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# Making Sense of the Information Wilderness:

Library and Information Services for the Improvement of Human Rights Work

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By Saša Madacki  
Edited by Liam Mahony

A Tactical Notebook Published by  
the New Tactics Project  
of the Center for Victims of Torture



**NEW Tactics**  
in Human Rights

**Published by**

The Center for Victims of Torture  
New Tactics in Human Rights Project  
717 East River Road  
Minneapolis, MN 55455 USA  
[www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org), [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org)

**Notebook Series Editor**

Liam Mahony

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**Support for the Tactical Notebook Series**

The Tactical Notebook series was produced with the support of the following funders: the United States Institute of Peace, the National Philanthropic Trust, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United States Department of State, the Sigrid Rausing Trust (formerly known as the Ruben and Elisabeth Rausing Trust), the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and a foundation and an individual donor who wish to remain anonymous.

Additionally, the King Baudouin Foundation provided grants to our partner the ICAR in Romania to support the regional training workshop held there and the production of tactical notebooks by workshop participants.

**Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the New Tactics in Human Rights Project. The project does not advocate specific tactics or policies.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank to all those who believe that libraries and information services in the field of human rights are essential to the defense of common values of truth and unbiased information, and play a key role in ensuring the universal availability of publications and innovative approach to serving patrons and supporting multiculturalism – not as political statement, not as phrase but in practice.

In particular, I would like to thank to the librarians who worked with me these years at the Human Rights Centre, University of Sarajevo: Miroslav Zivanovic, Luna Kalas and Fedja Kulenovic. Thanks to the present and former staff of the center who supported us in our mission: Ermin Sarajlija, Dino Abazovic, Aida Mehicevic, Lejla Fadilpasic, Sead Olovic, Senan Dervisevic, Dijana Dockal, Narcisa Basic, Xhemina Zejnnullahu and Adelheid Bassin. Thanks to the Secretariat of Balkan Human Rights Network – Snjezana Ivandic and Aida Vezic. For ideas, suggestions and drafting thanks to Dzenana Aladjuz, Bergin Kulenovic, Dr. Susan Wright, Dr. Kemal Bakarsic and to the members of Sinaia New Tactics Group.

Since librarian cannot be complete without demanding users, I would also like to thank to those who were not satisfied with partial answers, who forced us to be more comprehensive and who proved that librarians and users can be friends: Dr. Laurel Fletcher, Dr. Harvey Weinstein, Edina Becirovic and Senad Slatina.

For patience, support and love, thanks to my wife Alma.



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February 2003

Dear Friend,

Welcome to the New Tactics in Human Rights Tactical Notebook Series! In each notebook a human rights practitioner describes a tactical innovation that was used to advance human rights or address human rights violations. The authors are part of the broad and diverse human rights movement, including educators, librarians, health care workers, law enforcement personnel, and women's rights advocates. They are individuals who have contributed positively to the cause of human rights. They have developed tactics that not only have contributed to human rights in their home countries, but when adapted, these tactics can be applied in other countries and other situations to address a variety of issues.

That is why each notebook contains detailed information on *how* the author and his or her organization achieved what they did. We want to inspire human rights practitioners to think *tactically* – to think about the tactics they have chosen to implement their larger strategy – and to broaden the realm of tactics that might be considered to even more effectively advance human rights.

In this notebook, we learn how institutional strengthening tactics applied *inside* an organization can improve the *way* human rights practitioners do their work and what they *can do*. Organizations that use their resources efficiently, can more effectively advance human rights work. The experience of the Human Rights Centre at the University of Sarajevo is explained in this notebook. They built a strong information system and created a central role for an information specialist or librarian. The utilization of this information system and specialist allowed other staff to better, and more productively, focus on their core programmatic missions. Although the Human Rights Centre is now a fairly large and relatively well-funded organization, the tactic explained in this notebook presents ideas in a way that nearly any group doing human rights work could apply.

The entire Tactical Notebook Series will be available online at [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org). Additional notebooks will continue to be added over time. On our web site you will also find other tools, including a searchable database of tactics, a discussion forum for human rights practitioners, and information about our workshops and symposium. To subscribe to the New Tactics e-newsletter, please send an e-mail to [newtactics@cvt.org](mailto:newtactics@cvt.org).

The New Tactics in Human Rights Project is an international initiative led by a diverse group of organizations and practitioners from around the world. The project is coordinated by the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) and grew out of its experience as a creator of new tactics and a treatment center that also advocates for the protection of human rights from a unique position—one of healing and reclaiming civic leadership.

We hope that you will find these notebooks informational and thought provoking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Kelsch".

Kate Kelsch,  
New Tactics Project Manager

## **Saša Madacki**

Saša Madacki is the head of information research and of the library department at the Human Rights Centre at the University of Sarajevo. With more than eight years of experience in the field, he has previously worked as an archivist, researcher and research librarian at the Federal Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the State Archives, the Soros Media Centre and the National Museum of Literature and Theatre Arts. He also worked as local production manager for the documentary film "Experiment Reconciliation" for ORF (Austrian Broadcasting and Radio Company).

Madacki has organized training sessions for future human rights librarians and written on the history of theater in Sarajevo, the destruction and deterioration of library materials, the reconstruction of burned catalogues for the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and human rights librarianship. Currently he is studying ways to improve the exchange of information among human rights libraries in the Balkans. He also serves as president of the Division of Special and Faculty Libraries of the Library Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina. His areas of research include knowledge management, digitization, library automation and the impact of technology on human rights.

A lecturer at the Balkan Human Rights Network's School for Future Decision-Makers in human rights and technology, Madacki holds a degree in library science and comparative literature from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Sarajevo.

## **Human Rights Centre at the University of Sarajevo**

The Human Rights Centre was established by the University of Sarajevo in December 1996 with support from a number of international organization, including: the Council of Europe, the European Union, WUS Austria, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law/SIDA and the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights.

The aim of the center is to contribute to the realization of internationally recognized human rights through information and documentation services, teaching, counseling, research and reporting. The center works nationally and internationally in cooperation with other similar institutes, nongovernmental organizations and international and national human rights bodies.

## **Contact Information**

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University of Sarajevo  
Zmaja od Bosne 8  
71000 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
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<http://www.sarajevo.see-hrc.net/>

*My grandma always said that God made libraries so that people didn't have any excuse to be stupid.*

**Joan Bauer**

## **Introduction**

When I walked into my new office at the library of the Human Rights Centre in Sarajevo, I found myself with two cardboard boxes containing a card catalogue, an inventory list, a thousand dusty books and a pile of documents. A total wilderness. It was an idyllic and inspiring sight: a librarian sitting in the middle of a room surrounded by stacks of papers with the daunting task of



creating order out of chaos. Creating this order would yield an efficient tool to promote human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina where human rights are so abused and where reliable sources are lacking.

