



# Library Services to People with Special Needs Newsletter

## Message from the Chair by Nancy Bolt, Chair, LSN

It has been a difficult time to be a librarian or a library user during the past few months. Our last newsletter was in March of this year when we had made great plans for the coming year, including a program on Library Service to Refugees at the IFLA WLIC conference in August in Dublin.

Libraries closed and our users found their access to library resources and services severely limited. To our profession's credit, librarians quickly ramped up their expertise and extended or created new services to serve people online. However, our most vulnerable populations were left behind. Prison libraries closed and their users did not have the luxury just going online to get information. People experiencing homelessness who used the library for its air conditioning, its safety, its charging outlets, and online access were left outside, perhaps huddling by doors to use the wi-fi at a distance. Refugees, immigrants, migrants, and asylum seekers who used the library to stay in touch with family or get information about navigating a new country, had to go elsewhere.

Our IFLA Section, Library Services to People with Special Needs (LSN), will be doing our own webinar on *Using Universal Design*

*for Learning to Enhance Information Literacy Programs: Online and in the Library.* You can see our great line-up of speakers in this newsletter and register for one of the two webinars (or both). We are dedicated to making the webinar as accessible as possible so if you attend, and if it is not, just let us know. We are all learning.

This issue focuses on how libraries are providing services to people with special needs during the COVID-19 crisis. Lisa Krolak, Chief Librarian at UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning, shares how some prison libraries have been trying to continue serving their prison inmates and staff. Our Newsletter editor and LSN Information Officer summarizes some services provided to people with special needs from the Library Map of the World. Helen Chan, the LSN Secretary, provides two stories about the efforts of

school libraries to deal with the COVID-19 crisis.

We are pleased that IFLA featured the LSN developing Guidelines on Library Service to Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants in its celebration of World Refugee Day. You can read the full news release plus the services of Denver Public Library in Denver, Colorado, USA during the coronavirus. Finally check out how a foundation in the Congo is serving their school children.

We have recently conducted a survey asking libraries how they are serving people with special needs during COVID19. We are getting stories from around the world and our next issue this winter will feature many of them. For now, stay as safe as you can. Make good decisions. This will not be over unless we all work together to slow it down and bring it to an end.

## Inside this issue:

Webinar Invitation: IFLA IL & LSN Joint Webinar is Coming in September!	2
Impact of COVID-19 on Prison Libraries	3
School Libraries: Ready for Post-COVID Reopening	3
Library Map of the World: SDG Stories	4
LSN Featured in IFLA News Release for World Refugee Day	4
Books for Congo Helps Fight COVID-19	5
Facing COVID-19@Hong Kong Libraries	6

## Upcoming Conferences

- ♦ IFLA WLIC, Rotterdam, August 19-26, 2021
- ♦ IFLA WLIC, Dublin, 2022



Our LSN Team hold our Board Meeting

---

# Webinar Invitation: IFLA IL & LSN Joint Webinar is Coming in September!

by Helen Chan, Education for All Foundation and Secretary, LSN

## Using Universal Design for Learning to Enhance Information Literacy Programs: Online and in the Library

The joint webinar from the IFLA Information Literacy (IL) Section and Library Services to People with Special Needs (LSN) Section on “Using Universal Design for Learning to Enhance Information Literacy Programs: Online and in the Library” will be aired live in opposite time zones to accommodate participants in different parts of the world.

The intended audience includes, but is not limited to, any librarians planning Information Literacy courses, librarians providing online user training, library school students, and school librarians.

### Webinar I

Date: Sept 16, 2020 (Wednesday)

Time: 14:00 (2pm) Eastern Time Zone in New York (19:00 Universal Time Coordinated/Greenwich Mean Time)

Welcome remarks to be delivered by Min Chou, Chair, IFLA Information Literacy Section

### Webinar II

Date: Sept 23, 2020 (Wednesday)

Time: 10:00 am Hong Kong Time (6:00 UTC/GMT)

Welcome remarks to be delivered by Nancy Bolt, Chair, IFLA Library Services to People with Special Needs

Sign up for one or both webinars. Both webinars will be recorded and made available for delayed viewing.

