

Up Front Students Spearhead Grassroots Library Project in Nicaragua

Jane Mirandette is not a trained librarian, but when she began loaning books from the porch of her hotel in Nicaragua, she began earning her nickname, Library Jane. Mirandette's resources were only a few books intended for guests of the hotel Villa Isabella, which is perched on the hillside overlooking the bay of San Juan del Sur, a picturesque fishing village on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua. But when villagers began asking to borrow the books, Mirandette realized there was a need. By 2001, she had established the Biblioteca San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua's first lending library. A pioneer in international librarianship, Mirandette is the driving force behind a movement to establish a national system of lending libraries in Nicaragua.

In August, six GSLIS students and Assistant Dean Denise Davis flew to Nicaragua to work with Mirandette. The trip was conceived by Davis and organized by a group of students who recently formed Simmons International Relations for Librarians (SIRL). Students Mimi Kolosseus and Carla Magenheimer, with advisors Sergio Chaparro and Pat Oyler, spearheaded the group. SIRL hopes to build a communication network between people interested in international librarianship in order to provide volunteer, internship, and work opportunities for GSLIS students and alumni. During their stay in Nicaragua, Norah Connolly, Janet McEathron, Kristin Fowler, Senele Gonzalez, Kolosseus, and Carolyn Ziering taught book repair and cataloging to librarians, traveled with the bookmobile to nearby villages, volunteered at the library for the blind in Managua, and had an adventure they will never forget. Here are edited excerpts from the web logs they wrote.

In Managua. *Senele.* Jane, the library director and our host, traveled two hours from San Juan del Sur to greet us [here] at the airport. She is an amazing woman, full of energy and ideas to match. Talk about a woman with vision who can inspire others to follow — her enthusiasm is absolutely contagious!

Book Mobile in el campo. *Kristin.* Our Simmons group had an amazing experience this morning traveling to el campo with the biblioteca movil. The ride was rough, yet the beauty of the verdant landscape made the trip truly unforgettable. Our trip began on a paved local road but quickly turned into an unpaved route that was extremely difficult to navigate because of the recent rain. The first school we visited was the Escuela de Professor David Gullette in Cebadilla. [Note: David Gullette, a professor of English at Simmons, established this school.] As we pulled into the school parking lot, the children were already looking out of the windows waiting to trade their recently read books in for



"The Hotel Isabella has an eclectic group of guests, the majority of which are librarians and surfers, and we get along like a dream."

Kristin Fowler, San Juan del Sur, August 2, 2005

new ones. There were children from the ages of three to 12 all in the same classrooms.

Temblor! *Mimi.* Everyone in Nicaragua woke at exactly the same time yesterday, just as the sun was

rising at 6 a.m. I chose to stay with a host Nica family while I'm here in San Juan, so I woke alone in my room as I was jostled back and forth in my bed, heard my fan abruptly stop and saw the hallway light flicker out. Within seconds I heard my host mother, Sara, rushing down the hallway exclaiming, "Temblor! Temblor!" knocking on everyone's door (she has three children). I grabbed my shirt and joined the family on the front porch. Apparently, the Volcan Maderas has been "looking for" a good time to erupt. Wednesday wasn't its day. *Continued on Page 3*

The Information Link Gets New Name & Look

For the past year or so, we have been steadily making numerous small improvements to the look and design of the paper. This issue introduces two big changes. First a more streamlined name—*InfoLink*. And second, a beautiful new banner created by our production editor, Alisa Libby. Also new (since last spring) is the feature, "Up Front" on page one, which highlights key players at GSLIS and their projects. If you have comments, let us know by contacting Alisa Libby at alisa.libby@simmons.edu, 617-521-2797.

Library Project in Nicaragua

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All of the library workers attended the workshop [this morning]. [There were] another four librarians from towns north of here [and] three are staying [here]. It is the first time they have ever left home.

I feel as though I'm reaching deep into my original passion for librarianship. I remember my supervisor at a public library said the library is the poor man's education, and I loved that phrase, even wrote it in my entrance essay to Simmons.

Paradise is no picnic. *Mimi.* This is paradise. Several of us take a morning walk up to the mirador overlooking the San Juan valley and beach to discover indescribable peace at the top. We took an afternoon sail yesterday, with dolphins swimming alongside our boat, many turtle sightings (even two mating), and a cool swim to a private beach. The ocean water is as clear as the night sky. But it's no picnic. Sunday...no one could get on [the Internet]. About half of the group has had a stomach bug or a cold. Sometimes there's no cash in the ATMs, and you have to drive to another town if you want money. Julio's bug bites on his back were frightening.