In this notebook it is my modest hope to describe the results of this transformation, and what we have learned from it that can help others working for human rights. I believe now that every organization can improve its work and more effectively promote human rights and justice if it can systematically develop both a library and a librarian's position appropriate to its own size and objectives. The goal of this notebook will be to take the Sarajevo centre's experience and draw out lessons to enable other organizations to develop the tools and skills to more effectively navigate the ever-expanding wilderness of available information that can help them in their work.

**Left, staff at the Human Rights Centre making sense of the information wilderness.**

## The Library at the Human Rights Centre in Sarajevo

The Human Rights Centre in Sarajevo was established in 1996 by the University of Sarajevo with support from the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute and several other international organizations. It was to serve as an example for the whole country, to be used as a resource tool and reference center for international and local achievements in human rights, and as a meeting place for the academic community, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, public servants and individuals interested in studying, promoting and protecting human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The center is not merely an academic institution but an active partner in creating public awareness of the importance of effective protection of human rights in everyday life. The preamble to the statute of the center states:

The aim of the centre is to contribute to the realization of internationally recognized human rights. This should be accomplished through information and documentation, teaching, counseling, research and reporting<sup>1</sup>.

The center's library became a crucial tool for meeting the goal of information-gathering, documentation and research. The challenge for librarians was performing these tasks effectively satisfying a variety of users.

The center's management was very supportive of the library's development, and we had a budget to hire library assistants. Our team consisted of two law students and one advanced student of library science as assistant librarian. Within the limits of our resources, we had to organize the existing materials (including books, documents and periodicals) and build a collection of new

materials and sources, always keeping in mind the information needs of the growing human rights community. As a young team, we recognized that the world of information science was itself changing rapidly. We wanted to effectively combine traditional library services with new information technologies.

We could only achieve this if we left our prejudices and personal beliefs at the door. We kept in mind the old saying, *Cave ab homine unius libri* (Beware the man of one book). We did not wish to offer books and documents reflecting one perspective. Instead, our team worked to collect a wide variety of information sources from all parts of the Balkans, allowing researchers to take a comparative approach and make their own choices. The result was an unbiased collection, tended by professional librarians.

Within the center, the library was responsible not only for gathering, analyzing and synthesizing information for users, but also for the dissemination of information to staff members doing project planning, implementation or research on specific issues.

One of the very first special projects library staff were engaged in was the "Interviewing Study of Bosnian Judges and Prosecutors," a part of a larger project called "Communities in Crisis: Justice, Accountability and Social Reconstruction in the Aftermath of Genocide."<sup>2</sup> Our task was gathering

*I made my visit [to the Human Rights Centre] with a large list of fairly obscure needs for evidence and supporting documentation. The librarian helped me with this list, sourcing all my requests. Without this help I could not have completed the research satisfactorily. The library when I visited was an emerging model of good practice in terms of electronic access and active documentation to facilitate easy access.*

**Prof. Dr. Christine Bell, Chair in Public International Law, University of Ulster**

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<sup>1</sup> Sarajlija, Ermin. "Osnovne funkcije i program aktivnosti Centra za ljudska prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu" ("Basic Functions and Program of Activities of the Human Rights Centre of the University of Sarajevo"). In *Ljudska prava u Bosni i Hercegovini poslije Dayton: od teorije do prakse*. Centar za ljudska prava, Sarajevo.

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<sup>2</sup> This report, published in cooperation with the International Human Rights Law Clinic, University of California at Berkeley is available at [www.law.berkeley.edu/cenpro/clinical/JUDICIAL%20REPORT%20ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.law.berkeley.edu/cenpro/clinical/JUDICIAL%20REPORT%20ENGLISH.pdf).

information and documentation requested by researchers. We were in contact with the researchers on a regular basis, meeting their information needs. This study was later used by International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to revise their outreach program.

Today, the library is a dynamic place with a dozen computers holding easily retrievable information, and with organized published documentation. It has built a monograph collection with background information and in-depth overviews of previous research. The librarian at the center is not just a person behind the scenes surrounded by stacks of paper, but rather an active participant in the center's projects. The library, now in its sixth year, has become a major source of information for all projects involving the center. This is what our partners have to say about the role of the library in the work of the center:

*The Library has become a critical information center for students and professionals who research the area of human rights in the region.*

**Eric Stover, Director, and Harvey M. Weinstein, Associate Director, Human Rights Center, University of California Berkeley**

*In the field of human rights literature, the Human Rights Centre's library is one of the most well-equipped and famous libraries in Europe, including not only a large number of printed volumes, but also a database with hundreds and hundreds of human rights instruments.*

**Morten Kjaerum, Director General, Danish Centre for Human Rights**

*The Human Rights Centre of the University of Sarajevo plays a crucial role in the field of human rights research, documentation ... in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

**Manfred Nowak, Director, Ludwig Boltzman Institute of Human Rights, Vienna**

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## **What Your Librarian Can Do for You**

*Sorting data, finding answers, understanding what we need to know — these professionals are on the cutting edge. They use technology to manage knowledge.*

**Olivia Crosby, "Librarians: Information Experts in the Information Age." Occupational Outlook Quarterly Online**

Of course, not every organization can afford to establish a big, modern library or information center. Nevertheless establishing the role of "librarian" within even a small organization can improve its efficiency dramatically. Ideally, the organization should designate an energetic, curious and dynamic person who would have access to various types of information and be a guide through the information jungle for the rest of the institution. This role might expand later as

the organization's demands grow and its resources permit.

The librarian is a seeker who helps you, the activist, boldly go where no one has gone before. Think of the librarian as an astronomer whose mission is to put knowledge to work to help you, the astronaut, attain your goals. Librarians will not tell you what to do or what to think, but they can give you a broader picture, environmental background and detailed map of that metaphorical Milky Way.

When you return from your mission your librarian can take all the information you collected and process it, including it in a collection or database that others can access. Librarians can also guide you through the multidimensional collective human memory, stored not only in libraries and cyberspace, but also in documents and collections that a busy activist may not have time to find.



This notebook will encourage smaller institutions to appoint a librarian, information specialist or archivist to improve their performance in their everyday activities and in achieving their larger mission. While your institution's focus may not be solely gathering information, you must still be able to access and use information efficiently in order to do your primary work: advancing human rights.