### World Class Speakers on the Topic

Speakers in Webinar I include:

- Dr. Gihan (Gigi) Mohamad, Assistant Professor at William Paterson University, Wayne, New Jersey, USA. Dr. Mohamad teaches instructional design to pre-service educators.
- Ms. Caroline Smith, the Inclusive Services Consultant at the South Carolina State Library, Columbia, South Carolina, USA. Dr. Smith focuses on issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion within libraries and provides support to public library staff.
- Ms. Renee Grassi, Youth Services Manager at Dakota County Library, Eagan, Minnesota, USA is an author, blogger, speaker, trainer, and advocate for people with disabilities. She is a founding member of SNAILS, an Illinois networking group dedicated to developing more accessible libraries to children and teens with disabilities.

Speakers in Webinar II include:

- Dr. Clayton A. Copeland, Director of the Laboratory for Leadership in Equity of Access and Diversity at the University of South Carolina’s School of Information Science, Columbia, South Carolina, USA. Dr. Copeland’s research and teaching focus on universal design and equity of access to information for people with disabilities and other underserved populations.
- Prof. Carli Spina, Associate Professor and Head of Research & Instructional Services at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Prof. Spina is coordinator for services to patrons with disabilities and has extensive experience in projects related to accessibility, inclusion, universal design, and user experience.
- Dr. Kim M. Thompson, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor at the University of South Carolina College of Information and Communication, Columbia, South Carolina, USA. Dr. Thompson’s research focuses on the relationship between information access and social inclusion.

Duration of event: 60 minutes; Language: English; Captioning will be available online

Questions about the webinar or if you have access needs (i.e., visual impairment, dyslexia, deafness, language) please contact: Helen Chan, LSN Secretary, [helenmyc331@gmail.com](mailto:helenmyc331@gmail.com)

### Webinar I Registration

[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_QkH3N2VIQFWIBRjaiZyErw](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_QkH3N2VIQFWIBRjaiZyErw)

### Webinar II Registration

[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_64MOkZmuQ0y2\\_6g0nwwy4g](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_64MOkZmuQ0y2_6g0nwwy4g)

## Impact of COVID-19 on Prison Libraries by Lisa Krolak, Committee member, LSN



The COVID-19 pandemic has a serious impact on prison systems all over the world. Social distancing is difficult in the prison environment and particularly overcrowded prisons are in a serious health situation. Therefore, in many countries prisoners are released to minimize the risk of infection and to make a place for isolation and distancing of infected prisoners. Some countries even report riots as prisoners are worried about their health situation or they protest against the decision that visitors, such as family members, are currently not allowed. Services, such as education, libraries, worship etc., particularly when supported from the outside, are currently suspended or are implemented differently.

These measures also affect prison libraries and their outreach services. They are closed in most countries due to the pandemic or they provide restricted services. There are

countries where prison libraries are very low on the agenda in light of life-threatening situations. At the same time there are also prison librarians stating that “the prison library is business as usual and provides stability in very unsecure times” or “Libraries are taking a fundamental role inside prisons in times of crisis.”

While many libraries all over the world had to close their doors and moved their services to digital content and online services, this is not possible in the prison environment, as inmates in general do not have access to digital tools and the Internet.

During March to May 2020, I have received extensive reports from 22 countries on their national prison library services.

The majority report that prisons are in lockdown and nobody is allowed to enter from the outside. Prison libraries and their outreach services, such as book clubs, creative writing workshops, reading promotion initiatives, cultural events etc. are suspended when implemented by people entering the prison from the outside, such as professional librarians or community volunteers.

But this is not the case for prison library systems that are run by general prison staff and inmates, which is quite often the case. Having said that, some prison libraries reported that the prison staff normally in charge of the prison library are currently asked to undertake other duties due to the pandemic.

Although open, many of these libraries report limited or alternative services:

- Inmates are not allowed into the library, but have to choose from catalogues and materials are delivered to their cell
- Limited number of inmates are allowed in the prison library to ensure social distancing
- Group activities are transformed into solo activities or take place in smaller groups
- Increased loan periods for selected materials and an increase in loans generally
- Increased interlibrary lending with outside libraries and increased reference by mail services
- Using machines for automated loans and returns of media to avoid social contact.

