



Volume 49 | Issue 2

Article 10

2006

CILA: Librarians on a Mission

Georgianne Bordner
Regent University

The Christian Librarian is the official publication of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL). To learn more about ACL and its products and services please visit [//www.acl.org/](http://www.acl.org/)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bordner, Georgianne (2006) "CILA: Librarians on a Mission," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 49: Iss. 2, Article 10.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.1709>

This General Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *The Christian Librarian* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.

CILA: Librarians on a Mission

The Commission for International Library Assistance (CILA) serves libraries in Christian institutions of higher learning, especially outside the United States and Canada, with the training of their staff, the organizing and managing of their collections, and the strengthening of an infrastructure to maintain and improve themselves.

Beginnings

Although CILA only has existed in its present form since 1991, members of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL) and its predecessor, the Christian Librarians' Fellowship (CLF), have long been involved in serving international libraries. The Fall 1960 issue of *The Christian Librarian* reported that Margaret Shenk of Eastern Mennonite College was on her way to spend her sabbatical year serving in a library in Turkey. In the next issue, Carol Primmer reported on her work at the Far Eastern Bible Institute in Manila, Philippines. In addition to encouraging other librarians to serve on the mission field, she suggested that the Christian Librarians' Fellowship might be able to help overseas libraries from home by providing materials and advice. In May 1962, Shirley Wood of Columbia Bible College asked CLF members to assist her in securing back issues of needed journals for a missionary in Brazil. Subsequent issues of *The Christian Librarian* reported that many members followed the lead of these librarians in serving overseas libraries both by going to the field and by providing resources.

In 1971, CLF President P. Paul Snezek of Wheaton College proposed that the CLF form a standing committee to look into the nature of the organization's involvement on the mission field. Among other things, he suggested that this involvement might include the preparation of printed material, the

development of a short-term program, the translation of important materials, the establishment of a clearing-house for materials for overseas libraries, and financial assistance. Although a formal committee was not formed at this time, the first of these goals was partially fulfilled in 1979 with the publication of *The Library Manual for Missionaries*, edited by Clara Ruth Stone. This introduction to library work, for missionaries with little or no previous library training or experience, proved to be a valuable contribution to the development of overseas libraries.

Paul Snezek's vision for a standing committee on missions finally became reality in 1988, when the Standing Committee on International Library Assistance was formed. A major responsibility of this committee was oversight of the revision of the out-of-print *Library Manual for Missionaries* and its adaptation as a more useful training tool in third world libraries. Upon completion of some portions of the revised edition, the committee gave permission for ACL members under the direction of Dorothy Spidell to use the material in a 1990 library training seminar held in Thailand. This was the first of a number of similar projects that have been carried out with ACL's assistance.

CILA as it exists today was formed in 1991 when the Standing Committee on International Library Assistance was reorganized and renamed the Commission for International Library Assistance. According to its first General Secretary, Vihari Hivale, CILA "was formed to develop a strategic plan to assist Christian libraries in the developing countries of the world ... through library training seminars, consultations, and publications." Major accomplishments during that first year included the continued revision and field testing of the library manual,

Georgianne Bordner
CILA Coordinator &
Assistant Technical
Services Librarian
Regent University
Virginia Beach, Virginia

ABSTRACT:

ACL members have long been involved in serving international libraries, both by going overseas to work in libraries there, and by providing resources and advice from home. The Commission for International Library Assistance (CILA) was formed in order to develop a strategic plan to accomplish this mission more effectively, through publications, training, consultation, and other assistance. This brief history shows that over the years, changing technology and circumstances have changed some of CILA's strategies, but the mission remains the same.

Although CILA only has existed in its present form since 1991, members of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL) and its predecessor, the Christian Librarians' Fellowship (CLF), have long been involved in serving international libraries.

meetings with various mission organizations to seek support for CILA's projects, and Hivale's participation in a training seminar in Jamaica. Hivale's death in 1992 was a great loss to ACL and to CILA, but CILA remained committed to fulfilling his dream of assisting third world Christian libraries. The Vihari Hivale Fund was established in his memory as a way for ACL members to make financial contributions toward CILA's projects.

