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## From the Chair of the ECIS Library and Information Services Committee

There have been a few changes on the committee. The committee welcomes two new members: Izabella Tomljanovich, Librarian at the International School of The Hague, and Susan Matter, Elementary Librarian at the American School of Warsaw. Izabella is taking over as editor of *The Link*, which thanks to her you're reading right now!

John Royce has finished his two-year term as chair. Thanks to John for his expert leadership! Luckily, he stays on the committee to guide Linda Marti, the new chair, as I take over the job of organizing speakers for the ECIS conferences and informing librarians via the listserv of upcoming events. You're welcome to contact any of us with ideas and suggestions.  
—Linda Marti

## ECIS Annual Conference 2002

There was an especially strong programme for librarians at the November conference. Even though ECIS guarantees ten sessions per subject committee, this year we had at least 14 of them sponsored by the libraries committee, and many more from other groups that were of special interest to us. It made for a crowded and exciting programme.

ECIS allows each subject committee to propose two outside speakers. Traditionally we invite an author or illustrator, and a librarian. We were doubly blessed this year, for our author was a children's librarian until about five years ago. Theresa Breslin has written more than 20 books, many of which have won prizes and awards, some of which have been serialised on television. She has won Britain's foremost award in children's literature, the Carnegie Medal. It was a special pleasure for me: I first met Theresa when I was at college. The girl I was dating was taking a librarianship course alongside Theresa. I was but a sociology student but the librarians, a far livelier group than any on my course, tolerated my presence in their midst. It was good to meet up again and it won't be 30 plus years before we meet again.

The guest librarian was Doug Johnson, Director of Media and Technology for Mankato Area Public Schools in Minne-

sota. Doug, who has taught in Saudi Arabia and worked as a librarian, is a prolific writer, presenter and consultant. During the Librarians' Forum, Doug spoke about the need for school librarians to be more proactive in demonstrating their value and their worth. Schools are constantly crying out for people with the skills that so many school librarians already have, but the profile gets in the way.

In his second workshop, "Designing research projects students (and teachers) love," Doug spoke of anupholstrophobia (the fear of not covering...), one of the causes of lecture-style teaching which often results in lifeless work produced by uninterested students, also one of the root causes of plagiarism. He presented guidelines for making research projects personal and pertinent, real and worthwhile.

The last of his workshops dealt with ethical issues regarding computers and the Internet. The Internet has given new twists on what are often age-old problems, with speed, low price and ability to reach masses thrown in. Doug described and demonstrated his 3 P's of Technology Ethics, **P**roperty, protection and respect for the rights of self and of others; **P**roperty, protection and respect for the rights of self and of others, and **aP**propriate use of technology in constructive ways which do not break the rules of family, church, school or government. He explained a fourth **P**, the need to explain the **P**inciples behind these three **P**'s, for better understanding and appreciation. Doug's handouts from these and other of his presentations can be found on his website at <http://www.doug-johnson.com/>.

As well as these delights, we had a good crop of home-grown presenters, leading sessions on poetry and the news, teenage



reading, creative writing, and the invisible web. One of the highlights of the conference is the always enjoyable SIRS Gala Dinner. There was an additional suspense that evening as the SIRS/Mandarin ECIS Information Award winner was announced in an Oscar-style opening of the envelope. The winner was Veronica Cunningham of Oslo International School pictured below with her School Director, Barbara Carlsen.

Veronica had been appointed as part-time librarian, but proved her worth and the potential of the library to the extent that she had soon been given a full-time position and a team of assistants. Using sound management techniques, she has transformed her library into a vital, exciting, much-used and much-appreciated happening place.

Veronica was presented with her Award by Dixie McKay, Deputy Executive Secretary ECIS. On receiving it, Veronica



expressed thanks to SIRS, ECIS, the library committee and most of all to Barbara Carlsen, Director, Oslo International School. Dixie then made a presentation to Eleanor and Elliot Goldstein, owners of SIRS/Mandarin with the "Award for the Promotion of International Education", the highest honour ECIS has to bestow.

