

NAVIGATOR: COLORADO LIBRARIES AND THE WORLD

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RACHEL: A Dream Come True



Providing educational resources to students in developing economies is a challenge for educators, librarians, and information technology specialists. Depending on the locale, and language of the population, print resources may not be easily available locally and may be costly to ship from a distance. Technological solutions show promise, but also have limitations due to initial expenses related to setup, equipment upgrades or maintenance, unstable electrical power, lack of access or intermittent access to the internet, and limited access to content due to licensing and copyright.



For over twenty years, the Hester J Hodgdon Libraries for All Foundation, founded by Jane Mirandette of Loveland, Colorado, has been providing traditional library services at the San Juan del Sur Biblioteca in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua. From a simple start on the patio of Jane's hotel, the Hotel Villa Isabella, the library has expanded twice into increasingly larger facilities that currently house over 12,000 volumes, developed a mobile project that delivers books in Spanish and English to school children in 37 communities, and developed the Library in a Box program to provide the basis for others to develop library collections in communities nationwide.

Not to let the world pass her by, she and the board thought of ways to bring technology to the forefront. First, a chance meeting led to a Sister Library partnership with the Poudre River Public Library District in nearby Fort Collins. As a Sister Library, PRPLD provides server space and maintenance of the Biblioteca's online catalog (KOHA), including remote checkout to the 37 school libraries. Next, through donations and expertise from library faculty at the University of Maryland, the Biblioteca installed two 3D printers, which serve both as an educational and commercial venture.

The latest project is to expand resources through technology, complementing, not competing with the print resources. For the past two years, the board has been investigating the implementation of electronic databases, preferably through the use of open access products. HJH vice-president, Patricia Herron, and executive board member Rosemary Green took the lead in researching the products, developing a budget, and soliciting funding. Ultimately, the board selected RACHEL (Remote Area Community Hotspot for Education & Learning), developed by WorldPossible. RACHEL has been implemented worldwide and a significant number of systems have been installed in nearby Guatemala, complete with robust Spanish language resources. Fellow board member, Janet Lee, also from Colorado and chair of the ILCE-IG, had recently installed RACHEL in a Chromebook lab in Axum, Ethiopia and was familiar with the technology.

Setting their sights high and wide, the board decided the best course of action was to find a pilot project that could serve as a model for further expansion. They found a willing partner with Escuela Adelante, a bilingual charter school on the

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Save the dates:

- CALCON 2022, Westminster, September 8-10, 2022
- LibLearnX: The Library Learning Experience, New Orleans, LA. Jan 27-31, 2023
- ALA Annual, Chicago, IL June 22-27, 2022
- IFLA WLIC, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, August 21-15, 2023

RACHEL: A Dream Come True ...continued



outskirts of town. The school offers preschool and first through fifth grades, with hopes to expand to sixth grade next year. The co-founder, Jaime Hunter, has been an active user and supporter of the SJDS Biblioteca and a long-term relationship has been formed.

Funding for the project was provided by Opportunity Tree, out of Boulder Colorado. HJH and Opportunity Tree have been successful partners for several projects in the past. A proposal was submitted, vetted, and approved. A second RACHEL server was donated by board member, Atwill Hudgins, to serve as a back-up, but also in use at the Biblioteca.

All the parts seemed to be coming together, but COVID reared its ugly head. Because of supply chain issues, the servers were not available on their usual schedule. Once the physical equipment had been secured, the software was loaded, a suite of databases in Spanish and English. Thanks to prior installations in Guatemala, the databases already had been evaluated and most recent versions updated. Because of the popularity of the Ministry of Education curriculum in Ethiopia, Janet highly recommended investigating whether similar curriculum was available in Nicaragua. An electronic version was available, and the Nicaraguan curriculum was installed. Board member, Victor Zuniga, PRPLD, configured the Chromebooks and both servers prior to transport to Nicaragua.

The RACHEL server is a self-contained device loaded with content and emits a signal through a Wi-fi hotspot. The signal is strong, connecting up to 50 devices at one time. Thirty Chromebooks accessed RACHEL in the Axum, Ethiopia project and the signal was received in all corners of a four-story, stone and reinforced-concrete building. Any device that can handle a Wi-fi connection can be utilized, including computers, smartphones, tablets, and Chromebooks. Chromebooks were selected for both projects because of expense, reliability, and the ability for students to practice keyboarding skills. Because Chromebooks do not contain application software, they are less prone to computer viruses.



Travel to Nicaragua via Costa Rica was relatively uneventful, given excess baggage containing equipment and books. After a day of rest, a dry run putting the equipment together, and examining the content live, the team was set for two days of training.

The team was met by an enthusiastic teacher/administrators including the Jaime Hunter, Executive Director; Enrique Urbina, Growing Adelante Program Director; Monica Jaens, Director of Operations; and Isamar Delgado, Academic Director. In addition to having strong educational backgrounds, they were also very technologically savvy.

Rosemary gave an overview of the educational purpose of the system and the databases. Patricia utilized her Spanish skills to discuss the Nicaraguan curriculum and its supplemental resources.