## **The Effective Human Rights Librarian**

*In the nonstop tsunami of global information, librarians provide us with floaties and teach us how to swim.*

**Linton Weeks, *Washington Post*,  
January 13, 2001**

A word on terminology: librarian is used here to refer to a combination of documentalist, archivist, information specialist (or information officer) and competitive intelligence specialist. In the professional library world specialization has gone so far that we have cataloguers, digital library supervisors, database managers, law librarians and so on. But in a small human rights organization one person should carry all of these functions, so we will simply use the term librarian.

Human rights librarianship is the application of library and information science in the field of human rights, providing a wide variety of information to human rights activists and researchers of all kinds. In the information age, specialist librarians are essential: they provide the information edge for the knowledge-based organization by quickly meeting critical information needs. In order to fulfill this key role, human rights librarians must have certain professional competencies and must share a respect for certain common values.

## **The human rights librarian:<sup>3</sup>**

- Has sufficient knowledge in the field of human rights information and documentation (while an advanced degree in the area is not necessarily a requirement, some further study and a willingness to continue to learn from the organization are important);
- Supports freedom for all people to form, hold and express their own beliefs;
- Provides excellent service, customized to meet the needs of users and support the organization's mission;
- Is knowledgeable about technology;
- Is innovative, seeking out and acting upon new opportunities and challenges;
- Communicates effectively with others outside of the library;
- Is able to work effectively with diverse groups, creating an environment of mutual respect;
- Works effectively as a part of the team;
- Is an expert consultant to the organization;
- Understands how information and the library support and enhance communication.

## **What Can a Human Rights Librarian Do for Your Organization?**

There are many reasons to establish a library or documentation unit within a human rights NGO. It can facilitate information flow, aiding the day-to-day work of the institution; it can save the organization both money and time; it can ensure that the appropriate documents are classified as confidential (and only those

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<sup>3</sup> This skill list is based on "ASERL Competencies for Research Librarians" by the Association of Southern Research Libraries and "Competencies for Special Librarians" by the Special Libraries Association.

documents); and it can preserve the organization's important legacy for future generations. (See the appendix for a list of indicators that your organization needs a librarian.)

Does this description, from Louis Bickford's article, "Human Rights Archives and Research on Historical Memory: Argentina, Chile and Uruguay," sound familiar?

*CODEPU's [Comite de Defensa de los Derechos del Pueblo] collection of primary materials is substantial but totally unorganized. Thousands of testimonies, intake files, psychological profiles, legal documents, notes, and literature from the period are currently stored uncatalogued in more than twenty boxes. Although it is not known what exactly is in these boxes or how valuable these materials may be for researchers, there are jewels to be found in this huge collection.*<sup>4</sup>

#### **With your librarian:**

- ◆ You can get valuable information to help you make decisions.
- ◆ You can make better decisions.
- ◆ You can save time.
- ◆ You can be more productive.
- ◆ You can get your work done.
- ◆ You can do better work.

Adapted from "Seven good reasons to use a special library."  
<http://www.sla.org/content/SLA/professional/meaning/topten.cfm>

A good and trustworthy librarian can organize this kind of archival material. In the process he or she might also be able to "de-classify" significant amounts of it and make it more accessible. Frequently, organizations dealing with delicate human rights data classify too much data as confidential. For instance, they know that in box 12 there

might be two bits of confidential that could still put someone in danger. Because they don't have time to sort it, they don't let anyone look at anything else in the box. (This suggests two more qualifications for a human rights librarian: trustworthiness and good judgment.)

An effective librarian can also save an organization large amounts of money and time, as this example suggests:

*"A company librarian was told by a chemist in a steel rolling mill about an experiment which had solved a problem at a cost of \$10,000. The librarian told him that the Germans had previously conducted the same experiment, arriving at the same conclusions, and that their report was on file. This report on shelf probably cost less than \$5 when purchased; it brought the total cost of data to \$10,005."*<sup>5</sup>

Funny, right? Starting research without even looking at the library. By checking out what information already exists a good librarian can keep an organization from wasting its money and time.

A librarian can also perform the crucial function of maintaining the historic internal memory of the organization. There are many cases when internal documentation is in such bad shape that any information about previous research is inaccessible or inadequate.

Sometimes NGOs collect data that cannot be obtained anywhere else or produce such data through their work. Data collected over a long time period in one area can be an essential and unique record of a period or event. This heritage is a potentially invaluable tool for future research, as in this example:

*"Scholars seeking to understand the legacies of authoritarian rule in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay should be aware that the HRNGOs [Human Rights NGOs] offer an important resource in primary source documentation. While researchers may choose to seek*

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Maria Luisa Ortiz, documentalist, CODEPU, May 18, 1998, Santiago. According to Louis Bickford.

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<sup>5</sup> Ahrensfield, Janet, et al. *Special Libraries: Guide for Management*. Washington, D.C.: SLA, 1986.

*information among other sources – such as the official repositories for truth commissions, national libraries and other archival sources – the HRNGOs offer documentation that can be found nowhere else.” (From Louis Bickford’s “Human Rights Archives And Research On Historical Memory: Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay” in *Latin American Research Review*, 2000; 35 (2):160. Bickford’s article will certainly convince you to look after your documentation carefully because this is your legacy for tomorrow.)*

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## Setting up a Human Rights Library

Rather than focus on setting up a large documentation center, we will discuss here how to set up a small library within any human rights institution. The most important step is establishing the role of the librarian. This can be expanded later on depending on the needs of the institution. In the meantime, a single person in this role can have a huge impact on the work of an institution.

The minimum requirements when first creating a library include: the right person (or people), adequate physical space and equipment, a core collection of materials, a web site, appropriate software and an internet connection.

### **Duties of the Librarian**

A librarian must be a curious, dynamic, knowledgeable and energetic person, with a strong interest in providing this service to the organization. Ideally this person should be a professional librarian or archivist, but if that is not possible, there are training courses available (see page 17). The organization might hire someone with a human rights education and an interest in information science or a very organized former human rights activist with experience in the field, or it might assign the task to a current employee.

For a sample job description for a human rights librarian, see Appendix III.

I estimate that roughly 80 percent of a researcher’s time is spent gathering

Clearly, someone needs to take care of documents stored and produced within an organization. The work your organization does is valuable: don’t hide it or let it disappear. You don’t know who might possibly benefit from it!

It is clear to see that even the smallest nongovernmental and governmental human rights organizations could be lost without a proper documentation system and an individual guiding it.

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information. Half of these information-gathering tasks can be assigned to the librarian, giving the researcher more time to analyze and synthesize the information. For instance, the librarian can search for relevant laws, texts of official documents, treaties and statistical data, as well as names of contacts, phone numbers, addresses and biographies. On the other hand, sensitive information-gathering tasks like monitoring, interviewing and fact-finding in the field have to be done by human rights experts.

