Libraries promoting peace: Cherished illusion or opportunity for action?

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Libraries promoting peace

This is an adapted version of the PowerPoint presented at a brown bag meeting at the School of Information Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, in September 2016.

Additional text has been added to make the presentation intelligible in the absence of a voice-over. Some additional slides, with text boxes, have been added as well.

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A long history

• 19\textsuperscript{th} Century documentalists
  • Otlet, La Fontaine, \textit{et al.} associated with international peace movements
  • Liberal & scientific internationalists – peace through knowledge
  • Polity internationalists – relations between nation states

• Public library movement in USA
  • Maintenance of social order: Boston PL
  • Andrew Carnegie “the result of knowledge [gleaned from libraries] is to make men not violent revolutionists, but cautious evolutionists; not destroyers, but careful improvers” (Harris, 1975: 15).
“Good fences make good neighbours”

“Mending wall”, by Ken Fiery, 2007
https://peterrock12.wordpress.com/tag/good-fences-make-good-neighbors/
“Good fences make good neighbours”

Quotation is from the poem, “Mending Wall” by Robert Frost. Don’t misconstrue this bucolic scene. Frost was questioning, not approving, this “folk wisdom”

“Mending wall”, by Ken Fiery, 2007
https://peterrock12.wordpress.com/tag/good-fences-make-good-neighbors/
UNESCO

• Founded 1945

• “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”

• Mission: “…to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.”
UNESCO and public libraries

• *UNESCO public library manifesto* (UNESCO, 1949)

• ”[Unesco’s] aim is to promote peace and social and spiritual welfare by working through the minds of men. The creative power of Unesco is the force of knowledge and international understanding.

• ”This manifesto, by describing the potentialities of the public library, proclaims Unesco’s belief in the public library as a living force for popular education and for the growth of international understanding, and thereby for the promotion of peace.”
Causal chain?

Peace

Understanding

Knowledge

Education

UNESCO Public Library Manifesto

Information

Libraries

Campbell 1989

Short cut (simplistic)
Causal chain?

Peace

Understanding

Knowledge

Education

Information

Libraries

UNESCO Public Library Manifesto

Campbell 1989

The assumption that information automatically promotes peace is simplistic and needs to be interrogated.
But what is peace?

Our initial exploration:
<table>
<thead>
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<th>pax</th>
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<tr>
<td>Juridical</td>
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<td>authority</td>
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<td>Law and order</td>
<td>Sense of</td>
<td>Common</td>
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<td></td>
<td>community</td>
<td>humanity;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Respect for</td>
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<td>natural world</td>
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</table>
Different dimensions of the concept of peace are expressed by three words in the Roman and Judaeo-Christian traditions. The Latin *pax* refers to a juridical concept, in which conflict is avoided, resolved or suppressed by a legitimate authority. In this concept peace is ensured by maintaining in good condition the boundaries that enable people and nations to pursue and protect their separate respective interests. A constitution that sets out, limits, and keeps in balance the powers of various constituent parts of a state, is a key tool for preserving peace in this sense. In maintaining peace among nations, intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations or the Organizations for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) serve this purpose. The Greek *eἰρήνη* (*eirēnē*) refers to peace based on equitable ethical norms. It implies a sense of community and nationhood, or, projected to a worldwide scale, a spirit of tolerance and international solidarity. Going back yet further, the Hebrew *דְּתָם (shalom)* refers to peace as a sense of well-being and spiritual wholeness (Chatfield, 1986). Projected to a worldwide scale this might translate into an awareness of our common humanity, and of humanity’s place in the natural world.
Three dimensions

Scope
- International
- National
- Local

Time frame
- Long term
- Medium term
- Short term

Processes
- Cultivating peace
- Making peace
- Restoring peace
Three dimensions

Processes: It is helpful to conceptualize peace not as a state, but as a process, or processes, such as the processes of
• cultivating peace (preventing the emergence of destructive conflicts),
• making peace (de-escalating and resolving conflicts), and
• keeping and restoring peace (after conflict has ended).
Peace studies: interdisciplinary

**Example**, at UWM:

Master of Sustainable Peacebuilding Program (2014-)

“What is Sustainable Peacebuilding?

“Sustainable Peace is more than the absence of violence or the implementation of efficient technologies. It requires the fostering of macro-level change in societies or communities ...”
What can libraries do?

• Some further exploration:

• A simple typology/model
  • Seven roles for libraries
1. Informing

• Informing about *others*
  • Misinformation – avoid
  • “Othering”: others exotic, quaint, not to be taken seriously (cf. Said, *Orientalism*) – beware
  • Selection challenge: cultural sensitivity/competence

• Informing about peace
  • Origins, causes, and consequences of war and conflict, peace processes, and preconditions for peace
  • For professionals and communities
2. Promoting

• Beyond access
  • Acquiring materials and making them accessible is not enough.
  • Book exhibitions and book talks – traditional library activities to encourage reading by community members about particular topics
3. Educating

• The next level of engagement: educational interventions
  • Peace processes of building, making and restoring peace
  • Celebrate the International Day of Peace (September 21).
  • Library’s website as a medium for promoting peace-building resources and activities.
  • International days to promote understanding of immigrant and refugee groups
  • Note: emphasis not on “otherness”, but on shared humanity
4. Creating resources

• Librarians mainly acquire materials that have been produced by other organizations

• In certain situations we also need to create materials where none exist
  • particularly in certain languages
  • for particular groups
  • E.g. immigrants, refugees

