**SAMPLE ADVOCACY ARTICLE ON IASL**

*Please adapt for your own purposes and publications to raise awareness of IASL.*

*This article is adapted from one written for* Synergy*, the journal of SLAV, in 2004 by Elizabeth Greef.*

The International Association of School Librarianship. You may be asking:

* What is this?
* What does it do?
* What benefits are there in joining?

Here is some background information…

# History

The International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) was inaugurated in Jamaica in 1971. This followed nearly a decade of discussion and interest in the development of a forum focusing on school library services within meetings of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP). A tentative framework for the organization, which became IASL was approved in Sydney in August 1970 and a charter was drawn up.

**Conferences**

Annual conferences have been a hallmark of IASL since its inception and the first international conference was held in London in 1972. Even at this early conference there were 153 registered members and 24 countries represented (Ovens, 1972), indicating significant interest. There has been an annual conference every year since then although on occasions it has been a joint conference with another organisation.

The locations of recent and forthcoming conferences are:

1. Auckland, New Zealand
2. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
3. Durban, South Africa
4. Dublin, Ireland
5. Hong Kong
6. Lisbon, Portugal
7. Taipei, Taiwan
8. San Jose, USA
9. Abano Terme, Italy
10. Brisbane, Australia
11. Kingston, Jamaica
12. Doha, Qatar
13. Sanur, Bali
14. Moscow, Russia
15. Maastricht, The Netherlands

As part of some conferences pre- and post-conference tours are organised. Several IASL events are held during the conference, including the Assembly of Associations where reports are given on association activities around the world to give a comprehensive global picture of school librarianship, regional meetings and meetings of the special interest groups (SIGs). A highlight of the IASL dinner is the Grand Live Auction to raise funds for memberships in developing countries, books for children and awards.

The conferences in different settings are great opportunities for sharing our distinctive cultures and the emphasis is on promoting harmony and understanding. Global friendships are developed and renewed at each conference. The conferences provide opportunities for professional sharing and stimulation and support. A huge benefit of the conference is that it is also a research forum, providing access for delegates to cutting-edge research and providing the opportunity for cross-fertilisation of ideas between researchers and practitioners in the profession. Practitioners are informed of recent research in the field and researchers hear of applications at the coalface of teaching and curriculum development. The conferences also facilitate input from a wider network e.g. IFLA, regional conferences and other professional networks. In particular IFLA and IASL have been collaborating on an advocacy initiative for school libraries over the past few years.

# IASL’s mission

IASL has a multi-faceted set of objectives: to advocate the development of school libraries around the world, to encourage the integration of school library programs into the curriculum fabric of schools, to develop a network for sharing innovative ideas and programs, to nurture a sense of community among teacher librarians across the world, to encourage research into the field of school librarianship and marry this into professional practice, to facilitate adequate training for school library staff, to initiate activities and conferences in the field of school librarianship and to be a strong advocate for school librarianship internationally.

# Activities for children

The first **International School Library Day** was proclaimed on 18 October 1999, and developed into a whole month of celebration; this annual activity has provided an international focus for school libraries which involves school children. The current coordinator is Marie O’Brien.

**GiggleIT** is a program providing an opportunity for children around the world to share their work and establishes international communication and goodwill.

The IASL website provides a significant centralized focus for communication and reporting activities for ISLM and GiggleIT; there are annual themes, suggested activities, resources, publicity materials and a draft press release. Anyone can be involved in this event, not just IASL members.

# IASL Journals

*SLW* (School Libraries Worldwide) is the official research and professional journal of IASL, which is published twice a year. Recent themes for the issues have been ,,,,

The *IASL newsletter* is distributed three times a year and carries regional news and announcements to keep members informed.

**IASL Website**
This rich website is maintained by the IASL Secretariat but it was first developed by a well-respected Australian academic in the field, Professor Anne Clyde, who taught at the University of Iceland. It is currently being redeveloped and will cover information about the organisation of IASL and its conferences but also will provide a substantial range of resources, documents, websites and news about librarianship internationally. It is an excellent resource for anyone involved in the field of teacher librarianship and can be found at [www.iasl-online.org](http://www.iasl-online.org) Explore it and see what treasures you can find!

Planned new additions to the website are a Professional Development Library, links to many journals of interest to school librarians and a section on the state of school librarianship in most countries of the world, Window on the World of School Libraries.

**IASL-Link**
The listserv of IASL, *IASL-Link*, is an international forum for communication between members of the Association. It is also a means for distributing news, articles, links to discussion papers and information about IASL conferences and other activities. It is a benefit of membership.

**Awards**
IASL has an awards program which supports some members to attend conferences, recognizes excellence in the field and encourages research and development. These include the Jean Lowrie and Ken Haycock Leadership Development Grants, the Takeshi Murofushi Research Award, the IASL School Library Technology Innovation Award, the LinksPlus Library Commendation Award, the IASL School Librarianship Award, IASL/Softlink International Excellence Award, the new IASL Best Conference Paper Award in honour of L. Anne Clyde and Margot Nilson, and the IASL Books for Children Project for supplying books to school libraries in developing countries.

# Special Interest groups

IASL has a number of special interest groups which have the potential to become increasingly more active in sharing concerns, ideas and successes in these particular focus areas: advocacy, international development, ICTs, school library education, school library research, children’s and young adult literature, international schools and information literacy.

# Membership

If you are interested in joining IASL, the details can be found on the IASL website: <http://www.iasl-online.org/application.html>

# International development

By nature and inclination, most teacher librarians are networkers and open to cooperating with and supporting each other. IASL provides a forum for us all to become and remain informed about the global situation of school libraries, the challenges of the digital divide and the information-rich and information-poor of our world. It offers opportunities for encouraging and mentoring others. It also opens up avenues for our students and classrooms. There is scope for global projects and there are international initiatives such as Giggle-IT and International School Library Month which have been linking children and teachers around the world for many years.

**Regional divisions of IASL**

IASL is currently divided into ten regions: Europe, USA, Canada, Latin America and Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, Africa, Asia, East Asia, Oceania (Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific) and International Schools.

*[Write about your own region].*

 *Example -* ***Oceania****: Australia and New Zealand are very privileged nations in the field of school librarianship. The value of school libraries and the importance of highly trained dually qualified teacher librarians is widely recognized here. Our libraries are comparatively well-resourced and automated. However, in our region of Oceania there are many schools with no library at all or with tiny libraries with just a few books. Papua New Guinea is particularly deprived and the organisation of Hope Worldwide, which many of us have supported through a venture with the Department of Education and Training, has begun addressing the needs there. We have much to offer the rest of the world.*

**A challenge**

Do yourself a favour and become involved in a dynamic international association. Learn and contribute so that you and school children around the world can benefit from growing knowledge, improved reading ability and international goodwill.

**References:**

International Association of School Librarianship (IASL). (2015). Available [www.iasl-online.org](http://www.iasl-online.org)

Ovens, W.W. (1972). The International Association of School Librarianship:
First Annual Conference, London, 29th-31st July 1972. *The School Librarian*, 1972. Retrieved 5.4.04. (Online) Previously available <http://www.iasl-slo.org/history1972.html>

Elizabeth Greef

Vice President Advocacy and Promotion

*This can be adapted as you wish with a non-commercial share alike attribution but must retain the connection with IASL*