## School Libraries: Ready for Post-COVID Reopening by Helen Chan, Secretary, LSN

In order to provide effective measures on prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in primary and secondary school libraries, the Hong Kong Teacher-Librarians reviewed the government’s related documents, and proposed various ideas on school library operations when schools resume classes. Some suggestions are:

### **Quarantine books before re-shelving**

Positioning book drops outside school libraries once schools resume classes is important for pandemic prevention. Process returned books only after seven days when the possible coronavirus COVID-19 on books is dead. Disinfect the book cover, back cover and book spine before being returned to the library shelves.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting before Opening School Libraries**

Disinfecting school libraries should be

done before resuming classes. After school starts, books returned by students should be held for one week before cleaning and re-shelving. Schools and Teacher-librarians must guarantee library collections are disinfected regularly. The frequently touched surfaces of furniture, toys, commonly shared items, and floors should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily with 1 in 99 parts diluted household bleach while all metallic surfaces should be disinfected with 70% alcohol. Control students’ admission to the libraries by limiting the number of students at different timeslots.

### **Hand Sanitizer, Masks and Gloves to Safeguard Against COVID-19**

Providing 70-80% alcohol-based hand sanitizer outside the school libraries for all school stakeholders to clean their hands before and after visiting the libraries is necessary in the current post-

pandemic phase. All school stakeholders must wear masks in school libraries. Teacher-Librarians and library staff, including student librarians must wear masks and gloves, especially when they handle any library items in school libraries. Parent helpers and volunteers from the community will be discouraged to enter school libraries during this time.

### **Stop Group Reading activities**

All reading activities or learning zones that run in groups should be suspended even after school resumption till the situation is stable and safe enough to continue. Book exchange projects should be stopped in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19.

For more information about closure, restrictions, and reopening of school libraries, refer to the IFLA [webpage](#).

## Library Map of the World: SDG Stories by Janet Lee, Information Officer, LSN



Stories are an effective tool in telling the mission of a library and the services that it provides. Whether the library is a national, academic,

public, community, or special library, it has stories that illustrate how successfully it delivers free access to all types of information to its citizens. Sharing stories alerts users of their libraries' ability to serve, but also serves as an incentive to other libraries to think creatively about the provision of services whatever the circumstances and capabilities may be.

IFLA provides a graphical platform for these stories on its [Library Map of the World](#), providing libraries from all corners of the world the ability to share their stories of how they contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Although many of the stories reflect multiple SDGs, the goal most closely aligned with the interests of the Library Services to People with Special Needs is Goal 10 (Reduce Inequalities within and among countries), which reads: *To reduce inequalities, policies should be universal in principle, paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized populations.*

The more than dozen stories currently on the SDG stories tab illustrate services to women, children with disabilities, refugees, the homeless, and individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The stories represent libraries in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

It is only possible to highlight a few of the innovative solutions to pressing needs of people with special needs. The knisKibera Community Library in Kibera (Kenya), Africa's largest informal settlement, improves access to education by using tablet computers with pre-loaded educational content related to the school curriculum.

The Suzuki Foundation created the

first specialized service for children with disabilities in the Buenos Aires province in San Miguel Argentina. The programme at the Bebeteca (children's library), the only one in the country, works to address the isolation, inequality, and exclusion of families with disabled children and provides opportunities for strengthening early childhood growth and development. The Bebeteca has launched a mobile project to take its services into institutions working with children in vulnerable situations.

Collaboration with other like-minded institutions is reflected in projects in Chile and in Canada. In 2018, the national registry of homeless people (Chile) identified 12,860 people living on the street, 5% of this population were in the Antofagasta region. Realizing that homeless people seek libraries for safety and services, the Antofagasta Health Services sought out the Antofagasta Regional Library and the VIVA Library to work on an intervention programme together. This cooperation resulted in the cultural outreach program called BiblioStreet (BiblioCalle).