Today’s librarians do more than collecting and organizing books and data. Librarians:

- Prepare research reports in response to staff requests for specific information;
- Identify research done at other organizations to avoid unnecessary duplication;
- Verify facts for external and internal reports and publications;
- Create databases for organizations to access their internal information;
- Evaluate and compare information software and sources of data prior to purchase; and
- Train other staff to efficiently and cost-effectively use online databases.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Special Librarians, Putting Knowledge to Work.” available at <http://www.sla.org/content/SLA/professional/meaning/wh at/index.cfm>

The librarian's primary duties can be grouped into three main categories:

- Acquiring and evaluating materials
- Organizing materials
- Disseminating materials

#### **Acquiring and Evaluating Materials**

Among the first steps in organizing a new special library is the acquisition of materials. Materials for the new library will come from two sources: those already owned by the organization and new materials that will be purchased. Within your organization you certainly already have useful materials scattered around. The librarian should collect them in a single place and, after consulting with other employees, decide which materials will stay and which will be discarded. New materials should be purchased in accordance with a collection development policy that reflects the present and future plans of your organization. (For guidance on creating a collection development policy, see the list of references in Appendix I.)

Before including anything in the collection, the librarian must analyze its value to researchers: Is the information reliable, biased, accurate and concise? This, too, should be done in close cooperation with other staff in the organization.

#### **Organizing Materials**

As publications are acquired and assembled in the library, the next important step is for the librarian to plan for their organization – the orderly arrangement that assures each item can be found with a minimum of effort and time.<sup>7</sup> This means that the librarian should assign a code to every item based on some larger system of classification.

Currently there are many classification systems in use. Most public and scientific libraries use Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) or the Library of Congress Classification Scheme. But, the human rights field has its

own unique requirements. As Ivana Caccia, who created the Classification Scheme for Human Rights Documentation explains:

*“These are comprehensive systems of classifying and enumerating the overall body of human knowledge according to scientific disciplines and subdivisions, foreseeing all possible extensions and inclusions. Then there are specific ones, ranking categories and topics in a hierarchical manner based on the relationship existing among them with reference to a single common trait, property or use which, put together, form various components of a specific subject area. Many such specialized classifications are created by librarians and documentalists struggling with their growing collections on subjects which are too specialized or too heterogeneous in scope to the point of defying the breakdown of traditional classifications by scientific disciplines or categories. For instance the DDC does not recognize the existence of human rights, rather referring to the related term civil rights.”<sup>8</sup>*

For just these reasons separate systems of classification were created for dealing with materials related to human rights, including:

- Classification Scheme for Human Rights Documentation ([www.huridocs.org/clasengl.htm](http://www.huridocs.org/clasengl.htm) in English or [www.huridocs.org/clasfran.htm](http://www.huridocs.org/clasfran.htm) in French);
- Raoul Wallenberg Institute Classification Scheme ([www.rwi.lu.se/LIBRARY/Classif.htm](http://www.rwi.lu.se/LIBRARY/Classif.htm));
- Human Rights Centre Sarajevo Classification Scheme, a modified version of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute Classification (available from the author upon request).
- UDC has been also used in the Council of Europe Human Rights Library

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 18

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<sup>8</sup> Caccia, Ivana. “A System of Subject Classification for Sorting and Storing Human Rights Materials.” Available at <http://www.huridocs.org/cacciaen.htm>.

([info.coe.int/site2/collections/hrplan/HR\\_classification.pdf](http://info.coe.int/site2/collections/hrplan/HR_classification.pdf)).

See Appendix I for more resources on classification systems.

### **Disseminating Information**

Simply collecting and storing materials is useless if they are not disseminated to people who need them. Disseminating materials is, in fact, the librarian's foremost responsibility.

There are several ways to disseminate information, including:

*Current Awareness Service:* This is the most active way for librarians to be sure information reaches the people in their organizations who need it and that their colleagues are informed of developments in their fields. The librarian creates a profile for each user that includes their information needs and current projects (for example, one activist may be dealing with trafficking of human beings). When new materials (books, articles, pamphlets, even web sites) match information in a certain user's profile, the librarian alerts the user immediately. These systems can be automated, sending e-mails automatically when new materials come in, or the librarian can maintain the profiles manually.

*Reference Service:* Librarians can also answer questions from users as they arise. This service can have a huge impact on an organization. "Levels of reference service varies from answering simple requests to complete searches of the literature available on a subject. Such a search might result in the provision of statistics, or of a considerable array of carefully analyzed material – articles, documents, sections of books, memoranda, results of computer database searches, etc. – dealing with the subject of request."<sup>9</sup>

For more about reference services, see Appendix I.

### **Physical Space**

Poorly organized space will be a torment to both the librarian and the user. This is why it is highly desirable to have a separate room (not necessarily a big one), properly furnished, although in smaller organizations, shared office space can be enough. The space should be sufficient both to house the necessary material and to allow conversations between the librarian and the other human rights workers. Some quiet space is essential for the librarian to work undisturbed.

Your organization's needs may differ, but a one-person library, like those described here, should have enough space for approximately 1,400 items (including both books and leaflets). On average, about 50 books will fit on one meter of shelf space. The plans below include three bookcases with room for about 400 books each. But because NGO documentation is often published as reports or leaflets, you can most likely count on these cases holding about 1,400 items total.

For more resources on library design, please see Appendix I.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 26

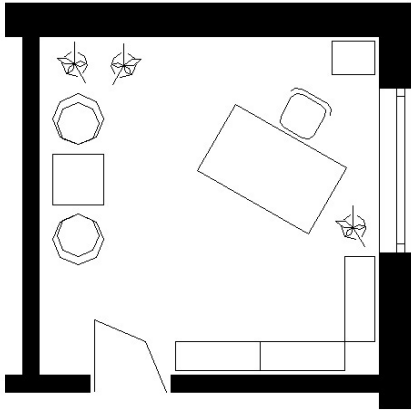
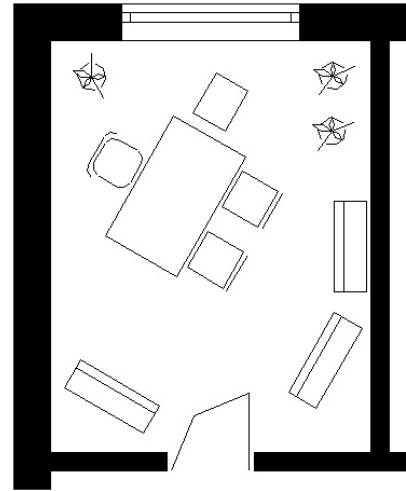
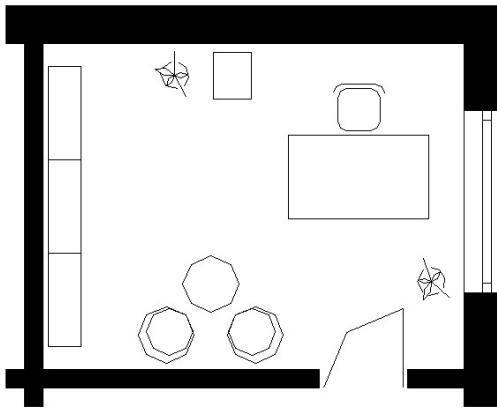


