

**Обширная география деятельности
благодаря локальным партнерствам:
Американские информационные центры и библиотеки-побратимы**

**Global Reach through Local Partnerships:
American Information Centers and Sister Libraries**

**Розгалужена географія діяльності завдяки локальним партнерствам:
Американські інформаційні центри та бібліотеки-побратими**

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Одним из основных способов поддержки народной дипломатии является создание публичных информационных центров. Современные американские информационные центры созданы на основе 2-х моделей: специальных библиотек на базе посольств, которые называются «Центры информационных ресурсов» (IRC), и партнерские образования, называемые «Американские уголки» (АС). IRC доступны читателям на местах и предоставляют справочные услуги, доступ в Интернет, возможности для исследований, и программы по различным тематикам.

АС представляют собой, как правило, часть местного головного учреждения, которое предоставляет населению информацию и программы о США. Как правило, место для размещения и персонал предоставляются организацией, а американское посольство предоставляет книги, журналы, плакаты, компьютеры, оборудование и программы, для которых приглашаются докладчики и показываются фильмы. АС доставляют материалы населению, часто проживающему далеко от столиц. Руководство их деятельностью осуществляется головными организациями, а за их регулярные контакты с посольством отвечают IRC.

Программа «Библиотеки-побратимы» является инициативой Американской библиотечной ассоциации и обладает достаточным потенциалом, способным расширить географию коллективной деятельности этих объединений. Это программа способствует развитию формальных и неформальных связей между библиотеками, что позволяет местным жителям обмениваться информацией, ресурсами, услугами и опытом, часто невзирая на границы и языковые барьеры.

One of the key ways to support public diplomacy is to provide public information centers. Contemporary American information centers follow two models: embassy-based special libraries called Information Resource Centers (IRC) and partner-based facilities often named American Corners (AC). IRCs are available to local patrons for reference services, Internet access, research, and programs on a variety of topics.

American Corners (AC) are generally part of a local host institution that brings information and programs about the U. S. to the public. Generally, the space and the staff are provided by the host while the American embassy provides books, periodicals, posters, computers, equipment, and programs such as guest speakers and films. ACs bring materials to readers where they are, often in locations far from the capital city. ACs rely on their host institutions for management and leadership and on the IRCs for regular liaison with the embassy.

Potentially adding an international dimension to these partnership efforts is the Sister Libraries Program, an initiative of the American Library Association. The Sister Libraries Program promotes formal and informal relationships among libraries that allow the member communities to share information, resources, services, and expertise often across distant borders and language obstacles.

Важливим засобом народної дипломатії є публічні інформаційні центри. Існує дві моделі сучасних американських інформаційних центрів: спеціальні бібліотеки у посольствах, які мають назву «Центри інформаційних ресурсів» (IRC), і партнерські проекти, так звані «Американські куточки» (AC). IRC доступні читачам, вони надають довідкові послуги, доступ до мережі Інтернет, можливості для досліджень, реалізують різноманітні програми. AC є, як правило, частиною місцевої установи (найчастіше – бібліотеки), яка надає населенню інформацію про США та організує відповідні програми. Як правило, місце для розміщення та персонал забезпечує місцева організація, а американське посольство надає книги, журнали, плакати, комп'ютери, устаткування, допомагає організувати програми, для котрих запрошують доповідачів, і перегляд американських фільмів. AC робить доступними матеріали про США для населення, що нерідко проживає далеко від столиці. Керівництво діяльністю AC здійснюють організації, де вони розміщені, а за їхні регулярні контакти з посольством відповідають IRC. Великий потенціал для розвитку діяльності таких інформаційних центрів має програма Американської бібліотечної асоціації «Бібліотеки-посестри». Ця програма сприяє розвитку формальних і неформальних зв'язків між бібліотеками, що дозволяє місцевим мешканцям обмінюватися інформацією, ресурсами, послугами та досвідом, незважаючи на кордони та мовні бар'єри.