The Toronto (Canada) Public Library collaborated with the Canadian Government's #WelcomeRefugees initiative

that resettled over 39,600 Syrian refugees in communities across Canada, of which 6,000 settled in Toronto. Immigrants make up close to 50% of Toronto's overall population. The Toronto Public Library's involvement complemented the city's mobilization efforts to welcome and support Syrian refugee families by providing pre-arrival and on-going post-settlement support services.

There is no doubt there are potentially hundreds of similar stories that could be shared to the greater library community. To facilitate this process, SDG stories provides a [submission form](#) that guides the library through the process. Each SDG story consists of a short description of activity, project or programme and its impact on community as well as links to additional information, pictures, and videos.

Does your library have a story to tell? Share it on IFLA's Library Map of the World SDG stories.



*Children participating in educational activity in the library in Kibera (Kenya) by EIFL is licensed under CCBY 4.0 ifla.org*

# LSN Featured in IFLA News Release for World Refugee Day

by Nancy Bolt, Chair, LSN

The IFLA Section on Library services to people with Special Needs (LSN) is working on its *International Guidelines for Library Services to Refugees, Immigrants, Migrants, and Asylum Seekers*. LSN is pleased that IFLA chose to feature the work of the LSN Section to celebrate World Refugee Day.

The *Guidelines* are being collaboratively developed by the Goethe Institute with the support of IFLA's Sections on Public Libraries, Library Services to Multicultural Populations, and Library Services to People with Print Disabilities, with Despina Gerasimidou as editor-in-chief, Nancy Bolt as Chair of LSN, and Samira Zahra representing Goethe. The proposed *Guidelines* will provide libraries worldwide with effective methods of serving refugees.

The article features results from a survey on how libraries serve refugees, immigrants, migrants, and asylum seekers. It also features the Denver Public Library's ongoing services to this population as well as what the Library is doing during the virus. Nicanor Diaz, the Immigrant Services Manager and Virginia Vassar Aggrey who runs the Plaza Program, described their services under Covid this way:

"The Denver Public Library closed physically, as did most libraries in the state. We quickly began to plan how we could continue to offer services in an online and remote environment. Amongst the solutions we found, people can now schedule a one-on-one appointment with a library staff member to discuss any topic of interest or need, aka questions about citizenship,

homework help, and help with technology. One user wanted help in preparing for a driving test. The Library also offers Online English Conversation Groups 5 days a week and an online Citizenship Study Group 1 day a week. These are free and people are encouraged to sign up and participate. But, the two major barriers in providing service during the pandemic are access to technology and how to use the technology. Many people rely on the library for internet access. With the library closed, this access is limited as are computer classes." The Library also offers a *Guide for Newcomers* offered in 13 languages by the Library's Cultural Inclusivity Services.

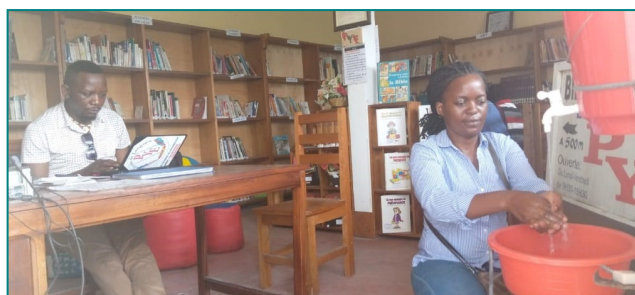
LSN is proud to be a part of this international celebration. You can see the full news release at <https://www.ifla.org/node/93156>

## Books for Congo Helps Fight COVID-19 by Shannon O'Rourke Kasali, Guest Author

Books for Congo is a local Congolese organization that contributes to efforts aimed at promoting a culture of reading in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The organization was established by Shannon O'Rourke Kasali, an American living and working in the DRC, in an effort to help local organizations and institutions create the libraries they dreamed of. The organization has helped establish 16 libraries and reading rooms, which provide access to information for adults and children in many communities in two provinces of the country. The libraries are used by children and youth to further their studies, they are used by those who dropped out of school to informally continue their education, and they are used as places for local groups to exchange ideas and work to improve their communities. The organization creates libraries, distributes books, trains and builds the capacity of librarians, and promotes reading through community activities including a library bus.

