

Visit to UK by the President of the Association of Health Information and Libraries in Africa

In May 2011 Phi hosted a visit to London by Nasra Gathoni - President of the Association for Health Information and Libraries in Africa (AHILA) .

Nasra has worked with health information for over 15 years. She has been a hospital librarian at the Aga Khan Hospital and currently she is a librarian at the Aga Khan University Faculty of Health Sciences Library in Nairobi, Kenya. In her current position she is in charge of electronic resources and the lead person in the information literacy programme. She has taught information literacy to both postgraduate medical doctors and undergraduate nurses. Her interest and skills in this area has also seen her facilitate training workshops for practicing nurses in Kenya. An assessment of the impact of this training was carried out and the findings presented at AHILA12 congress in 2010. - The impact of information retrieval skills training for nurses: a case study of KEN-AHILA/ INASP course In Nairobi- Kenya, 2009

Strengthening the framework for improving the health of the people of Africa through reliable health information is core to the work of AHILA with Phi providing support; both are finding many benefits in working together and sharing experiences. Since information and communications technologies continue to redefine the role of health information professionals and library service development, new skills and old expertise in information exchange are crucial. These range across a broad spectrum of scenarios from assisting researchers to get research into practice to working with other professionals using community strategies to reach the general public. The overall aim of the International Federation of Library Associations's (IFLA) Public Access to Health Information programme (PAHI), which was first piloted by Phi in Kenya in August 2009, is to empower librarians so that they can position themselves and their services to improve public access to health information. Phi and AHILA will continue to work with IFLA on this key programme.

One of the main purposes of Nasra's visit was to participate in the HIFA2015 conference Addressing the information needs of healthcare providers in low-income countries, held at the British Medical Association. Nasra co-presented a paper a paper with with Shane Godbolt (Director of Phi) and co-facilitated a web-conference with Neil Pakenham Walsh (Coordinator, HIFA 2015 Campaign).

During the remainder of her packed programme Nasra was able to undertake a range of continuing professional development visits and meetings focused on building AHILA and taking forward its strategy as well as meeting up with Ken-AHILA's UK partner Ken-HIP (a consortium of libraries based around Bristol) to discuss continuing collaboration.

We asked Nasra to choose some highlights of her visit and she chose

- the HIFA Conference especially the experience of facilitating a web conference and the potential benefits that opened up in terms of use of online platforms for communication and sharing
- meetings and networking with various colleagues with different expertise and experience , especially meeting Dr Regina Ungerer from WHO who gave most generously of her time and practical advice in discussing AHILA 13 in Cap Verd in 2012

- Learning more about IFLA’s work and its relevance to AHILA including the potential for closer links between Phi, IFLA and AHILA in working on programmes of mutual interest including PAHI and others
- New knowledge around potential continuing professional development opportunities available working with Phi as AHILA’s UK partner

On her return Nasra wrote to Phi

- “I would like to sincerely thank you once again for your continuous support to AHILA and especially for facilitating my trip to UK. It was a very fruitful week with very valuable meetings and discussions.”



Nasra Gathoni

Shane Godbolt

photos: by courtesy of Hugh Hill

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