American Information Centers: IRCs and ACs

IRCs at U. S. embassies provide current, authoritative and contextual information on policy issues, legislation, business and trade issues, and political and social processes to local decision makers, opinion leaders, academics, and others. The goal of the IRCs is to provide library and information services and resources with a focus on the U. S. to local readers and patrons.

Hired as employees of the U. S. embassy, the staffers of an IRC are professionally-trained. They identify, retrieve, authenticate, package and disseminate up-to-the-minute information on a wide variety of issues. The staffers' objective is to put policy and other needed information on the desk of the right person at the right time.

Many IRCs are walk-in libraries open to the community several days a week and by appointment. Many IRCs also are the location for educational advising for people interested in studying in the U. S., English language testing, and English language learning. All IRCs have public access Internet stations for patrons. Some IRCs may charge a small fee for use. Most IRCs offer Internet training so that patrons are familiar with searching strategies and conventions.

All IRCs accept reference and research queries from their patrons on topics relating to American history, politics, government, law, current issues, and similar areas. Questions that cannot be answered locally can often be referred to research specialists in the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) or other American libraries. IRCs welcome queries by phone, fax, email, and visits.

IRC collections contain information resources, both electronic and print, that are selected for their relevance to public diplomacy and embassy objectives. Collections include: primary source documentation of U. S. domestic and foreign affairs policies; examples of thoughtful discussion and debate of U. S. historical and current issues; insights on American culture and values; and information on bilateral U. S. - host country issues.

All IRCs maintain reference collections covering these topics but usually exclude technical subjects like clinical medicine. Usually, an IRC offers memberships to patrons who are asked to supply a photo

and other identification. Sometimes a small fee is charged for an annual membership and circulation privileges.

Most IRCs maintain current periodical and newspaper collections of about 50 titles ranging from scholarly journals like «Foreign Affairs» to lighter matter about popular culture. It is very common for an IRC to subscribe to «ProQuest» or to «EBSCO», two very large online periodical collections for the use of their patrons. Patrons are often given on-the-spot training in the use of these complex databases.

Most IRCs maintain electronic catalogues of their holdings. Some IRCs have online catalogues that can be consulted from afar. For example, visit South Africa's union catalogue at <http://207.67.203.71/U95000Staff/OPAC/>

American Corners

Each day thousands of young people around the world come to American Corners (ACs) to pick up a book about life in the U. S., learn how to apply to a U. S. college, e-mail a pal in the U. S., or watch a video. Often located outside of capital cities, ACs bring information to those who have limited or no exposure to the culture or ideas of the U. S. ACs, first launched in 1999 to reach out to populations located outside the capital, are partnerships with local institutions — usually public and university libraries — to provide information about the U. S. to local groups. Currently, there are about 400 ACs worldwide. There are 162 such partnerships in Europe, for example.

The heart of the AC is the commitment to open access to general audiences through active programs that engage local people in many ways such as speakers who give talks on U. S. society and values and returning visitors to the U. S. who participated in American cultural programs. Most ACs consist of collections of books, magazines, music, and other media. Most ACs have computers, video/DVD players, and television for the use of the patrons.

The host institution commits to provide staff, space, maintenance, security, and other important components for a successful center. Almost always, the AC staffer's English language skills are sufficient to utilize the collections, discuss the information needs of the patrons, and otherwise facilitate the efficient use of the AC's resources by its visitors.

The AC is one of the key components in the ongoing work of an American embassy's Public Affairs Section (PAS). For English language learning, the regional English language officer (who serves in a region for a period of years) and the English Language Fellow (whose service is usually measured in months) work with local departments of English at universities to support English language pedagogy. The Cultural Affairs Officer administers Fulbright fellowships and identifies local candidates for participation in American international visitor programs. An Educational Adviser helps local students, teachers, and families identify suitable American colleges and universities and facilitates the application process. Typically, PAS staffers in the course of the year invite several American experts to speak to audiences on topics of local interest and urgency. The IRC backs up all these activities and initiatives by maintaining strong collections and research services.

