**PLG Activities at ALA Midwinter**

About fifteen PLG members and friends met at ALA Midwinter in Chicago on February 1 to discuss the work of local and student PLG chapters in the U.S. and Canada. Members of the Indiana University Chapter were present and gave a brief presentation on their chapter activities and future plans, and there was discussion about other chapters' activities that have appeared in the *PLG Bulletin* over the past year. After the meeting PLGers adjourned to a local restaurant for the PLG Dinner, which was attended by eight people despite the heavy snow outside.

*From left to right:*
Mark Hudson, Tina Gross, Katharine Phenix, Kenny Garcia, Ed Remus, Tom Twiss, Jane Glasby
Call for Submissions - Miriam Braverman Memorial Prize

The MIRIAM BRAVERMAN MEMORIAL PRIZE, a presentation of the Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG), is awarded each year for the best paper about some aspect of the social responsibilities of librarians, libraries, or librarianship. Papers related to archivists, archives, and archival work are also eligible.

The winning paper will be published in the Summer issue of Progressive Librarian. The winner of the contest will also receive a $500 stipend to help offset the cost of travel to and from the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference. The award will be presented at the annual PLG dinner at ALA, and the winner is invited to present their paper at the PLG meeting. In addition, the winner will be provided a press pass for the conference, allowing for free entry to sessions and the exhibition floor, with the expectation that they will write a short reflection for publication by PLG.

Requirements

1. Contestants must be library and/or information science students attending a graduate-level program in the United States or Canada. Contestants may not have finished their coursework earlier than the previous December.

2. Entries must be the original, unpublished work of the contestant, and must be written in English. Entries may not exceed 3,000 words, and must conform to MLA in-text citation style.

3. To facilitate the blind review process, each entry must include a cover sheet providing the contestant's name, full contact information (address, phone number, e-mail address), name of the institution where the contestant is enrolled, and the title of the paper. No identifying information, other than the title, should appear on the paper itself.

4. Entries must be submitted electronically, in PDF format, to bravermansubmissions@gmail.com. Entries must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. CST on international workers’ day, or May Day, May 1, 2015.

5. The $500 stipend is available only to help defray the cost of ALA conference attendance in the winning year; if the winner of the contest is unable to attend, the money will remain in the Braverman Prize endowment fund.

Any questions regarding the contest or the selection process can be directed to the chairs of the selection committee, Megan Browndorf, mbrowndorf@towson.edu and Kelly McElroy, kelly.mcelroy@oregonstate.edu.

More information about Miriam Braverman and about the Progressive Librarians Guild is available at http://progressivelibrariansguild.org/.
PLG Statement: In Defense of Libraries and Culture in the Middle East

Media coverage of the destruction of libraries and antiquities in northern Iraq during March 2015 has aroused the indignation of people around the world. The Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, has initiated this destruction and used it in a propaganda campaign to promote its interests throughout the region. This destruction is based on its crude fundamentalist version of Islam, but that is not the whole story. There are also reports that ISIS is selling invaluable artifacts for profit.

Libraries with unique collections, with some items going back to 5000 BC, have reportedly been ransacked in Mosul, including the Mosul Central Library, the Mosul Museum Library, the Sunni Muslim Library, and the library of the Latin Church and Monastery of the Dominican Fathers. There are reports that many of the books were burned.

Archeological sites at the ancient cities of Hatra, Nimrud, and Dur-Sharrukin have reportedly been devastated. The Mosul Museum was looted during the U.S. led military invasion in 2003, but nearby residents saved many of the artifacts at that time by hiding them in their homes. According to Bagdad Museum Director Fawzye al-Mahdi, it appears that most of the recently destroyed artifacts in the Mosul Museum were actually plaster cast replicas of originals, which were moved to Bagdad in 2003. However, according to exiled Mosul Governor Atheel Nuafi, at least two were priceless originals, including the Winged Bull, which used to stand at the gates of Nineveh in the 7th century.

Progressive librarians unconditionally condemn the destruction of libraries and culture in the Middle East.

In order to understand the current situation, we need to examine recent history. In a candid March 17th interview with Shane Smith of Vice News, President Obama stated that “ISIL is a direct outgrowth of Al-Qaeda in Iraq,” and that it is an “example of unintended consequences” (https://news.vice.com/topic/isil).

Before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, Iraq was a brutal dictatorship that tortured its opponents. But it was also a stable and secular middle-income country fueled by an oil-based economy. Although women were certainly not treated as equal to men, they had considerable freedom and rights not available in many other countries in the region. But of course Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq, opposition to the government was not tolerated, and freedom of speech was very limited. One consequence of the authoritarian state was that radical Islamist groups had no presence in the country.

Although the U.S. generally supported Saddam Hussein from 1979 to 1990, the situation reversed after the 1990 Gulf War when Iraq attacked and annexed Kuwait. Strict U.N. economic and other sanctions led to the death of perhaps 500,000 Iraqi children by 1996, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that “we think the price was worth it” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbIX1CP9qr4).

Al-Qaeda established a presence in the country only after the chaos caused by the U.S.-led invasion. The destruction and systematic dismantling of Iraq’s government and army along with the bombing of crucial infrastructure led to the recruitment of competing ethnic militias, and massive “ethnic cleansing” of both Shiite and Sunni neighborhoods and regions.

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PLG Statement: In Defense of Libraries and Culture in the Middle East (continued)

Whether boots on the ground or through drone attacks, the U.S. military is continuously making the situation worse. New extremists are created when the U.S. military kills or maims civilians or destroys their homes and livelihoods. The example of Iraq is instructive. A stable secular country without any Islamist extremists has been turned into a haven for ISIS. The destruction of libraries and culture is a direct result.

We condemn the ISIS attacks on libraries and culture, and we equally condemn U.S. wars in the Middle East and elsewhere. It is the people of the Middle East who can solve the problems of the Middle East. In the current situation, the most productive things the U.S. can do are to end all military operations in the region and to provide non-military aid and development assistance, including assistance in the rebuilding of libraries and other cultural resources.

Issue 43 of Progressive Librarian

Issue 43 of Progressive Librarian has been mailed out to current PLG members. This issue features the proceedings of Organize and Assemble IV, the fourth annual symposium organized by PLG Edmonton that was held in October 2014. Included in the proceedings is the keynote address “The Commodification of Information and the Public Good: New Challenges for a Progressive Librarianship” by Samuel E. Trosow, and “Response to Dr. Samuel E. Trosow’s Keynote Address” by Michael B. McNally.

Also in this issue is “Showing Solidarity: 2014 Union Review” by Sarah Barriage.

The table of contents of this issue can be viewed on the PLG website.

Call for Papers

To commemorate Miriam Braverman's 1965 article "Mississippi Summer" that appeared in School Library Journal (November, 1965: 32-33) and reprinted in Library Journal (November 15: 5045-5047), special issue number 44 of Progressive Librarian is devoted to exploration of Freedom Libraries during the Freedom Summer of 1964. Issue 44 will reprint Miriam Braverman's article to set the stage for this special issue.

Research articles reflecting on the civil rights movement, Freedom Summer, and where librarianship stands today in relation to the history and present of this movement will be considered for inclusion in Issue 44. Essays, poems, reflection pieces, letters from elders to the next generation of librarians, images, drawings, graphics, bibliographies, and book reviews will also be considered for inclusion in Issue 44. Submissions are due by July 31, 2015. Consult Progressive Librarian's submission guidelines for information regarding format and style.

Have an update you’d like to see included in next month’s bulletin?

Send it to sarahbarriage@gmail.com