THE INTERCULTURAL TRANSFER OF PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS: A CASE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN BULGARIAN LIBRARY EXCHANGE

by

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Emporia, Kansas

May 2008

A Dissertation

Presented to

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Library and Information Management

**AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
FOR THE DEGREE OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

Rebecca Leigh Miller Banner
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presented on April 17, 2008

Title: The Intercultural Transfer of Professional Knowledge in International Partnerships: A Case Study of the American Bulgarian Library Exchange

Abstract approved: Herbert K. Achleitner
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International partnerships between libraries are an oft-used approach to transferring professional knowledge across national borders, with the intent of developing the profession in both nations. Unfortunately, such partnerships are routinely unsuccessful. An assumption exists in the library and information science profession that international partnerships are a good mechanism for developing libraries worldwide, without a full understanding of how they work and how they could be improved. Very little empirical research has been conducted on the nature of such partnerships; the processes of knowledge transfer that go on within them; and the factors that affect the partnerships and ultimately the knowledge transfer. The purpose of this dissertation research was to examine one international partnership for the factors and processes that establish and sustain a communicative environment enabling the successful transfer of professional knowledge.

Given that international partnerships rely on interpersonal communication to transfer knowledge, the diffusion of innovations theory was an appropriate guide to this research. The Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) seven-element model provided a detailed framework for the data collection, analysis and interpretation of findings. Using a case study design set in a naturalistic inquiry approach, the experiences of members in a group of international partnerships were explored. The study participants were the members of the American Bulgarian Library Exchange (ABLE), an international partnership project. Data were collected by five methods: individual interviews, focus group interviews, documentation collection, direct observation, and participant journals. These data and accompanying research notes were analyzed with a constant comparative technique supported by the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software N-Vivo7.

The findings showed that multiple factors affected the international partnerships in the ABLE case. Facilitating factors included the participants' commitment and interest; a shared profession; support from multiple social structures; opportunities for face-to-face

communication; and a shared language. Inhibiting factors included a lack of time; feeling obligated to participate; difficulties with communication technologies; an unsupportive social structure and significant language differences. While the research presented here has certain limitations based on the case study approach, the findings indicate a rich terrain of future research.

Международните библиотечни партньорства са много чест подход за пренасяне на професионални знания през граница с цел развиване на професията и в двете страни. За съжаление такива партньорства обикновено са неуспешни. Сред библиотечно-информационната общност е прието, че международните партньорства са добър механизъм за развитие на библиотеките по света, но няма цялостно разбиране за това как работят те и как биха могли да се подобрят. Малко емпирични изледвания са проведени относно същността на подобни партньорства; относно процеса на трансфер на знания, който ги съпътства; относно факторите, които повлияват на партньорствата и в края на краищата, трансфера на знания. Целта на това дисертационно изследване е да проучи едно международно партньорство с факторите и процесите, които създават и поддържат комуникативна среда, даваща възможност за успешен трансфер на професионални знания.

Тъй като международните партньорства разчитат на междуличностната комуникация за трансфер на знания, подходяща насока за това изследване беше теорията за дифузия на иновациите. Моделът от седем елемента на Кац, Левин и Хамилтън (1963) осигури подробна рамка за събиране на данни, анализи и интерпретация на откритията.

Опитът на членовете на група от международно партньорство беше проучен, като се използва модел на изследване на обект и промените му във времето чрез събиране на сведения в естествена среда. Участниците в изследването бяха членовете на Американско-българския библиотечен обмен (ABLE), проект за международно партньорство. Данните бяха събрани по пет метода: индивидуални интервюта, интервюта чрез фокус-групи, комплектуване на документи, пряко наблюдение, както и дневниците на участниците.
Тези данни и съпровождащите научни бележки бяха анализирани с постоянна сравнителна техника, подпомогната от софтуер за качествени анализи на данни N-Vivo7.