A typical AC provides a range of services. Often educational advisers use the AC as the meeting place for students and their parents interested in exploring the opportunities to study at an American university. Some 800,000 foreign students are currently enrolled at American institutions of higher education. Many of them receive grants and other financial assistance. The AC is a suitable place to start learning how to apply for entrance to an American school.

For countries where study of the English language is an important goal for students and others, the AC provides a home for a regional English Language Fellow who works with local teachers of English to strengthen their programs and materials. Peace Corps volunteers frequently use the AC for program development.

One of the key elements of the AC is Internet access. An AC provides several workstations where visitors can do online research. Sometimes access to an e-mail account is possible though often the workstations are so heavily used that e-mail is discouraged. Often the Internet service is free though when a fee is levied, it is low. Very often the staffers of ACs offer training on library topics such as safe use of the Internet, research using online resources in particular subjects, and other useful sessions. Many AC staffers independently organize activities on U. S. -related topics.

Because an AC is part of a larger institution, the hours of service and eligibility for service depend on the practices of the host institution. Generally, the emphasis is on public access as the materials and services are intended for use by the general public.

Collections vary widely in size but include encyclopedias and dictionaries, materials about the U. S. and its history, culture, government, and the bilateral relationship. Over time, continued donations of books and other materials enrich the collection and bring it in line with local needs and interests. For example, in a country where English is not the official language, the collection may feature some material that is in the «Easy Reader» category. There are sometimes subscriptions to American periodicals. Sometimes a TV monitor with earphones is available and used to play DVDs of American films and instructional material. Most ACs are equipped for multi-media presentations with resources such as CD-ROM databases and videos as well as DVDs.

The trained personnel in IRCs and ACs stand ready to serve with reference assistance, research advisory services, training, and timely programming. Outreach services mean that areas distant from the capital can also be served. Working within the public diplomacy goal of mutual understanding, the staff of IRC and their partners in the ACs are among the resources available to readers and users.

Sister Libraries and American Library Association

According to Nancy Bolt, immediate past chair of the Sister Libraries Committee of ALA's International Relations Round Table (IRRT) there are a few compelling reasons to start up a Sister Library Partnership.

Increase cultural understanding between countries: US communities are built on immigrant populations – some very old and some very new. US public libraries try and meet the cultural and information needs of their user populations and contact with a home country is one important way to do this. In today's world, cultural understanding is increasingly important.

Increased access to published information and artifacts in both countries: Libraries can draw on their partnership to improve their own collections and can offer their own language resources to libraries in other countries.

Learn new library services and technologies: Many partnerships involve travel between the library staff in the two countries. These visits allow library staff to learn how libraries in different countries address similar issues and problems.

Broaden the view of the library profession in both countries: Attendance at library conferences and online interaction allows staff in both libraries to learn the issues that are important in other professions.

Share information, expertise, and training between libraries: All aspects of library service can be discussed and shared. Online and on-site training programs can bring new skills to library staff.

Improve the image of the library in the community: International partnerships can bring recognition from the community and community leaders that the local library reaches beyond its own borders to get information, resources, and understanding.

Success stories of existing Sister Library partnerships show that partners:

Exchange library information such as newsletters, YouTube clips, photos.

Exchange library resources such as local newspapers, bibliographies, books based on a profile of what the Sister Library wants; reference questions for each other and free searches and electronic interlibrary loans between partners.

Share library training programs by sharing access to web-based online training programs and sharing training materials, syllabi, handouts, and workbooks.

Share library programs and exhibits by creating a bulletin board display with photos, holding real-time discussions or participating in each other's programs through Skype, organizing a «read the same book» discussion for teens or adults, exchanging children's artwork and doing displays in both countries with photographs of the children.