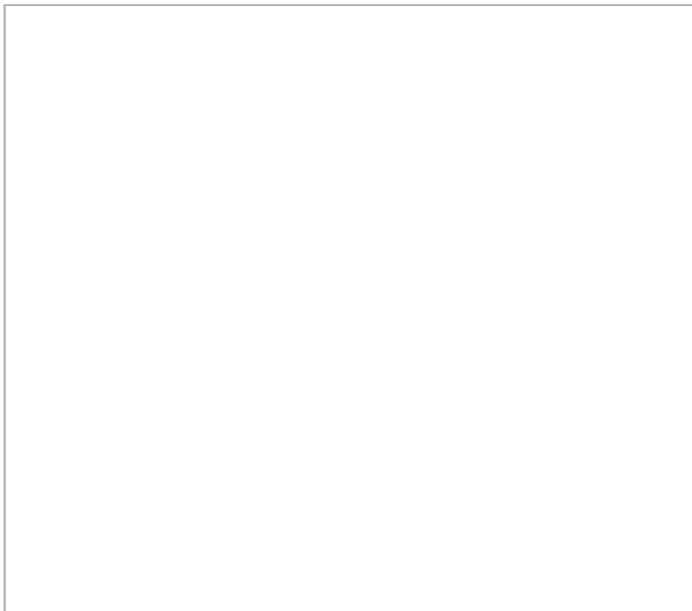
CILA Projects

CILA's first and possibly most significant project was the revision of the *Library Manual for Missionaries*. After six years of writing, reviewing, and editing by a panel of volunteers, the new *Librarian's Manual*, edited by Ferne Weimer and Ken Gill, was published in 1994. With a broadened scope, the *Manual* sought to meet the needs of national librarians as well as missionaries. Special care was taken to use less technical language that would be understandable to non-librarians and to those for whom English is not their first language. A large number of examples and exercises were included to make difficult concepts such as

cataloging easier for beginners to learn. Essential to the project was the international perspective provided by members of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship in the United Kingdom, along with other librarians familiar with international library standards. The *Manual* has been very well received in the twelve years since its publication, with over 5000 copies distributed around the world.

Although *The Librarian's Manual* was designed to be used as an instructional tool, and was tested in overseas training seminars prior to its publication, it was made more useful when used in conjunction with a training syllabus prepared by CILA General Secretary Lois Lehman and CILA Team Coordinator Eva Kiewitt in 1996. This syllabus was first used by the team of Edythe Feazel, Anita Gray, Eva Kiewitt, Lois Luesing, and Ruth Silvers in a 1996 training seminar in Jamaica, and since then has been used both by teams and by individuals in a number of seminars around the world. When Robert Ellett, Georgianne Bordner, Floyd Votaw, and Ferne Weimer conducted a seminar in India in 1997, they found that the librarians there needed to learn Library of Congress classification and subject headings instead of Dewey Decimal Classification and *Sears List of Subject Headings*, as recommended in the manual. The cataloging instructors met the needs of their students by preparing additional examples and exercises to substitute for those in the manual. The team also added to the usual seminar curriculum, including instruction on the MARC format and the automation system that had been installed on a previous visit. In 2000, Douglas Butler, Georgianne Bordner, and Dennis Tucker conducted a seminar in Bolivia, which was the first seminar taught entirely in Spanish. They used the syllabus with a first draft of a Spanish translation of the manual, prepared by members of the team.

While the training seminars have been popular and have given some ACL members their first opportunity to serve overseas as part



Dorothy Bowen, Mrs. Rex Jeng and Dorothy Spidell at the 1995 graduation of Thai Library Training Session.

of a team, even more members have participated in projects on their own. These are often people who are able to go overseas for longer periods of time, or who are able to meet needs that could not be met as easily by a larger team. Some have assisted in library automation projects, others in cataloging, and still others have served as consultants to overseas libraries preparing for accreditation. Although CILA has not been directly responsible for planning and carrying out these projects, the Commission often assists by providing advice and resources. All ACL members may benefit from hearing about the challenges and opportunities in serving libraries around the world through reports at the annual conference and in *The Christian Librarian*.

CILA frequently receives requests for information on library automation and has responded in several ways over the years. For some time, the Commission served as a distributor of the *Librarian's Helper*, a software program designed to produce catalog cards and labels. This service was discontinued when the software became outdated, but CILA continues to gather information on other inexpensive library automation products that may be appropriate for small overseas libraries. CILA has also worked with the CPI team to provide copies of the *Christian Periodical Index* on CD-ROM to qualified libraries interested in building a collection of electronic resources. As the needs of the world's libraries have changed, CILA has attempted to change with them by finding new ways to serve.

What's Next?

As CILA seeks to meet the changing needs of today's libraries, a new team of volunteer writers and reviewers is preparing a revised edition of *The Librarian's Manual*. This project is scheduled for completion in summer 2006. The most noticeable change in the new edition will be the addition of information on newer technologies and library automation.

Those librarians who remain unable to automate still will find information on subjects such as producing and filing catalog cards, but librarians with access to the necessary technology will appreciate the updated information on computer programs and electronic resources. Members of ACL and CILA also continue to work on Spanish and Russian translations of the manual.

Technology has not only changed many of the ways in which modern libraries function, but also offers new opportunities for librarians in the United States to assist overseas libraries. While CILA may be best known for sending teams of librarians to conduct training seminars overseas, this is not always what the overseas libraries need the most. Often ACL members can serve without ever leaving home. Many overseas librarians just need some advice from more experienced librarians with whom they can correspond via e-mail. Others desperately need resources and greatly appreciate donations from another library. Some have access to periodical indexes but need someone to send them needed articles. A few ACL members have even helped by doing remote cataloging.

At ACL's 2005 conference, CILA conducted a survey to find out who might be interested in serving at home or abroad. The information is being used to develop a database that will help match interested ACL members with overseas libraries that have requested help. Any member may complete the survey to be added to the database, or update previously submitted information, by contacting the CILA Team Coordinator. For more information on opportunities for service, contact the CILA General Secretary or the Team Coordinator. Working together with colleagues, here and abroad, CILA desires to continue its mission for many more years or until the Lord returns. ✚

CILA's first and possibly most significant project was the revision of the Library Manual for Missionaries.