The cheering was spontaneous, and the standing ovation warm and genuine. SIRS/Mandarin has given so much over the years to help school librarians make a difference.

All in all this was a grand conference much appreciated and very worthwhile. —*John Royce*

## The SIRS/Mandarin ECIS Librarian Award

- For more than 25 years, **SIRS/Mandarin** has been active in supporting international schools.
- For more than 15 years, **SIRS/Mandarin** has participated in the ECIS November Conferences, has organized user workshops, has published *The Link* newsletter, and has sponsored the ever-popular Gala Dinners.
- For more than 10 years, **SIRS/Mandarin** has offered, paid for and organized a unique award: The SIRS/Mandarin ECIS Award for International School Librarians.

During the past 10 years, librarians in ECIS schools around the world have been eligible for this award. The owners of SIRS/Mandarin, Eleanor and Elliot Goldstein invite the award winners, chosen by the ECIS Committee on Library and Information Services, to spend two weeks at the company headquarters in Boca Raton, Florida. Every year, one librarian has the opportunity to visit local schools and libraries, to see library automation software in a working environment and to discuss product developments and other

issues relevant for librarians with representatives of the company. Every year, the winner enjoys a free flight to Boca Raton, Florida, accommodation and food, and, on top of this, the generous hospitality of the Goldsteins at their company headquarters in Southern Florida.

SIRS/Mandarin's commitment to international education and to the work of librarians and libraries is unique. In the very beginning, the founders, Eleanor and Elliot Goldstein, have created the idea that would become their philosophy: "Schools in a free society can only function properly if information is freely available to them at any time." The Goldsteins have always seen their work as a key element for libraries and for the distribution of information. This is why SIRS/Mandarin established the annual award more than a decade ago.

Every librarian from any ECIS school is invited to participate and apply for the award. The winner of the award will be announced at the **SIRS/ Mandarin Gala Dinner in Hamburg, November 22, 2003.**

### Application:

The selection committee is looking for a librarian who can best benefit from being the award recipient and make future contributions to the international school library community. To apply please submit a letter describing your contributions to your library and your view of librarianship. Please include the number of years you have been a librarian in the international community, how a visit to Florida schools and libraries will benefit you and your library, together with a copy of your CV or resume.

**Please email your application to [lmarti@isp.cz](mailto:lmarti@isp.cz)** Chair of the ECIS Committee on Library & Information Services, **by September 22, 2003.**

### Conditions:

1. Applications are due **by September 22, 2003.** The ECIS Committee on Library and Information Services will select the finalists and the Annual Award Winner **before October 17, 2003.** Finalists must attend the ECIS conference in Hamburg in November. All finalists will receive invitations to attend the SIRS Gala Dinner where the winner will be announced.
2. This fellowship is offered only to experienced ECIS school librarians with at least three years of library science experience. The applicants are not required to be SIRS or Mandarin customers.
3. The award includes transport to Boca Raton, Florida, room & board for 12 days, visit to the company and its various departments, and visits to different schools and libraries using Mandarin Library Automation Software.
4. The winner is expected to write an article about the experience in Florida for *The Link*, the newsletter published by the ECIS Librarians' Committee and sponsored by SIRS.

## Librarians Do Take Risks

It was a day in December 2001 that the Director of our school called me into his office and asked, “What kind of risk-taker are you?” Needless to say, this question took me by surprise. After all, aren’t librarians supposed to be calm and collected, “all-together-type” people? Taking risks isn’t part of our job description! He then went on to explain the situation: “A US Department of Defence School in Germany closed down last summer and their entire library is available to anyone who is willing to pay for the transportation of the books.” Now this, for any librarian, is wonderful news – more books!!! “The risk is, we have no idea what will be inside the container,” he continued.

After a short time of consideration, we decided to go ahead and transport the books to Tashkent. After a long journey along the Great Silk Road from Europe to Central Asia we were astonished to find that it was an entire 40-foot container filled with an assortment of every kind of book under the sun. WHAT JOY for a risk-taking librarian! I would never have thought I would ever be the one to say, “There are just too many books.” After opening the container I discovered a wealth of books and expensive encyclopedia sets. Any librarian would be thrilled at some of the treasures I have uncovered.