Figure 1<sup>10</sup>, left. A small but comfortable and non-claustrophobic possible layout. The room is small (4 x 4 m or 13 x 13 ft.) and holds a bare minimum of equipment. The shelves in the lower right-hand corner hold about 1,440 books or bound printed materials. There is a filing cabinet behind the librarian's desk that can hold about 200 hanging folders for storing unbound materials. In the future, material storage can be expanded by eliminating the small table and chairs to make room for an additional 2,000 items.



Figures 2 and 3, above left and above right, respectively. These rooms are just slightly smaller (3.5 x 4.5 m or 11 x 14 ft.), but still not claustrophobia-inducing. The furniture and possibilities for storage are similar to the first layout.

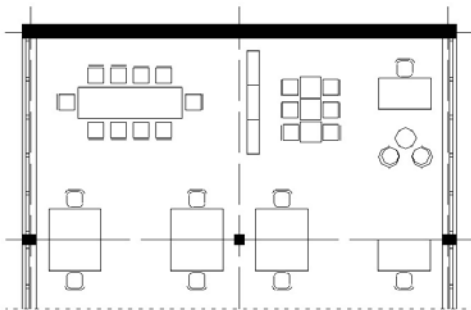


Figure 4, left. This plan will work if there is no separate room available for the librarian (who will have to be able to work in a crowded and possibly noisy space!). The librarian's desk is in the upper right corner (right-hand arrow) and three shelves help divide the room (left-hand arrow). The conference table between the desk and shelves may be used by the whole organization. This layout allows the librarian to share equipment such as a photocopier, fax, etc.

<sup>10</sup> These four plans of possible layout of the library are created exclusively for the purpose of this publication by an independent architect Mr. Goran Budimir from Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. For any advice he is available at [goranbudimir@yahoo.com](mailto:goranbudimir@yahoo.com).

## Equipment

All of the plans above incorporate the bare minimum of equipment: a desk, desk chair, computer, phone/fax, file cabinets and shelves. Your computer will need an Internet connection, preferably one that does not interfere with the regular telephone usage of the organization.

## Minimum Software

The librarian will need general office software, in addition to more specialized programs for organizing the collection and keeping track of users. The software and packages you choose should allow for cataloguing, classification, indexing and generating bibliographies. (As software availability changes the author will post periodical updates at <http://www.newtactics.org/main.php/ToolsforAction/TacticalNotebooks>.)

**Office Software.** Look for Microsoft Office or an equivalent (such as Lotus or Corel) with word processor, spreadsheet and database programs. If your budget is limited, you may consider acquiring GNU Linux (a free, open source operating system) with StarOffice.

**Internet.** You will need an Internet browser with an e-mail program, such as Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator or Opera.

**Bibliography, Integrated Library Software & Research Tools.** On the market there are hundreds of software packages available.<sup>11</sup> Those recommended here are just a selection of the software used and tested in small libraries. Before purchasing you may wish to consult with your local, national or university library.

There are two kinds of software used in libraries: bibliographic software and integrated library software (ILS). Bibliographic software (for example, ProCite) is primarily intended for use by authors creating

bibliographies while working on an article or book. Some libraries, however, use it to create bibliographies of special collections (dissertations, press clippings, etc.). But, because there is no limit on the number of records it can hold, it can also be used to catalogue all the materials in a library. Bibliographic software has three basic functions: cataloguing (describing the materials), searching the catalogue and generating bibliographies. Note that, while bibliographic software can be used in small libraries, it is not a completely adequate substitute for ILS, which includes many more features.

In addition to basic cataloguing, ILS also allows for registering users, maintaining an online catalogue, keeping track of inventory, tracking borrowing, generating reports (e.g. usage, shelving plans, various statistics, etc.), and bar code support – in other words it automates every major library process. This is why ILS is more than ten times more expensive than bibliographic software.

For a longer list of bibliographic management programs. See "Overview of Personal Bibliographic Software" by Mike Fraser<sup>12</sup> available at <http://info.ox.ac.uk/ctitext/service/workshop/bib-overview.html>.

For all other library-related software needs, see the Librarian's Yellow Pages ([www.librariansyellowpages.com](http://www.librariansyellowpages.com)) or the Internet Library for Librarians ([www.itcompany.com/inforetriever/sys.htm](http://www.itcompany.com/inforetriever/sys.htm)).

**ProCite (4.0 or 5.0).** ProCite allows you to catalogue documents and books, and keep a directory of Web sites. It will also automatically collect and organize references from online bibliographic databases, library catalogues (OPACs), etc; automatically insert and format citations in word processing format and create bibliographies; format references according to a particular bibliographic styles (e.g. Modern Language Association style, Chicago style, etc.); and

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<sup>11</sup> Please note that neither the Human Rights Centre nor the Center for Victims of Torture is connected with any of the companies whose products are mentioned here.

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<sup>12</sup> "Bibliographic Concepts and Databases Workshop Resources." From a workshop held at Oxford University on November 17, 1999.

format data for exporting to other programs. (For a detailed description, see [www.procite.com](http://www.procite.com).)<sup>13</sup>

ProCite is very easy to use and maintain. According to the manual you can store up to 100,000 records in one single database. Our experience shows that a relatively slow computer can easily handle about 60,000 records in one database. The software comes with a detailed manual and a two-hour training session is usually enough to make users comfortable with the program.

**Web Reference Poster (optional).** Web Reference Poster is an optional addition to ProCite that will allow you to make your ProCite databases available online, either on the Internet or a private intranet. Activists and researchers can search the catalogue at their convenience without asking the librarian. A live demo is available at <http://157.22.229.198/ris/risweb.isa>.

These two software packages combined can meet the needs of an organization with a relatively small budget and greatly improve its performance.