• Local information
  • South African example
4. Creating resources

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• Local information
  • South African example

South Africa: A great deal of unrest and frustration, manifested in “service delivery protests” can be traced to lack of communication from municipal officials to the residents. Can community libraries play a role as a clearing house for disseminating information about consultations, decisions, planning processes etc. affecting the community?
5. Empowering

• Seeds of much conflict in ignorance, deprivation, inequality, and competition for scarce resources.
  • Role for library in promoting peace – indirect: building stronger, more resilient, more inclusive and more equitable communities
  • support educational & community institutions and projects
  • Develop the community’s own capacity to create and disseminate (e.g. promoting authorship and community publishing).
• Information & media literacy
• Capacity to participate in political process
6. Healing

- Bibliotherapy?
- Trauma, after horrific suffering, deprivation and loss
- Children in refugee camps....
- In strange country everything is different – home school, weather, languages...
- Scope for libraries to go beyond the conventional provision of books and media
- Program of storytelling and group activities, with opportunities for self-expression through drawing, music, dance, and acting
7. Advocacy

• Librarians and community activism?
  • Except “librarianly” issues (e.g. Freedom of expression & privacy)
  • Long tradition of “neutrality”
  • Neutrality: “mending walls”, accepting and reinforcing barriers and inequality.

• Advocating for peace
  • Breaking down walls of incomprehension and privilege
  • In conflict-ridden communities advocacy carries risks *(Charlie Hebdo)*
  • Relevance of the library to the community
Informing

Creating resources

Promoting, animation

Educating

Empowering

Healing

Advocacy

Committed; activist; contextual

Detached; neutral; general

A tentative model
A reality check

- Request posted on IFLAnet
- Asked for examples, with photos
- Intended for a poster in Columbus
Three clusters

• Education and research for preventing and healing conflict
• Promoting peace through interreligious and intercultural dialogue
• Services to refugees and immigrants

• Some examples...
Education & research

Centre for Conflict Resolution, Cape Town
Informing & Promoting

Centre for Conflict Resolution, Cape Town
Serving CCR staff, researchers, students, community activists, general public
Interfaith/intercultural dialogue

Cartoneras projects (IFLA RELINDIAL SIG; Médiathèque Drômoise des Sciences Religieuses)
Cartonera refers to handmade books made of cardboard and recycled paper. They were first issued in Argentina during the economic crisis, in 2001. IFLA’s Religions in Dialogue Special Interest Group (Relindial) has launched a project to develop a Cartonera activity as a tool of action for sharing and learning about religions. For more about in Relindial, see http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/relindial/documents/relindial_cartonera_project._en.pdf.
Informing, promoting, educating

“Havens of exposure” where young people from different backgrounds come and read, study, and learn together. In the process, it is hoped that they build friendships and overcome prejudices.

Photos provided by Arizza Nocum, arizza.nocum@arizona.nocum@gmail.com
Responding to refugees

Linkoping Public Library, Sweden
First aid

• Big topic at IFLA 2016
• Library responses to influx of refugees
• Distribution points
• Information
• Internet access
• Library/access cards
• Language programmes

Finland:

**Opi suomea: language café for refugees**
(Learn Finnish: Tapiola library is hosting a weekly language café! You will be introduced to a number of basic Finnish words used in everyday life.)

Creating resources

Example: An online multilingual language course
Welcome!
Great to have you here! It is easier to get settled and feel at home when you understand the language. **Welcomegrooves** enables you to learn some initial words, sentences and common phrases, and gives a little information about German culture. The entry-level course uses music to impart language. This makes learning easier. Listen to the lessons whilst reading the translated transcripts in your native language or a language of your choice. MP3 files of the language lessons and PDF documents of the translated transcripts are available for download here.

http://www.welcomegrooves.de/
Welcome for refugees

Media access for refugees in Germany: a donation-funded online card gives refugees access to the wide range of e-media services and WiFi available in public libraries in Hamburg. The libraries offer various programmes and electronic services, including e-learning courses such as German as a Second Language.

Access to WiFi at the libraries is an important service for the card holders. Almost every refugee has a mobile end device. They are the most important means of keeping in contact with family and friends around the world.

E-Media card

Image: [http://www.lesenetz-hamburg.de/b%C3%BCcherhalle-nach-machen-sich-stark-fl%C3%BCchtlingen](http://www.lesenetz-hamburg.de/b%C3%BCcherhalle-nach-machen-sich-stark-fl%C3%BCchtlingen)
Healing

A role for libraries?

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/syrian-refugees-art-therapy_us_56aa6784e4b05e4e3703a5d0
A Spanish NGO has organized an art therapy workshop for Syrian refugees in Jordan to help them deal with trauma and regain a sense of hope.

Image: GLOBAL HUMANITARIA/BADER CENTER

Iman is 15 years old. A bomb exploded near the car she was in with her family. Two of her brothers died. She lost one of her legs. In the image above, she is working on a painting called “Sharing the Grief: I Need Someone to Share my Pain.”

A role for libraries?

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/syrian-refugees-art-therapy_us_56aa6784e4b05e4e3703a5d0
Conclusion

• Based on submissions, libraries mainly involved in
  • Information & promotion
  • Education (inter-cultural & interfaith understanding)
  • Aid to refugees (Current BIG issue)

• Other roles?
  • Indirect peace-building?
  • Need for raising awareness, sharing experiences
  • Mortenson Center: International Peace Day initiative;
    website librariesforpeace.org
  • Libraries for Peace (L4P) Day: September 21
Thank you

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