The traditional dish [here] is gallo pinto: beans and rice, and we eat it with almost every meal. A local fruit, pitahya which is basically a pink artichoke, is sweet and tasty. Toña and Victoria are the two national beers, and the salads are tasty shaved white and red cabbage with vinegar.

Missing San Juan del Sur. *Kristin.* Leaving San Juan del Sur was one of the most difficult experiences I have had in my life. This small place has given me so much on a personal level, that I can't wait to give something back. On my flight back home...I brainstormed about different ideas that could help with Jane's work and my own special interest in helping Rosario's library for the blind in Managua. So much inspiration and renewed enthusiasm for libraries in developing nations has resulted from this trip, that it's hard to describe.

The Cataloging Continues. *Carolyn.* [W]hen Norah, Janet, and I really looked at the cataloging issue, we realized it was not a two-week project. Instead we have assisted Jane in choosing a more advanced cataloging software that will be able to grow with her collection and have turned the cataloging of her collection into a semester-long project.

Once we receive ResourceMate 3.0, the new software, a group of us will be spending the fall semester doing a lot of copy cataloging from the ISBN numbers that were entered in the old catalog. A few of us are already considering a return trip in January to set up the cataloging software on location and attach barcodes and spine labels to the actual books. The next step...will be to catalog the books that did not have ISBN numbers.

To read the complete set of unedited blogs, visit http://nicaragua.typepad.com/my_weblog/; these will also be archived on <http://my.simmons.edu/gslis>. To read more about the Biblioteca San Juan del Sur and Jane Mirandette, visit <http://www.sanjuandelsur.org.ni/community/library.html>. To learn more about the Simmons International Relations for Librarians group, visit <http://web.simmons.edu/~sir>.

Grant News

New Ph.D. Program

GSLIS received a grant for \$780,465 from The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) as a part of the 2005 Librarians for the 21st Century program. The funding will establish a doctoral program that specializes in managerial leadership in the information professions, focusing on the knowledge, skills, and personal traits applicable to leadership in libraries and other information-based enterprises. The grant will support the preparation of 15 individuals (five per year) for leadership roles in library and information organizations. The program will cater to those who may not be able to interrupt their employment to gain a degree, and will be offered with non-traditional scheduling to a small, highly selective student body. Among the benefits will be a pool of well-screened and qualified individuals to lead libraries and information organizations into the future, a body of scholarly and practice-based research of advantage to professional organizations, and continual updating and examination of leadership issues in information-related organizations.

Minority Internships

The Simmons College Libraries have received a grant in partnership with UMass-Boston to recruit future librarians by providing internships to 144 Massachusetts high school students, focusing on minorities and those who are the first in their families to attend college. The three-year project will build on the pilot internship program featured in the February 2005 issue of the *Information Link* to develop a curriculum that could be adapted for any library. Congratulations to Denise Davis, Assistant Dean for Admission and Recruitment, Doris Ann Sweet, Associate Director of Library Administration and Planning and the staff of the Beatley Library!

More Visiting Researchers Arrive from Asia

GSLIS welcomed five more visiting researchers from abroad this summer to work with **Professor Ching-chih Chen** and her Global Memory Net, supported by the National Science Foundation's International Digital Library Program. There are currently seven international researchers who have come to GSLIS to work on this project for three to five months. Each will incorporate new images from their cultures into system as well as participate in system development.

In addition to **S.Q. Zhang**, head of library automation of Sichuan University, China, and **Boris Badurina** of the University J. J. Strossinayer in Osijek, Croatia, others include **Nguyen Thi Tuan Linh**, the conservator of the Vietnam National Ethnological Museum in Hanoi; and **Nguyen Thanh Son**, an AV technical staff member at that museum. They are incorporating images from the museum's ethnological collection. **Haiyan (Haley) Li** is a systems engineer at the library of the Shanghai Jiaotong University in Shanghai, China, and is incorporating images of Chinese musical instruments. **Hongxia (Jenny) Zhang** from Hainan, China, is the head of library automation at the University of Hainan Library and is incorporating images of the Li minority ethnic group and their culture. **Xiaobo Xiao** from Xian, China, is the deputy head of library automation at the Xian Jiaotong University. He is also a Ph.D. student in computer science at that university, and will be involved in system development.