**CDS/ISIS (WinISIS) Library Software (free).** In the beginning the Human Rights Centre's library did not have the funds to purchase software. In my search for free software I discovered CDS/ISIS (WinISIS), which is completely free and is used for cataloguing books, documents and conference proceedings by a large number of libraries. We contacted UNESCO and got it very quickly. Although we later found the money to purchase integrated library software we kept CDS/ISIS for research. Full details, including features and user groups, are available at <http://www.unesco.org/webworld/isis/isis.htm>.

**Integrated Library Software.** If your budget is not terribly limited you may want to purchase

an integrated library system (see above). Good resources for vendors include:

- ACQWEB: Guide to Automated Library Systems, Library Software, Hardware and Consulting Companies ([acqweb.library.vanderbilt.edu/acqweb/pub/opac.html](http://acqweb.library.vanderbilt.edu/acqweb/pub/opac.html));
- Library Technology Guides: Key Resources: LTG Library Automation Company Directory (<http://staffweb.library.vanderbilt.edu/breeding/librarycompanies.html>);
- Library Automation Systems and Vendors (<http://libinfo.com/vendors-systems.html>).
- See also the Librarian's Yellow Pages and the Internet Library for Librarians, above.

**BookWhere Software (optional).** This software allows you to simultaneously search over 650 library catalogs, and is great for discovering hard-to-find information and materials not available for sale. Once you find what you need, you may contact holder and ask for an interlibrary loan. For more information see [http://www.web-clarity.com/products/overview\\_bookwhere.html](http://www.web-clarity.com/products/overview_bookwhere.html).

**Documenting Human Rights Violations.** If your organization formally documents human rights violations you can download a database for free from HURIDOCs (Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems, International) called WinEVSYS. This is available in separate versions compatible with Access 97 (<http://www.huridocs.org/winev97.zip> - a zip file, about 1.2 Mb) or Access 2000 (<http://www.huridocs.org/winev2k.zip> - also a zip file, about 1.1 Mb). A very detailed WinEVSYS Database Manual is available at (<http://www.huridocs.org/winevman.pdf>).

**A word of caution:** Not all database systems are applicable in every situation. Patrick Ball and Herbert F. Spier remind us that:

*"Human rights projects are so different from each other that it is ineffective and inefficient to develop a standard software program that must be customized for each project. In the*

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<sup>13</sup> You can also use ProCite to create dictionaries. See an example posted by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions at [eubd1.ugr.es/tony/risweb.isa/](http://eubd1.ugr.es/tony/risweb.isa/), containing English-Spanish language resources for library and information professionals.



*six projects we personally have worked on in the last eight years, none of them could have shared their database software with the others. This is the case even though they all shared certain design characteristics.*"<sup>14</sup>

So, prior to making any decision on software, do some research. Check the Human Rights & Science Program at the American Association for the Advancement of Science website for further details at [shr.aas.org](http://shr.aas.org). If you are interested in exploring this issue further, check the electronic edition of the book *Who Did What to Whom: Planning and Implementing a Large-Scale Human Rights Data Project*, by Patrick Ball.<sup>15</sup> Full text access available at [shr.aas.org/www/contents.html](http://shr.aas.org/www/contents.html).

### **Core Collection of Books**

The ideal content of a collection depends on the mission and scale of the organization. Initially it may not be possible to define exactly the scope of the library's interest, the areas to be covered or the degree of coverage required. Creating a collection development policy can be a long process, but it is essential to building a healthy and useful library (see the resource list in Appendix I and <http://www.newtactics.org/main.php/ToolsforAction/TacticalNotebooks> for more on collection development). In general, it might be assumed that an organization will want to collect information essential to its present and future programs.<sup>16</sup> For example if your organization plans to carry out research on international criminal tribunals, your collection must include books, periodicals and electronic information related to

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<sup>14</sup> Ball, Patrick, and Spierer, Herbert F. Introduction. "Making the Case: Investigating Large Scale Human Rights Violations Using Information Systems and Data Analysis," (Patrick Ball, et al., eds.), 2000. Available at <http://shr.aas.org/mtd/>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. Patrick Ball, Ph.D., is deputy director of the Science and Human Rights Program. Since 1991, he has designed information management systems and conducted quantitative analysis for large-scale human rights data projects for truth commissions, nongovernmental organizations, tribunals and United Nations missions in El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, South Africa and Kosovo.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

international criminal law, humanitarian law and the history of the countries involved. Additionally, newspapers and other press clippings are essential. Or, if your organization plans to deal with the trafficking of women, besides international and regional conventions and declarations related to the issue you may need statistics, previous field research reports, etc. in order to prepare future researchers.

The Human Rights Centre's core collection can be seen at <http://www.newtactics.org/main.php/ToolsforAction/TacticalNotebooks>.

### **Web Site**

A web site is an additional service you can offer to your employees and to the outside world. It provides current information about your activities and services, offers round-the-clock access, and enables you to communicate with your audience. It could even open up possibilities you had not considered – new donors, a partnership, who knows. The Internet is a fantastic opportunity for organizations both small and big to let the world know where they are and what they do. Don't forget the Internet is here to stay and growing at an astonishing rate.

On your organization's web site, the librarian can post links and electronic documents, in addition to other materials such as your library's catalog, your organization's newsletter, newsletters of related organizations, information about fellowships and internships, links to free online books and legal material. The librarian can make your web site a learning center for all your organization's activists and for the world at large.

The Web site of the Human Rights Centre has a library page ([www.sarajevo.see-hrc.net/biblioteka/index\\_eng.htm](http://www.sarajevo.see-hrc.net/biblioteka/index_eng.htm)) in addition to pages for programs, activities, staff, etc. It contains news, information services available, access to the catalogue, electronic resources, government information, cases before domestic human rights institutions, etc., as well as links to international organizations, NGOs and more.

## **Training for Librarians**

The first and the best option for any librarian is a formal education in library/information science. For more information on earning a degree please visit [www.becomealibrarian.org](http://www.becomealibrarian.org) or the web site of your local university. In the United States, one- or two-year master's programs are offered, while in Europe four-year undergraduate study is also an option. Distance learning programs are also available, but they are very expensive. For details on distance learning options see [www.ala.org/alaorg/oa/disted.html](http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oa/disted.html).

A less intensive option would be specialized short courses or summer schools. Asser College Europe offers a training course for legal information specialists ([www.asser.nl/educatio/acelib.htm](http://www.asser.nl/educatio/acelib.htm)). The three-week course is intended to improve the skills of librarians in using international legal materials, focusing mainly on European Union documentation and the EU legal framework, but also dealing with the World Trade Organization, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

For specialized courses please check the International Summer School on the Digital Library at [cwis.kub.nl/~ticer/summer02/form.htm](http://cwis.kub.nl/~ticer/summer02/form.htm). Some human rights institutions with developed libraries also organize courses in human rights documentation and librarianship. (For example contact the Danish Centre for Human Rights at [www.humanrights.dk](http://www.humanrights.dk) or visit their Human Rights Documentation Course page at [www.humanrights.dk/calendar/all/doccourse/?print=1](http://www.humanrights.dk/calendar/all/doccourse/?print=1)).