Janet spoke of possible ways to display the menu, Spanish first/English second or vice versa, placing Spanish and English versions of similar databases one after the other, or suppressing most or all of the databases and displaying them a few at a time over the course of the semester. There was a total of 70 different databases/modules, half in each English and Spanish. The databases include: Kahn Academy Lite, Wikipedia, Hesperian Guides, as well as English and Spanish children's books and stories.

The second day of training went over the administrative mode, including arranging the menu, installing new databases/modules, setting up the statistics tool, and discussing the teacher's learning tool. The teacher's tool allows teachers to upload files such as exercises, practice exams, lesson plans, and other activities. The teachers have the capability of allowing the students to view the items or suppressing them for use later.

Then they put RACHEL to the test by setting out the Chromebooks for the children to use. They immediately dove right in, checking out stories and solving math problems.

Over the next year, the board will monitor qualitative and quantitative data and look for other sites in which to expand.



CAL and ILCE Sponsor Library Tour to Nicaragua Nov. 10-18



Please join members of the International Library and Cultural Exchange as we visit libraries, cultural centers, and natural sites and participate in local library events in beautiful Nicaragua.

Local arrangements will be made by Jane Mirandette, Founder of the Hester J. Hodgdon Libraries for All Program, a Colorado-based nonprofit. Jane is the Director of the San Juan del Sur Biblioteca in San Juan del Sur, a beautiful coastal town.

Join us to:

Tour various cultural sites in Nicaragua including Masaya Volcano and its Natural History museum; the 16th century city of Granada, with its cathedrals and the Museo San Francisco with its large collection of pre-Columbian statues.

Volunteer and travel with the San Juan del Sur Biblioteca Movil on its regular route to rural schools and participate in the lending process.

Celebrate the 21st anniversary of the SJDS Biblioteca, the highlight event of the year, with a library festival and street fair for over 500 children, events for Nicaraguan librarians and teachers, and an evening Gala event.

Click for costs, itinerary and registration form: <https://ilceig.wordpress.com/international-library-tours/>

Laptops to Lesotho Sets up Library in Kokobe



An intrepid team of Colorado librarians have returned from Kokobe, Lesotho, where they set up a small library at an elementary school. The team, Janet Lee and Nancy Wood, led by Laptops2Lesotho president Kathy Plath, were able to deliver over 200 children's books, two SolarSpell servers complete with content, and over a dozen Kindle Fires loaded with educational apps, children's books in the local language, and educational videos.

Laptops to Lesotho was founded over a decade ago and the founders delivered XO laptops to Kokobe and Nahana, where they were quickly embraced. Over the years, L2L constructed a classroom/library building complete with solar power with an aim to upgrade the technology with a dedicated server and the Kindle Fires.

Kathy is a former member of the ILCE-IG steering committee. More information on L2L can be found at <https://www.laptopstolesotho.org/>

Shannon Brennan Selected for CAL Leadership Institute



Congratulations to Shannon Brennan, Children's Librarian at the Bemis Public Library, and a valued member of the ILCE-IG steering committee for being selected to the 2022 CAL Leadership Institute (CALLI).

The goals of the CAL Leadership Institute are to develop leaders within CAL and the Colorado library community by:

1. Allowing an exploration and understanding of personal leadership styles.
2. Developing key relationships among participants, presenters, and the larger library community through inquiry (listening and understanding others), advocacy (learning about issues and taking a stand), and networking (building collaborative networks and creating coalitions for change).
3. Providing the necessary professional development opportunities to grow leaders at all

levels of library organizations.

Shannon writes, "Being on the steering committee for ILCE is very helpful so I'm glad to be a part of the group!"

STEERING COMMITTEE:

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Who We Are

The International Library and Cultural Exchange Interest Group (ILCE-IG) grew out of the American-Bulgarian Library Exchange Project (1996-2011), which sought to create connections and cooperation between American and Bulgarian libraries. The ILCE-IG has extended its scope to encourage projects that foster relationships between Colorado Libraries and those of other countries, to help build and maintain libraries in communities overseas, and to celebrate non-dominant cultures across Colorado.

We're on the web:
ilceig.wordpress.com/

Focus on a Project

Tenedbha Refugee Camp in Sudan

When civil war broke in Ethiopia on Nov. 4, 2020, 60,000 Tigrayans, mostly women and children, fled to neighboring Sudan seeking temporary refuge. Twenty-one months later, the prospects to return seem distant, but hope is still there. Organizations like Health Professionals for Tigray and International Society for Better Health Access are establishing clinics and learning centers in the various camps. Resources are slim, but resourcefulness abounds. Both organizations introduced themselves to Denver Sister Cities International, Axum Committee and Janet Lee, ILCE-IG chair, responded by providing two RACHEL servers for an upcoming trip by ISBHA founder, Dr. Tegest Hailu, to Sudan.

RACHEL is a device that holds an astonishing amount of open-access educational content for all ages, including Kahn Academy Lite, Wikipedia, Kolibri, Hesperian Health Guides, and the Ministry of Education Ethiopian curriculum. Because the Sudanese government requires schools also teach Arabic, many of the aforementioned databases are included in Arabic.

We wish Dr. Tegest and ISBHA success in Tenedbha.