When the COVID-19 crisis hit, the libraries stepped up to share accurate information, dispel rumors and continue to provide adapted services to their patrons and communities. For those libraries that remained open with adapted services, handwashing stations were placed at the entrance to ensure that visitors washed their hands when they arrived and as they left. Masks were worn by librarians and encouraged or made mandatory for patrons. Patrons were permitted to pick up books, but the library buildings were closed to on-site reading. Informative posters focused on educating people on how to prevent the spread of the virus were shared with

the libraries to be posted visibly on their doors. One library also launched a home-delivery service to ensure that out-of-school children continued reading while the schools were closed. Books for Congo also supported the libraries in fact-checking rumors that circulated on social media, and accurate information was shared by the libraries on social media and via text/Whatsapp with their patrons. The libraries are not new to supporting their communities through challenging times, as they also helped to educate their communities and promote handwashing during the recently-ended Ebola outbreak.



Bibliothèque École de Langues PYE

# Facing COVID-19@Hong Kong Libraries by Helen Chan, Secretary, LSN



With the experiences accumulated from Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, Hong Kong academic libraries, public libraries and school libraries were more well-prepared to face the challenge of suspension due to COVID-19 pandemic. However, the announcements from the government about extending the school suspension on Jan 31 for two more weeks, and then to March, then April, and now indefinitely, has left schools continually developing or improving their eLearning capability.

“To stop classes but not stop learning” during the school suspension period requires the enhancement of teachers’

skill and familiarity over eLearning in a short period of time. The synergy of all school stakeholders, especially the time and effort of those from special schools, are drawn to keep the school library programs running during this hard time. One special education school, which serves students with physical disabilities and mild intellectual and developmental disabilities, creates videos and uploads them onto a learning management system (LMS). In addition, the school sends out instructions to parents by post every two weeks to keep students reading at age level. E-Books are available for all students. Students have no difficulty learning with parental support. The asynchronous learning is well received by both parents and students. Checklists for online learning are provided to parents to record students’ reading and learning performance at home.

As public libraries elsewhere, the Hong Kong public libraries rely on their eResources to support reading needs of the public in these uncertain times. Further restrictions from Jul 29 have caused academic libraries to accelerate their precautionary measures. The academic libraries have reduced the level

of services, including opening hours, and restrict access to current students and staff. No face-to-face services are available. All patrons must wear masks. Numerous library support services for remote learning are provided for the patrons. Around the clock library services are arranged through different channels, including Connect-A-Librarian via Zoom, WhatsApp-A-Librarian, and making appointment online for research consultation. Though the provisions of library services seem non-stop at a limited level, many patrons are still waiting the chance to find their books on the bookshelf, flip the pages at a quiet corner, and smell the ink and paper in libraries.

Most libraries are looking for various channels to deliver their messages to the users. It may help if we better understand the changes in online teaching in different educational sectors under COVID-19 in [Hong Kong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong_Kong_Central_Library).

*Photo of Hong Kong Central Library found at:*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong\\_Kong\\_Central\\_Library](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong_Kong_Central_Library)

## Library Services to People with Special Needs



Chair: Nancy Bolt  
Past Chair: Mitsako Namura  
Secretary: Helen Chan  
Information Officer: Janet Lee  
Standing committee:  
<https://www.ifla.org/standing-committee/09>

## MISSION

The Section for Library Services to People with Special Needs provides an international forum for the discussion of ideas, sharing of experiences and development of tools designed to promote and improve the effectiveness of library and information services to special needs groups, and the promotion of national and international cooperation at all levels.

These groups include, but are not limited to, people who are in hospitals, nursing homes, and other care facilities; people in prisons; people who are experiencing homelessness; people with physical disabilities; people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind; people with dyslexia; and people with cognitive and mental disabilities.

We are on the web: <https://www.ifla.org/lsn>



Be Social: Like us on Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/IFLALSN/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ifla.lsn/>