HURIDOCs holds training courses and workshops in various parts of the world, in collaboration with local and regional human rights organizations (see

[www.huridocs.org/training.htm](http://www.huridocs.org/training.htm)). These training activities are practical, and are oriented towards the work and needs of documentalists and information workers in human rights organizations. The courses usually last from five to ten working days, and on average include 15 to 20 participants.

The Canada-U.S. Human Rights Information and Documentation Network also organizes trainings in various aspects of documentation and information management. Check for availability at [shr.aaas.org/cushrid/training.htm](http://shr.aaas.org/cushrid/training.htm).

Finally you can ask about courses at your local or national library association.

## **Join Up!**

Your librarian should become a member of a library association, whether locally, nationally or internationally. He or she will learn a lot from these colleagues, some of whom might even help with the establishment of your library. The Special Libraries Association ([www.sla.org](http://www.sla.org)) division is especially for solo librarians. The benefits of joining an association include:

- Making contacts with other colleagues dealing with same issues (for example the Special Libraries Association has chapters for solo librarians, law librarians, etc.);
- Gaining access to new developments in the information world through subscriptions to periodicals published by the association;
- Getting announcements of courses, conferences and events;
- Gaining access to distance-learning programs organized by the association.

## Conclusion

*Have no fear of perfection -- you'll never reach it.*  
**Salvador Dali**

*A library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of life.*  
**Henry Ward Beecher**

Perfection is not possible, but improving your work with the help of a devoted librarian certainly is. Give a dynamic, knowledgeable, energetic and motivated person the chance to make a difference in your organization as a librarian or information officer and you will see the difference it makes in your own work. Nobody is born with a library science degree, but some people who have not had a formal education in information sciences are still librarians by nature with the information-gathering instincts of a detective. I think that

you will be more relaxed – and more effective – in your own work when you know that sitting there, behind a desk crowded with books, is a friendly person who will guide you through the information jungle – your librarian.



*Above: Staff at the Human Rights Centre enjoying the fruits of the librarian's labors.*

## Appendix I

### Recommended Reading

Library Services

Ahrensfield, Janet L., Christianson, Elin B., King, David E., and Special Libraries Association. *Special Libraries: a Guide for Management*. 2nd ed., rev ed. Washington, D.C: Special Libraries Association; 1986.

Bickford, Louis. "Human Rights Archives and Research on Historical Memory: Argentina, Chile and Uruguay." *Latin American Research Review* 35 (2000): 160.

Buckland, Michael. *Redesigning Library Services: A Manifesto*. Available at <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Library/Redesigning/html.html>.

*Competencies for Special Librarians of the 21st Century*. Submitted to the Special Libraries Association Board of Directors by the Special Committee on Competencies for Special Librarians, Joanne Marshall, Chair, Bill Fisher, Lynda Moulton, and Roberta Piccoli. Available at <http://www.sla.org/content/SLA/professional/meaning/competency.cfm>

Debowski, Shelda. *The Hidden User: Providing an Effective Service to Users of Electronic Information*. OCLC Systems & Services (2000), Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 175-180. (Printed copy available on request.)

Gorman, Michael. "The Five Laws of Library Science : Then and Now." *School Library Journal* (July 1998) Vol. 44, Issue 7, p. 20-23.

Guzman, Manuel, and Verstappen, Bert. "What is Documentation?" HURIDOCs, 2001. Available at <http://www.huridocs.org>.

Levett, Gavin P., and Guenov, Marin D. "A Methodology for Knowledge Management Implementation." *Journal of Knowledge Management* (2000) Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 258-269.

"Library Bill of Rights." American Library Association. Available at [www.ala.org/work/freedom/lbr.html](http://www.ala.org/work/freedom/lbr.html).

Madacki, Saša. "From Dusty Storage to Library Without Walls: Librarian in Wonderland." American Library Association, 2001. Available at [www.ala.org/work/international](http://www.ala.org/work/international).

Manifold, Alan. "A Principled Approach to Selecting an Automated System." *Library Hi Tech* (2000), Vol. 18, No 2, p. 119-129.

Odlyzko, Andrew. "Silicon Dreams and Silicon Bricks: The Continuing Evolution of Libraries." *Library Trends* (Summer 1997), Vol. 46, Issue 1, p. 152.

Rowley, Jennifer. "Knowledge Organization for a New Millennium: Principles and Processes." *Journal of Knowledge Management* (2000), Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 217-223.

Seer, Gitelle. "Special Library Financial Management: The Essentials of Library Budgeting." *The Bottom Line: Managing Library Finances* (2000), Vol. 13 Issue 4.

Seymour, J.L., and Goodman, A.S. "Documenting Desert Storm: As War Approached, Military Librarians Faced the Problem of What to Do Til the Index Came." *American Libraries* (Jul/Aug 1991), Vol. 22, Issue 7, p. 64.

### **Finding and Evaluating Information**

"BIG6: An Information Problem-Solving Process." Available at <http://www.big6.com>.

"Boolean Searching on the Internet." Available at <http://library.albany.edu/internet/boolean.html>.

Finding Information on the Internet: A Tutorial Introduction to the Internet. Searching, recommended search strategies using both search engines and subject directories, tables comparing tools, glossary, detailed searching instructions and links to collections of gateway sites. Available at [www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html)

Fornaciari, Charles, et al. "The Age of Clutter: Conducting Effective Research Using the Internet." *Journal of Management Education* (December 1999), Vol. 23, No. 6, p.732-742.

"Guide to Effective Searching of the Internet." Available at <http://www.brightplanet.com/deepcontent/tutorials/search/index.asp>

Internet and computer training materials developed by a group of individuals and institutions (including Bellanet) with the support of the International Development Research Centre's Unganisha project. Including: Computer Handbook, Effective Internet Searching, E-mail, Navigating the Web, Overview of the Internet. All available at [http://www.bellanet.org/itrain/materials\\_en.cfm](http://www.bellanet.org/itrain/materials_en.cfm).

"Internet Detective: An Interactive Tutorial on Evaluating the Quality of Internet Resources." Project DESIRE. Available at <http://www.sosig.ac.uk/desire/internet-detective.html>

Introduction to Search Engines: An Introduction, Review and Comparison of the Major Search Engines. Kansas City Public Library. Available at <http://www.kcpl.lib.mo.us/search/srchengines.htm>.

