



July 2019



Rotary International Convention Hamburg – 2019

by LitRAG Chairman John Thorne

Each year Rotary International mounts a Convention by moving the venue from country to country – often in May or June. This year the Convention was held in the multi-cultural city of Hamburg from June 5. It is a destination worth visiting for cultural and historical interests anyway; however, over 26,000 people attended the Rotary Convention. This represented more than 170 countries and over 3,600 Rotary clubs and Rotaract clubs.

Above: Many RI Convention attendees visited the LitRAG display stall at the 2019 Hamburg Convention. On this occasion, (from left to right) LitRAG Chair Dr John Thorne with his wife, Shirley, welcomed Marie Lou, Gaspard and Katrin.

The convention centre is called the Hamburg Messe und Congress and I am confident that about 26,000 people bumped into me or waved or hugged or said, "Hello". Broadly-speaking there was a huge auditorium, two very large open buildings that contained about 330 exhibit booths and a myriad of meeting rooms that would hold from 50 to 350 people for 'breakouts'.

Why would any person go to a Convention like this? Well to begin with, Rotary **is International**. Here is the one place each year that we can meet old friends, make new ones from diverse cultures and, most importantly, exchange ideas about practical service. This makes the 330 exhibit booths very critical to a successful Convention.

By coincidence, a German resident has been elected to serve Rotary as President in a couple of years' time. He is Holger Knaak and it is clear that he is active, has a focus on personal service and will embrace change when it is necessary.

At the Convention, Rotary committed another US \$102m to the eradication of polio - we are indeed so close. Of course, there were speeches from world-class speakers, but most likely it was the practical service activities on display in the booths and the friendships forged that remain strongly etched in each attendee's mind. The next Convention will be in Hawaii in 2020.



The "Literacy Rotarian Action Group" Booth Hamburg Convention

by LitRAG Chairman John Thorne

As mentioned on p. 1, booths at Rotary Conventions are a focus of attention for 99% of attendees as they showcase the service from around the world by small and sometimes larger entities. In many cases, a particular booth can give exciting hints to the Rotary observer who is alert to more service.

Each booth is about 3 metres square. Of course, an organisation may acquire more than one booth and so double or triple their floor space. Most organizations have to pay for the booth, however, each Rotarian Action Group (RAG) is offered one booth free.



There are 26 RAGs. Our presence at Conventions is quite vital to our service to members and for sharing ideas across the Rotary world. In Hamburg, our booth was on a corner with busy aisles going both ways. This gave a positive presence to our work, but we were still competing with about 330 other booths and their displays!

We are grateful for helpers to 'man' the booth as it is open for almost six continuous days at least from 9:00 am until 5:30 each day. If you are planning to go to Honolulu next year, please consider giving us some time in the booth – it is actually fun and worthwhile for yourself. Our booth has a number of 'handouts' that are very useful. Our bookmark attracted attention and is practical, while copies of our past *Newsletters* also caught the eye of new members for it is produced bi-monthly and indeed is packed with useful ideas.

This year my wife, Shirley, and I were in the booth for about half the time. As people came up, we explained a little of our part in the Rotary scheme of things, but mostly we listened to just what they are doing in the area of basic education for adults, for children in villages, in gaols, with refugees and more and more. It is so encouraging that our fellow Rotarians and their friends and families are making a difference - one person at a time.

Frequently a particular Rotarian may ask how to link with another club in another part of the world. Mostly we can help or we can direct that person to someone who can give practical advice. We listen because we want to learn about success and to share good ideas. Basic education is a diverse area of essential work and there are no simple remedies that can be applied everywhere.

This year we had a dynamic 'Breakout' with a clear focus and message about the critical need for girls' education. We advertised this with a small flyer at the booth. This created genuine interest and great discussion. It is a privilege to meet and talk with such a diverse Rotary membership and hear of their struggles and also their good news and great ideas.

