From local to global:
The expanding horizons of libraries and related information organizations

Peter Johan Lor
Extraordinary Professor
Department of Information Science
University of Pretoria, South Africa
Background

• Context of this presentation
• My background in international LIS
• The book
• Part I: Conceptual foundations
• Chapter 1
• This presentation
  • “Capita selecta” – reflections & questions/provocations
Periodization

• Natural human response
  • Making sense, giving structure

• A means of control
  • Manipulation of perceptions
  • Diminish or obliterate the past
  • E.g. “pre-colonial” Africa
Periodization (2)

- Eurocentric schemes
- Americentric schemes
- Technology as the driver
  - “...Society”; “...Economy”
  - “Post-...”
- Periodization not about the past
- Technological determinism

- Problems
  - Discontinuity; leapfrogging; capitalism; Western bias
Six horizons

• Attempt to organize this chapter; alternative to periodization
• Evolution of spatial & intellectual horizons of LIS
• Geographic and intellectual space
• Horizons can coexist
• Not synchronized geographically
• Alas: Western bias
Six horizons (2)

1. Local
2. Imperial
3. Universal
4. National
5. International
6. Global

A braided channel
Image:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Braided_river
Horizons 1 & 2: Local & Imperial

• Continuing, co-existing
  • Tension between periodization and horizons

• Question #1: Relationship of LIS to Time
  • Old books, heritage from earlier times
  • Preservation, blunting the tooth of time
  • “Save the time of the reader” (Ranganathan)
  • “Just in time” vs. “Just in case”
  • “Ticking time bomb” of digital media
  • More?
Horizon 3: Universal

• Medieval paradox
  • Spatial horizon contracted
  • Intellectual horizon: Latin universal language?

• Obstacles to universalism
  • Political instability, insecurity (barbarians)
  • Language (Proto Indo-European root *barbar- echoic of unintelligible speech of foreigners (compare Sanskrit barbara- "stammering..."
Horizon 3: Universal (2)

• **Question #2**

• Bibliographic control
  • Centrality of *control* in LIS
  • Naming, description, enumeration (Genesis 2:20)
  • Arresting time
  • Ambition overvaults itself...

Image: King Canute (Knut)
http://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/B000369
Horizon 4: National

• Westphalian system (Peace of 1648)
  • Emergence of the Nation-State
  • Long process
  • Significance disputed
  • National traditions, languages, myths
  • National institutions
  • Tensions
    • Querelle des Bouffons

Image:
Horizon 4: National (2)

- National libraries
- National library “systems”
- Cataloguing codes
- Imperial ambitions
  - Control!
- Universal scope

Image: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/400398223091617696/
Horizon 5: International

• “International”:
  • Coined by the English utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, introduced in 1789 in his *Introduction to Principles of Morals and Legislation* to refer to the law of nations. (OED)

• “Internationalism”:
  • First recorded in 1843. The OED lists four meanings. Relevant here is no. 2 (first recorded in 1851): “The principle of cooperation and understanding between different nations; belief or advocacy of this principle”.

• International librarianship: starting now?
Horizon 5: International (2)

• Two main strands of Internationalism:
  • Polity internationalism
  • Community internationalism
• World peace a common goal
• Different approaches


The First Hague Conference in 1899
Internationalism

- Polity internationalism
  (e.g. Geneva Conventions, 1864-; ITU, 1865)

- Community internationalism
  - Socialist ("red") internationalism
    (1848-)
  - Liberal internationalism
    (e.g. ICRC, 1863-)

- Peace movements
- Scientific universalism

Figure 1.1
Internationalism

Polity internationalism (e.g. Geneva Conventions, 1864-; ITU, 1865)

Community internationalism

Socialist ("red") internationalism (1848-)

Liberal internationalism (e.g. ICRC, 1863-)

Peace movements

Scientific universalism

Figure 1.1
Horizon 5: International (5)

• Question #3:

Inter{(NATIONAL)ism}
Horizon 5: Internationalism (6)

19th Century internationalism in LIS (?)

- Librarians
- Collections
- Volumes
- Bibliographies
- Library "Science"
- IFLA, 1927-

- Documentalists
- Literature
- Information
- Indexes
- Documentation → Information Science
- IIB/FID, 1895-2001

Universal expositions
Library associations
Horizon 5: International (7)

• After WW1
  • Aid, rebuilding after wartime destruction (US; ALA)
  • US influence in France, Belgium
  • League of Nations
  • IFLA

• After WW2
  • UNESCO; libraries prioritized initially
  • Universal ideals stymied (Besterman)
  • Nation-state primacy (polity internationalism)
  • Developing countries
  • Turn to information
Horizon 5: International (8)

- After WW2:
  - Cold War rivalry
  - Decolonization
- Cultural diplomacy
- Area studies
- Internationalization in LIS education

- Question #4: Moral issues?
Horizon 6: Global

• **Question #5**: When did globalization begin?  
  • How far back its origins?

• **Question #6**: Manifestations of globalization  
  • In what ways does globalization manifest itself?
Horizon 6: Global (2)

• Impact on LIS
  • Mediated in particular by rapid development of ICTs

• Dematerialization
  • Information unbundled
  • Intellectual property rights: is digital different?

• Commodification
  • And altruism

• Resource discovery
  • OCLC
Notional timeline of the six horizons

Global

International

National

Universal

Imperial

Local

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<th>Hellenic/Roman</th>
<th>Medieval</th>
<th>Renaissance</th>
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Figure 1.2
Notional timeline of the six horizons

Global

International

National

Universal

Imperial

Local

Antiquity Hellenic/Roman Medieval Byzantine - Islamic Renaissance Enlightenment 19th Century 20th Century

The end of “international librarianship”?
Thank you

Peter J Lor

Department of Information Science
University of Pretoria
Pretoria
South Africa

Peter.lor@up.ac.za