Murray, Janet. "Applying BIG6 Skills and Information Literacy Standards to Internet Research." *The Big6 Newsletter*. Available at <http://www.big6.com>.

van Rijsbergen, C. J. "Search Strategies." *Information Retrieval*. Available at <http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/Keith/Chapter.5/Ch.5.html>.

Scott, Brandt, D. "Evaluating Information on the Internet Computers in Libraries." Available at <http://thorplus.lib.purdue.edu/~techman/evaluate.htm>.

Tyner, Ross. "Sink or Swim: Internet Search Tools and Techniques." Version 5.0, spring 2001. Available at <http://www.sci.ouc.bc.ca/libr/connect96/search.htm>.

### **Collection Development**

Ahrensfield, Janet L., Christianson, Elin B., King, David E., and Special Libraries Association. *Special Libraries: a Guide for Management*. 2nd ed., rev ed. Washington, D.C.: Special Libraries Association; 1986.

Eaglen, Audrey. *Buying Books: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*. Neil-Schuman Publishers, 2001.

Montgomery, Bruce P. "Archiving Human Rights: A Paradigm for Collection Development." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* (March 1996) Vol. 22, Issue 2, p. 87.

van Zijl, Carol. "The Why, What and How of Collection Development Policies." *South African Journal of Library and Information Science* (September 1998), Vol. 66, Issue 3, p. 99.

### **Classification Systems**

Andrews, J.A., and Hines, W.D. *Keyguide to Information Sources on the International Protection of Human Rights*. London: Mansel Publishing Ltd, 1987.

Caccia, Ivana. "A System of Subject Classification for Sorting and Storing Human Rights Materials." Available through HURIDOCs at <http://www.huridocs.org/cacciaen.htm>.

Liu, Mary. *Cataloging and Classification for Library Technicians*. Haworth Press (Haworth Series in Cataloging & Classification), 2001.

### **Reference Services**

Bopp, Richard E., and Smith, Linda C., eds. *Reference and Information Services: An Introduction*. Libraries Unlimited (Library and Information Science Text Series), 2000.

Katz, William A. *Introduction to Reference Work*. Volume I. WCB/McGraw-Hill, 2001.

Mann, Thomas. *The Oxford Guide to Library Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Ross, Catherine, et. al. *Conducting the Reference Interview: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*. Neil-Schuman Publishers.

Westbrook, Lynn. *Identifying and Analyzing User Needs: A Complete Handbook and Ready-To-Use Assessment Workbook*. Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2000.

### **Library Design**

*Building Blocks for Planning Functional Library Space*. LAMA Bes Facilities Committee, eds. Scarecrow Press, 2001.

Gardner Reed, Sally. *Small Libraries: A Handbook for Successful Management*, 2nd Ed., McFarland and Company, 2002.

McCarthy, Richard C. *Designing Better Libraries: Selecting & Working With Building Professionals*. Highsmith Press, 2000.

## Appendix II

### You Know You Need a Librarian When ...

When one or more of the following problems exist, an organization is ready for a special library:<sup>17</sup>

- Funds are being used to buy multiple copies of books and magazines when fewer copies, properly centralized, controlled and circulated would better serve the needs of all.
- Extensive and expensive collection of books, magazines, reports, services and other materials are scattered around the offices – in desk drawers, on top of file cabinets and in the backs of storerooms.
- Despite the accumulation of publications, the ones needed cannot be found.
- Employees are spending a good deal of time trying to track down information, thus diminishing time they have to spend applying information – if they find it – to their work.
- An important decision must be delayed because of a lack of correct information; or someone discovers, too late, information which might have altered an earlier decision.
- Management begins asking itself if some research being undertaken by its personnel might have already been done and reported elsewhere.
- No thought is given to collecting historical materials (documents produced by the organization itself) until the organization decides to commemorate an anniversary.
- Researchers and journalists approach your organization wanting to study it and write about its work. But your documentation is in such a shambles (or kept so secret) that they are unable find adequate information. Your organization thus loses potential publicity and outreach, or critical study that could help you with fundraising, etc.
- Your organization, like many human rights NGOs, experiences frequent personnel changes and involves many volunteers. Both staff and volunteers may simply not know the history of their own organization and may, lacking time for efficient research, make errors of fact or judgment in their work or in their public statements and press releases.
- You are asked to take on a project in a new country or region and need to do a feasibility study for the proposal. Existing studies will be crucial, but you may not have the information skills to find them. You may be tempted, like many, to base the decision and research on just “talking to the right people.”

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<sup>17</sup> Adapted from Ahrensfield, Janet, et al. *Special Libraries: Guide for Management*. Washington, D.C.: Special Libraries Association, 1986.

## **Appendix III**

### **Job Description for a Human Rights Librarian**

The Human Rights Centre placed the following advertisement for a librarian:

#### **DOCUMENTALIST/LIBRARIAN**

The University of Sarajevo Human Rights Centre seeks a documentalist/librarian to be employed for an initial period of one year with a two-month probation period. The documentalist/librarian will be responsible for the development and maintenance of all library, documentation and information services, resources and technology, including a procurement program and computer and database facilities. *S/he* will provide user services and library facilities. *S/he* will show initiative in establishing contacts and in cooperating with various international and national organizations, national and foreign libraries.

The successful candidate will be a qualified librarian/documentalist with experience in the field of human rights, law, social or political sciences. *S/he* will be familiar with computer and electronic developments in the field and be willing to undergo further training if required. *S/he* must be at ease in a small team with limited institutional support. Fluent spoken and written English, in addition to local languages, is essential.

The following duties were later added to the job description:

Responsible for leadership and overall management of the international law and human rights library, including planning, supervising and evaluating library services, operations and collections; managing a budget, providing extensive bibliographic instruction and delivery of information services to clients. Responsible for collection development and policymaking.

Responsible for supervising digital library.

Responsible for developing contacts and resources that assist in the acquisition of collection materials and funding.

Responsible for supervising cataloging and processing functions in the expanding human rights library system.

Responsible for assisting patrons by providing references and advisory services, assessing user needs and developing search strategies, and providing technical training and support for staff and users.

Responsible for maintaining United Nations Documentation (GA; SC; ECOSOC; ICTY).

Responsible for maintaining a collection of case law from the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.



## Notes



**For a full list of publications available in the Tactical Notebook Series,  
go to [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org).**

Online you will also find a searchable database of tactics and  
forums for discussion with other human rights practitioners.



The Center for Victims of Torture  
New Tactics in Human Rights Project  
717 East River Road  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
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