Not all literacy activity needs funding. Many times, if money is needed, there are local groups outside Rotary that may help. In addition, those communities that have active libraries and schools mostly welcome cooperative ventures. All of this is shared while at the booth.

In conclusion, I wish to thank PDG Carolyn Johnson (our Vice Chair) for setting up the booth again, to those helpers who gave time and especially to all those who stopped by and had a chat at our Literacy RAG booth.



8 September 2019 International Literacy Day

The United Nation's theme for 2019 is:
Literacy and Multilingualism.

We are all aware that globalisation and fast-advancing digital technology are transforming ways in which people work, live and learn, and are generating new skill demands and lifelong learning needs. Despite progress made, literacy challenges persist, distributed unevenly across countries and populations.

Embracing linguistic diversity in education and literacy development is central to addressing these literacy challenges and to achieving the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

How will your Club support the 2019 International Literacy Day?



Above: Teaching writing in Gao, Mali.
(Photo courtesy of the United Nations.)

International Literacy Day 2019 provides renewed impetus for Rotary Clubs to make meaningful connections between literacy and technical and vocational education and training through literacy projects and programs.

Is there a literacy project that you could initiate, repeat, support or maintain? Past Literacy Rotarian Action Group (LitRAG) newsletters offer information, ideas and suggestions about literacy projects.

Need Literacy Teaching Ideas? Visit the *Literacy Shed*

A free website offering 34 engaging topics within which there is a wealth of short films and animations and related teaching ideas. Visit:

<https://www.literacyshed.com/home.html>

Innovative Water Gadget for Schools

In a number of LitRAG newsletters, we have mentioned the idea of value-adding an already active project. Here is a good example. In the photo at one



of the Convention booths (- seen left) you can see an 'upside-down' bottle filled with water that a child can access after visiting the toilet at their school. Our view is that if appropriate posters are placed nearby, basically at no extra cost, the children can learn exactly why it is essential to wash hands.

For adults, the message includes teaching people about how **handwashing helps them and their communities to stay healthy.**

Handwashing education in the community:

- reduces the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by 23–40%
- reduces diarrhea illness in people with weakened immune systems by 58%
- reduces respiratory illnesses, like colds, in the general population by 16–21%
- reduces absenteeism due to gastrointestinal illness in schoolchildren by 29–57%.

Clearly, the above information needs to be shared in a 'child-friendly' way that is appropriate for each community, for each culture. Is this a project that you could take up?

By the way, it is our practical experience that children are great teachers of their parents in changing simple behaviors like handwashing.





**District 5550
Rotary Club of Saskatoon Nutana
Supports Indigenous Student Education
by Boris Kishchuk**

The Saskatoon Nutana Rotary Club has undertaken a \$40,000 project to support language, cultural, literacy and numeracy skills at the St Francis Cree Bilingual School in Saskatoon. St Francis has a dual stream, pre-kindergarten to Grade 8, English and Cree bilingual program.

Approximately 600 First Nations and Metis students attend from some 57 neighborhoods in and around

Saskatoon. Most are bused-in on 20 buses daily. In addition to its educational program, St Francis provides a nutritional program of breakfast, snack and lunch to all students as well as emotional support as needed. An Elder is usually in attendance to provide historical and other support to the students and staff.

The Rotary Club's financial support to St Francis is being provided over four years and is targeted at computer-assisted learning, through the use of iPads and other electronic equipment.

Funds raised by the Club's main fundraising event, RibFest, are used to support the project. Financial support for the project is also provided by District 5550.

In addition to the St Francis School project, Saskatoon Nutana Rotary Club has, for a number of years, provided scholarships to the Oskayak First Nations High School in Saskatoon. The scholarships are provided to students continuing their education beyond high school.

Convention Booth – "One Dollar Glasses"

There were many impressive booths at the RI Convention. For both Carolyn and John, one stood out because, in a way, it is an adjunct to reading. To explain a little further. Many classes of schoolchildren have 50, 60, 70 in the room with one teacher. A child who cannot see clearly could easily disguise his/her inability. Therefore to see clearly would limit the potential for learning.