Nancy Bolt also gives advice about finding a Sister Library.

Sister Libraries was created in 2000 to encourage partnerships across country lines. The current wiki includes the following information:

- Success stories with ideas of how libraries formed their partnerships, an indication of some partner activities, and a contact name for the partnership
- Reasons why you might want to form a Sister Library partnership
- An advance planning checklist to help you get started
- Suggestions on how to find a Sister Library
- A directory of libraries seeking a Sister Library and how to submit your request to be a Sister Library
- Suggested activities and a list of resources

Another way to find a partner is to participate in an existing Partner program such as Sister Cities (www.sister-cities.org) Many municipal administrations around the world have formed partnerships with Sister Cities in another country. There are many advantages to building on this relationship. First, a relationship with a municipality in another country already exists. Second, there are other municipal functions that are already cooperating so that information is available about the other country's partner. Third, the librarian may be part of a delegation that visits the Sister City and thus the Sister Library.

A current example of how partners find one another is the partnership between institutions in Uzhgorod, Ukraine and Corvallis, Oregon in the USA. The Window on America Center (ACs in Ukraine are called WOAs) at Zakarpattia Oblast Library initiated a Sister Library project with Corvallis-Benton County Public Library. In 2007, on the invitation of Ukrainian librarians, the mayor of Corvallis visited Zakarpattia Oblast library in Uzhgorod, and discussed the ways of possible cooperation with the library director. The mayor spent two hours at the WOA Center, using this time for communication with librarians and journalists. The head of the WOA and a librarian from Corvallis-Benton County Public Library participated in a televised broadcast on the program «Good Evening, Zakarpattia!» (local TV «Tysa»). They briefed the audience on the WOA and Sister Library programs and described the ongoing cooperation between Uzhgorod and Corvallis under the Sister Cities program.

In 2009, on the invitation of the mayor of Corvallis, the Uzhgorod WOA head visited the American public library under the Sister Library program. She had meetings with the library director, librarians, participated in the annual Oregon Library Association meeting, described the WOA Program, and discussed the possibilities of Sister Library cooperation. Hopefully, this year the Sister Library partnership will be officially formed.

Ms Bolt provides several tips for a successful Sister Library partnership:

- Identify a primary contact who is excited, enthusiastic, willing to commit time to the Partnership and who enjoys spending time working with people from another country.
- Communicate frequently. Persistence in pursuing the partnership is critical. Try to e-mail your partner at least once a month. Frequent communication builds a strong partnership; like any friendship, it will grow with the small steps.
- A common language needs to be determined and used.
- Sister Library Partnerships need to have a feeling of equality. Sometimes libraries in developing countries also expect more than their Sister Library can deliver, such as equipment and significant print/electronic resources. The scope of the partnership should be clear.
- Modest funding is needed for sharing resources and ongoing program activities. Funds can come from the library, partner institution, donations from interested NGOs, and fundraising activities.
- Trust may build slowly. There may be some doubt that one of the partners is truly interested in the partnership.
- More than one library staff needs to be involved. Sister Library Partnerships have failed when the primary contact finds a new job or takes an extended leave for health reasons.
- Put together a formal agreement that includes the goals of the Sister Library partnership, primary and secondary contacts, some indication of activities and expected benefits of the Sister Library partnership.
- Face – to-face visits promote understanding and friendship but are expensive for both sides. However, it is these visits that can bond partners in a way e-mail and postal mail cannot.

Some Resource Links

ALA International Relations Round Table Sister Libraries Committee

http://wikis.ala.org/sisterlibraries/index.php/Main_Page

Find a partner, view success stories, and get helpful tips.

Sister Cities International

<http://www.sister-cities.org/>

Discover if your city has a Sister City.

Southeast Florida Library Information Network (SEFLIN)

(<http://www.seflin.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=intact.activityList&>) SEFLIN and its members have multiple Sister Library Partnerships.