Most of my mornings were spent inside the container, up to my elbows in books, trying to beat the midday sun turning it into a sauna. Our maintenance men, security guards, some of the senior students, and anyone who looked strong enough to carry a box, were roped into lugging an endless stream of boxes to the library on the third floor. All of them, including me, have developed muscles no gym workout could ever produce. The greatest challenge of all was fitting all these new books into our present library: more shelving and more space – both of which were extremely hard to find. Today, the TIS library has more than doubled in size, with all the books unpacked, classified, computerized, packed on shelves and enjoyed by one and all. What a rewarding project!

Having spoken about the good fortune of TIS’ library I would be fitting to reveal the latter, and no less important, part of our story. Uzbekistan, a country that is enjoying independence from the Former Soviet Union for eleven years now, continues to develop day by day. For some reason, however, English books have never been a priority. Thousands of students graduate from universities and colleges each year, with English as a major, without even seeing more than a total five books printed later than 1980. During Communist rule, books were well monitored by the KGB—certain books were selected to be in libraries, most of them available in Russian, very few in original. An English graduate will have read Shakespeare in Russian, for example, but never laid hands on an English version! This was one of the greatest shocks to me as a librarian. The availability of English books in Uzbekistan today remains very limited, partly because of past practices, partly because of cost factors.

Moreover, libraries in Uzbekistan today, operate on systems and methods inherited from the Soviet system – a very impersonal and unfriendly environment. Patrons only have access to a giant card catalogue in a “card-catalogue-room” where they have to find the details of the book they require, request it from the librarian through a small opening in the screen that divides the librarian from its users, and return the next day to receive the book. The book may only be taken home in very special circumstances. There is no opportunity for browsing, or page through books and absorb the library atmosphere.

An NGO (Non-Government Organization) from the US identified this problem and launched a project to establish a model Western library for university students and alumni, giving them an opportunity to enjoy English books in a user-friendly facility. The library offers the use of reference materials, research books, textbooks, novels, newspapers, magazines and the Internet. It attracts both curious and hard-working students from all over Tashkent – a hive of excitement and activity: the-place-to-be for those who know English.

Back to my container: much of it contained books unsuitable for a K-12 school library. What better opportunity than to donate the 6 000 remaining publications to this library! It warmed my heart to see the students help unpack the many boxes, paging through each book, stroking the covers as if they were made of gold. I, as the only experienced librarian amongst them, was more than happy to spend afternoons with the students sorting and shelving these precious possessions as we shared stories from our respective backgrounds. The generous “leftovers” from this mystery container not only bolstered the library considerably, it gave new hope to thousands of students in Tashkent who are eager to improve their English. For us at TIS, we were happy to be able to make such a significant contribution to the community around us. What a privilege to sow into the lives of some of the leaders of the future.

It never ceases to amaze me how a single gesture of generosity can snowball into something beyond our own, limited expectations. It turned out that the excess books from the university library were, in turn, donated to a variety of schools in Afghanistan this January. Who would ever have thought that books from an American library in Germany would find their destiny in the hands of Afghan students who have been denied the right to read under the oppression of Taliban rule for so many years? What a great honor it was for the humble library of Tashkent International School to be a cog in the wheel of international understanding, cooperation and development.

*Felicity Timcke*  
Tashkent International School

*Felicity Timcke wrote this article as an entry for the 2002 SIRS/Mandarin ECIS Librarian Award. (editor)*

## Teaching Critical Thinking

How many times have you had to remind students “don’t believe everything you read?”

Excellent lesson plans which teach students how to critically evaluate the electronic resources can be found through the New York Times Learning Network Teacher Connections <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/index.html>. Creating a lesson plan around a NYT article, such as *Is the Internet a Web of Deceit?* or *Searching with Certainty*, an instructor is given a great tool in illustrating how to separate the credible information from the less reliable and why it is important.