In Germany, a former mathematics and science teacher, Martin Aufmuth, invented and developed a very simple and cheap way to make spectacle frames and insert appropriate lenses following a simple eyesight test. Martin mounted an interactive booth at the Convention to easily show how quickly and easily a pair of glasses can be made for just one dollar.

There is a small infrastructure needed behind the offer of glasses, but several charities are already supporting the "One Dollar Glasses" concept. Of course, any adult or children could benefit.

Martin has supported the program into Burkino Faso, Bolivia (around Lake Titicaca), Malawi, around the Amazon and more. The program requires that the glasses are purchased (about \$1) and there is the potential for a small business to thrive in needy communities plus training and distribution.

Please research for yourself at: www.OneDollarGlasses.org



Above: Shirley and John Thorne with Martin Aufmuth (centre) at his Hall of Friendship booth.

Convention – Special breakout: Education of Girls

At the Hamburg Convention, there is no doubt that your Literacy RAG contributed strongly to a critical global issue. We are grateful to our member, Anand Seth, who made the suggestion to place our energy behind a first-class breakout on the need for the education of girls.

Broadly speaking, we can base this on two astounding pieces of recent independent research from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In summary:

1. That the lifetime global cost to society of not educating girls to complete high school is US\$15 to \$30 trillion;
2. That for poor countries there would be a 15% gain in output if women had a greater participation in the work force by removing barriers to their full education.

LitRAG invited a very credible team to address the broad issue of education for girls because action with girls changes everything for every community on Earth!

Who was on the panel?

- Deepa Willingham - an inspiring woman, brought up in Calcutta who created a peace school for girls and more - the action is continuing.
- Ruth Nvumetta Kavuma - a former Member of Parliament in Uganda and outstanding school principal with emphasis on wide education for girls including the sciences.
- Carolyn Johnson - active Rotarian educator working in Guatemala (and other locations) plus Director of Culture and Reading Program and Coordinator of the Foundation's Cadre of Technical Advisors (Basic Education & Literacy).
- Melissa Diamond - Founder of the Global Voice for Autism, which also supports families around trauma-related lives.
- Nevine Yassa - founder of Rising Out of the Ashes - helping marginalized communities in Egypt. An active and 'hands-on' Rotarian who had also been a Rotaractor in Egypt.

This group of highly regarded but active educators shared their stories to about 320 attendees to our breakout. The stories were heartfelt and encouraging. Participants left the room feeling there were aspects that they could use in their work in dozens of parts of the world.

The questions also brought out or expanded deeper meanings that panel members had mentioned.

There is no doubt that our breakout added value to the Convention. We do thank most sincerely all panel members for sharing their lives and all participants for their time and trust that it will make

a difference for girls' education.



LitRAG Office-Bearers

LitRAG Executive Committee:

- Chair: John Thorne, PRID (Australia)
- Vice Chair: Carolyn Johnson, PDG (USA)
- Secretary: Courtney Doldron, Pres. (Canada)
- Treasurer: Harvey Baxter, Rotarian (USA)

LitRAG Directors:

- Rodolfo Bianchi, PDG (Guatemala)
- Sylvia Byers, PDG (Australia)
- Chebab Elawar, PDG (USA)
- David Fowler, Past President RIBI (England)
- Shekhar Mehta, PRID (India)
- Anand Seth, Rotarian (USA)
- Courtney Doldron, Rotarian (Canada)

LitRAG Advisors to the Board:

- Bill Boyd, Past RI President (New Zealand)
- Noraseth Pathmanand, PRID (Thailand)
- William Stumbaugh, Rotarian (Ecuador)

Website: www.litrag.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Reading.Rotary/>

Contact John Thorne or Carolyn Johnson:
info@litrag.org

The Literacy Rotarian Action Group is a recognised Rotarian Action Group and operates in accordance with Rotary International Policy but is not an agency of or controlled by Rotary International. Note: Rotarian Action Groups are a resource to Rotary clubs and districts in their speciality but are not an agency of RI and may not act on behalf of RI as part of all agreements.

