

Honored guests, school librarians, professors, teachers, community members, and children of Zimbabwe,

I bring you greetings from Ms. Katy Manck, of Texas, USA, President of the International Association of School Librarianship, on the occasion of International School Library Month, being celebrated this day at the National University of Science and Technology. Here is her message to all assembled here today and to supporters of school libraries in all places:

+++++

On behalf of IASL members in 53 countries, happy International School Library Month 2017 to you all! From its beginnings in 1999 as International School Library Day to its expansion as International School Library Month in 2008, every October we take time to celebrate, discuss, and advocate for school libraries as a vital part of the education of the world's children.

This year's ISLM theme – Connecting Communities and Cultures – reminds us of the many ways that we interact with persons of similar and different cultures and viewpoints, within our own school and town, throughout our country, and around the world.

"Connecting Communities and Cultures" also applies to readers, from small children listening to grandparents' stories to students just learning to read alongside their parents to youth who investigate societal issues through books, websites, and social media while striving for better understanding of their world. School libraries and school librarians are essential to this lifelong process.

"Every child deserves a great school library and a qualified school librarian," I say and I truly believe. Therefore, I urge parents and community members to call for the provision of improved school library facilities, increased and appropriate school library materials for students' reading and research, and further training for school librarians who can assist every student of every ability level in every class.

As you discuss and celebrate school libraries today, please consider how they can be expanded, enhanced, and even created for those schools which have none, all with qualified school librarians to lead, teach, and inspire.

Wishing you all a joyous International School Library Month celebration today and many pleasant hours of reading in all the days ahead, as you connect with cultures and communities, both real and fictional!

+++++