

Study Visit of Italian LIS students to the Netherlands and especially to Amsterdam World Book Capital 2008 and the Venice of the north, from 11 – 15 June 2008

Early in the morning of 11 June, a group of 20 LIS students and professors from the Department of Education, University of Padua (Italy) arrived in Amsterdam. Some of these students are studying at the University of Padua for a Master's Degree in School Librarianship and/or Educational and Museum Services Librarianship. Others are taking a post-academic degree course in Children's Literature, Picture books and Publishing : towards a reading pedagogy. The purpose of their visit was to learn more about libraries (especially school libraries) in the Netherlands. Their programme in the Netherlands was arranged by four ENSIL members - Donatella Lombello and Luisa Marquardt from Italy and Marji Tsjebe and Helen Boelens from the Netherlands. Also members of the LWSVO (Dutch Association of School Librarians) took part in this visit and helped to make it a success. This is a short description of the activities which took place.

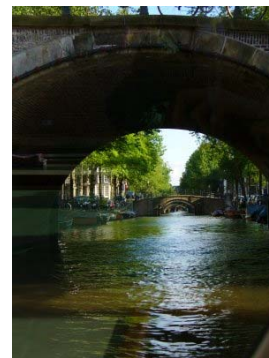
Our hope is that this visit will inspire more of you to look beyond the borders of your own country, to find out how school librarians in different countries cope with the day-to-day running of their school libraries. During this visit it became evident that school librarians throughout Europe encounter similar problems. Some have found solutions and can help their colleagues in other countries. This was a wonderful, though very busy visit – people made friends and discussed different aspects of school librarianship, although, as many of us know from ENSIL meetings, the language of communication was “broken English”.

We encourage all ENSIL members to think about the possibilities for similar exchanges.

The programme was as follows:

Day 1.

Arrival in Amsterdam. A visit to the school library of the Barlaeus gymnasium. This is one of the oldest secondary schools in the Netherlands and has a reputation for academic excellence. The school librarian, Mr. Roeland Smeets, guided the students around the busy library which has recently been renovated and refurbished. He provided a delicious lunch and then explained some of his ideas about the use of ICT in the school library.



Later in the day, the students visited the Anne Frank museum and took a boat trip through the canals of Amsterdam – the Venice of the North.

Day 2.

The students travelled by train to Woerden, to visit two schools: the Kalsbeek College (skp location) and the Brede School. After their arrival in Woerden, the students went to the Kalsbeek College, where pupils and staff gave them a guided tour of the school. The Director Europe of the IASL, Mrs. Lourense Das, made a short presentation. Mrs. Das also announced that ENSIL (European Network for School Librarianship and Information Literacy) has now become a formal foundation (the ENSIL Foundation). Mrs. Das is the Chairperson of this foundation.



After that, a visit to the Brede School, which is located across the road from the Kalsbeek College, had been arranged. In Dutch, the word “breed” or “brede” means “wide” or “broad”. The concept of the Brede School is as follows: two different kinds of primary schools (one Protestant school and one non-denominational school) are housed under one roof. Also, in the same building, there is a children’s library, run by staff of the Woerden Public Library. Also, once again in the same building, there is a nursery for babies and young children, an after-school centre for the children of working parents, a playground, and a school health service. To top it all off, there are very nice modern apartments above the school classrooms, which can be purchased or rented by members of the general public. The Brede School has its own co-ordinator, who checks that all these different parts of the school co-operate and work harmoniously together. The Brede School is the centre of the community.



Lunch was served at the Kalsbeek College. Some pupils had decided that people from Italy should have the opportunity to taste some Dutch delicacies. Lunch therefore consisted of a strange combination of herring and pancakes (plus lots of other things which were placed on the menu at the suggestion of pupils and staff). Lunch was a very friendly occasion, enjoyed by all.

Afterwards, two students from the University of Padua made presentations about the work which they are doing for school librarianship in Padua. Helen Boelens, the school librarian at the Kalsbeek College, then gave an explanation of the KILM (Kalsbeek Information Literacy Matrix) which is used for information literacy instruction for both pupils and teachers.

A trip by train and metro then brought the group to the beautiful public library in Amstelveen, which is located on the outskirts of Amsterdam. The library was completed about 5 years ago and provides wonderful facilities to its patrons and other members of the public.



Day 3.

Once again a long, busy day. First of all, a visit to the Hervormd Lyceum West in Amsterdam, a school where \pm 90% of the pupils come from immigrant backgrounds. This secondary school does everything it can to promote quality in education. The Italian students were welcomed by the staff of the school library, Ms. Bernadette Heitmann and Ms. Pia Middelweerd, and were given a tour of the school library. The visitors also had the opportunity to meet the school Principal and the deputy Principal, who explained how the school has set up effective policies in various areas. A most important policy has to do with the prevention of bullying.



A trip by tram then took the students to the new Public Library of Amsterdam, the pride of the Dutch library world. The library is both modern and friendly. To top it all off, on the top floor it has an inexpensive restaurant with a wonderful view of Amsterdam.



After lunch and a comprehensive tour of the library, the students made their way to the Bazel, the archive of Amsterdam. About a year ago, the city archive of Amsterdam moved to a completely renovated building, which is known as the Bazel. This building was originally built for a prestigious bank between 1919 – 1926. It has recently been completely renovated in the original style and is a popular place in Amsterdam. Not only is it a place where the general public can seriously study the archives of the city, but it also has room for special exhibitions, a small cinema where old films of Amsterdam are shown, a wonderful bookshop and a coffee shop. However, last but not least, the bank vault has been converted into a special exhibition where people can view the real treasures of the archive, some of which date from the 17th century. My favourite is a small document, signed by Anne Frank, which she completed at the police station when somebody stole her bicycle.



The day was completed by a visit to the St. Ignatius gymnasium Library, a school which is known for its academic excellence. The school librarian, Mrs. Matji Tsjebe, served refreshments and arranged a tour of the library. She explained the school library's policy and its development during the past few years. Mrs. Tsjebe also referred to the fact that a complete renovation of the school, including the school library, will commence in the 2008/2009 academic year. Two teachers also presented projects which had to do with international co-operation. In particular, it was explained that the St. Ignatius gymnasium is taking part in a large European E-twinning project, which connects various schools throughout Europe.



Afterwards, the visitors were served a wonderful Dutch meal which was cooked by parents and teachers of the school. Not only was it delicious, but the hospitality on this occasion was wonderful. Guests from outside the school (LWSVO) had been invited to take part in this festive meal.

After dinner, the visitors went to the Van Gogh Museum, which is open late during the summer months.

Day 4.

The visitors spent most of the day walking through Amsterdam, visiting the sites and doing some shopping. However, in the afternoon, a special tour had been arranged at the Special Collection of the library of the University of Amsterdam. The deputy curator of the special collection, Ms. Astrid Balsem, very graciously gave a guided tour, in Italian, for the visitors. Last but not least, the students then walked to the Allard Pierson Museum (University Museum) which has a special exhibit entitled “Lectori Salutem”, a celebration of the world of books in Amsterdam.



An exhausted group finally made its way to an Indonesian restaurant for a delicious Rijsttafel. As mentioned above, this was an occasion of cross-culture, cross-border, cross-language communication, which was a joy to all those who took part in it.

For the information of our international readers, none of the schools which were visited are private schools – they are all public, government-funded schools.

Matji Tsjebe
Donatella Lombello
Luisa Marquardt
Helen Boelens.

25 June 2008.