response by a hand up. Midway I walked out with the ball, because as a faculty librarian, no one passed me the ball – an instantaneous recognition of buy-in.)

- C. The organizational structure of the library should change, especially in restoration, conservation, rare books and manuscripts, all of which will be impacted by new technology (digitization) and Lithuanian legislative emphasis on preservation of its cultural heritage.
- D. An extensive bibliography showed how digitization is being used worldwide to supplement or replace conventional preservation/restoration. It is faster, cheaper and makes more documents available to more readers than conventional restoration. A database and formalized workflow with priorities was recommended, as was close coordination the National Library (and others) to avoid duplication (i.e., digitizing the same objects).
- E. Open source efforts were supported by discussion of copyright implications, impact of digitization and recommendations for a federated search engine.
- F. Education. A lecture was given to LIS graduate students on the steps required to develop a digital library. I sponsored four students as ASIS&T student members, the first in Lithuania.

Summary

I made several recommendations on digitization technology and the impact on other library operations, including open source management and digital library creation. As the staff was highly qualified in all aspects of library and information science, I also assisted in bringing (American) training in change management and motivational theory (staff involvement and buy-in), critical skills in their time of change and expansion. ■