Do you have Reluctant Readers or Visual Readers?

Children who try not to read are often called reluctant readers or struggling readers. But what about using a more positive term like 'dormant readers'? This term involves an attitude change in both the person encouraging the reader and the reader his/herself.

For some young readers, a book or even a block of text is like a giant stop sign. These children often get slapped with a label like 'reluctant reader', when really they may just prefer more visual books. Resist applying a negative label and instead find books that your young reader enjoys and ways to engage the reader.

Children might be reluctant to read because they:

- ◆ can already read but reading competes with things like sports, video games, social media, texting or talking with friends
- ◆ struggle to read, can tell they are having difficulty and develop an aversion
- ◆ are skillful readers, but prefer to choose their own reading material and are suspicious of the books that adults want them to read
- ◆ Find turning pages boring and would be better using a Kindle or similar device
- ◆ can't find books they like.

The following tips might help you inspire a less enthusiastic reader:

Visual impact: There are many books available with highly visual, comic-influenced format (e.g., *Captain Underpants*) that were written specifically to help 'reluctant readers' and children with challenges like dyslexia. The stories and characters can be rich and well developed, and children still learn reading skills with these more visually driven books. Search your

local library for: graphic novels for young readers.

The power of comics and manga: Don't denigrate this genre. Many of the most celebrated literary figures of our time not only grew up devouring comics, but also incorporate comic-inspired

themes into their prize-winning novels: Michael Chabon, Junot Díaz and Jonathan Lethem, to name a few. Many children become avid readers through their love of comics.

Use technology to encourage reading: Use online resources to hook students in. Encourage them to sign up for book sites like *Goodreads* to compare and critique books, write reviews or make movie trailers for favorite books. Or:

- ◆ Visit [Goodreads](#)
- ◆ Set up a library blog for reviews and links to online information about authors, titles, series, discussion or book trailers.
- ◆ Use interactive sites like:
- ◆ [BBC School Radio](#) — you can hear children interview authors about the inspiration for their books and tips for writing.
- ◆ Visit [Wonderopolis](#) — explains a wonder-of-the-day using text and a video, then tests your knowledge.

A book about a computer game is still a book:

Popular computer and video games often have book counterparts. This is a great way to



steer a child toward the pleasures of text. There are lots of books featuring Minecraft, Pokémon, Plants vs. Zombies, and the like. From there, you can expand your child's repertory to graphic novels and comics, and then progressively to books with fuller texts.

Nonfiction is great: Some young people are fact-gatherers, who may be more inspired by reading nonfiction. If it's presented in a highly visual format, all the better for conveying even more kinds of information. Look for books on topics they're interested in. Also try tempting them with ancient history, the solar system, animals, natural disasters and discoveries.

Avoid treating books as a chore: Instead of saying, "If you spend 30 minutes reading, you'll get to play on the iPad/eat ice cream/be paid a dollar." Rather, treat reading as its own reward — a privilege, even.





Create Awareness of the severity/impact of illiteracy.
Strengthen Capacity of communities to provide education for all.

BASIC EDUCATION & LITERACY MONTH SEPTEMBER 2019

Win \$400 USD for your club

**Three awards of \$400 each will be made to clubs
with the most creative or innovative project. To enter:**

- ◆ Describe your project (500–800 words).
- ◆ Explain what your club did and the result.
- ◆ Who benefitted from your project?
- ◆ How were Rotarians involved (and how many?)
- ◆ How was the project promoted?
- ◆ Include 2-3 photos (with short captions).

Celebrate & Promote Awareness of Literacy Month

Applications must be received by 15 October 2019

Include primary contact information:

Rotarian's name & email

Club President, Club & District, city & country

Send your application to: rotary.tas@gmail.com

*The Rotarian submitting the application must be a current member of LitRAG.
Awards will be announced in the November 2019 LitRAG newsletter.*