The book *Web of Deception: Misinformation on the Internet*, edited by Anne P. Mintz (ISBN 0910965609), provides a thorough background on how Internet users can be deliberately misled. While it does not include any lesson plans, the book is interesting and full of practical ideas. One of the sites listed in this book is <http://www.ithaca.edu/library/Training/hott.html>. This site, maintained by John R. Henderson at the Ithaca College Library, provides useful checklists and tutorials to help evaluate Web pages critically.

—Susan Matter

## The ECIS Library Listserv

*The Link* is published every six months. Often we need to get in touch with each other more frequently, sometimes as a matter of urgency. An ideal vehicle is the ECIS Library Listserv. You won’t get overwhelmed by the volume of correspondence, and what there is all pertinent. It is the ideal way to keep totally up-to-date with what is happening in ECIS librarianship.

Have a look at the archives, you will see just what I mean. You can reach past correspondence from page <http://listserv.ecis.org/archives/library.html>. While you are here, you can simply click on the [Join or leave the list](#) line and sign on. It’s as simple as that!

## Chris Crutcher at ECIS 2003

Start making your plans now to attend the ECIS Annual Conference in Hamburg on November 21-23. Chris Crutcher will be the featured author. Don’t miss out on hearing him!

Chris Crutcher is an author and family therapist living in Spokane, WA. Though he was born in Dayton, OH on July 17, 1946, Crutcher grew up in Cascade, Idaho, a small logging town north of Boise. He graduated from Eastern Washington University, poured cement in Texas, taught high school in Washington, and ran an alternative school in Oakland, CA before he wrote his first book, *Running Loose* in 1982.

Seven other novels – *Stotan!*, *Chinese Handcuffs*, *Crazy Horse Electric Game*, *The Deep End*, *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*, *Ironman* and *Whale Talk*—as well as a collection of short stories—*Athletic Shorts*—followed the first novel. Crutcher’s

fiction—heavily influenced by his work as a therapist—is known for its humor and its heartbreaking honesty. He has been honored with dozens of awards including the ALA’s 2000 Margaret A. Edwards lifetime achievement award and the 1998 National Intellectual Freedom Award from the NCTE.

You can find out more about Chris Crutcher and his writings at <http://www.aboutcrutcher.com/>. This Web site also features excerpts of his novels, reviews and even a page for librarians.

## Worthwhile Library Project at the St. Julian’s School in Carcavelos, Portugal: Readathon 2002

Readathon is fast becoming a tradition at St. Julian’s, having first taken place in Oct. 2000, as part of our celebration of International School Library Day. The idea of uniting the pleasurable with the useful—allowing children to indulge themselves in reading for enjoyment, yet at the same time ensuring that their efforts would be rewarded with a significant financial contribution to a meaningful cause—was welcomed by the students. Both the Library and the English department are thrilled by the “knock-on” effect of enthusiastic readers and book reviewers clamouring to be added to the wait lists of popular titles, and sharing the good news about their reading with their teachers and classmates.

Last year’s effort, whose beneficiary was the “Escolinha do André” in Xai-Xai, Mozambique, raised 3673 euros, which was used to furnish and equip 4 classrooms for primary school and adult literacy classes. This year, we have chosen to benefit the *African Educational Sponsorship Project*. This ambitious, student-led project, set up by last year’s Global Issues Committee, had already raised nearly 4000 euros, about half the funding required to educate, feed and clothe 2 children in Africa for 10 years. The funds contributed from Readathon will now allow the Committee to realize their goal of positively and meaningfully changing the lives of children in need.

Our recent automation and renewal of the collection in the Secondary Library has generated much enthusiasm and a large upswing in circulation. We hope that this, coupled with projects such as Readathon and regular exhibitions tying in student work with the library’s resources, will serve to draw attention to the importance of books and the school library in the education of the world’s children. This is one of the main aims of the International Association of School Librarianship, of which we are members. More information can be found on the St. Julian’s Web site under “Library Media Centre” [www.stjulians.com](http://www.stjulians.com) or on IASL’s site, [www.iasl-slo.org](http://www.iasl-slo.org).

—Christine Sousa e Sá

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