Проучванията показаха, че различни фактори са повлияли на международното партньорство в случая с ABLE. Благоприятните фактори включват ангажираността и интереса на участниците; общата професия; подкрепа от различни социални структури; възможности за общуване на живо, както и общ език за общуване. Възпрепятстващите фактори включват липса на време; чувство на задължение при участието; трудности с комуникационните технологии; неподкрепяща социална структура и значителни езикови различия. Макар че изследването, представено тук, съдържа известни ограничения поради описанието на един отделен случай, изводите му предлагат богат терен за бъдещи проучвания.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A work of this magnitude, although written by one person, is truly a community endeavor. I wish to give thanks to and for the following people, who have supported and enabled me to complete this "magnum opus."

Dr. Herbert Achleitner, my chair and "Doktorvater," has met the challenge of keeping me focused and on track for almost 10 years. Without him I would never had had the many wonderful "learning opportunities" and experiences of international information transfer, conference organization, and diplomacy. I hope I have finally paid him back by completing this work so he can retire. Dr. John Agada is an intellectual inspiration whose thoughtful and articulate insights always clarified my hazy thinking. Dr. Cathy Perley is a shooting star who consistently gives good advice, whether on life choices or sentence structure. Finally, Dr. Alexander Dimchev, whose son graciously translated the informed consent forms, and whose knowledge of challenges facing Bulgarian librarianship has been extremely helpful with this dissertation. It is only fitting that he be on the committee for a dissertation that examines an international partnership project that he co-inaugurated. I offer my deepest, most heartfelt gratitude to each of you.

Gary entered my life at a pivotal moment in the dissertation process. He consistently met and exceeded my expectations, supplying me with food, shelter, love, laughter, good conversation, carrots and sticks, and a constant supply of Nerds. With his love and support, I was able to wrestle this "20-pound bond paper monster" into submission. Although he was absent during my final push to completion, he was with me in spirit every step of the way. I thank him and dedicate my heart to the future chapters of our life together.

My immediate family has been a great support structure. Sherry, my mother, has witnessed several times the pain of writing a dissertation and was always encouraging. Russell, my father, always cheered when I would report on even the smallest of writing progress. I owe them sincere thanks for temporarily putting a roof over my head when they thought they were done. Irene and Dallas, my grandparents, loved and supported me unconditionally, even though they might not have always quite understood what I was doing and why I was traveling so much. Andrew, my brother, Tina, my sister-in-law, and Caitlin and Rachel, my nieces, provided comic relief, pedicures, and innovative hair styles. Thank you all.

Multiple friends have stood by me and cheered me on. Janelle Sjue, my sister by heart, was always there with a supportive word, sympathetic grunt of indignation, or whoop of delight. Participating in the births of her children gave me the analogy to emotionally deal with my own "baby." Three fellow PhD students—Gretchen Hoffman, Brenda Hough and Susan Zuber-Chall—formed a learning community to maneuver through the mazes of classes, exams, proposal and dissertation with the lubricating assistance of a good glass of wine and Thai food. What would Jesus do? I don't know, but if we ever get bored with this academic stuff, there's always "BRaGS!" Finally, my new colleagues and friends at the University of Kentucky's School of Library and Information Science deserve recognition for their support and belief in my ability to finish. Lisa O'Connor was particularly willing to share her experiences and offer her help and support. Thank you to such a great network of friends.

Collecting the data for this dissertation took me to 42 cities in two countries over 100 days. Tom, Mary Cay and Jeff Burger run the friendliest "bed and breakfast" in

Englewood. Steve and Bev McCarthy do the same in Moline. Nancy Bolt, Bonnie McCune, Claudine Perrault, Susan Kling, Susan Henricks, Ilvana Kaloncheva and Ertan Geldiev also welcomed me into their homes with graciousness and warmth to help ease the financial burden of so much traveling. Thank you all for your generous hospitality.

Acknowledgements would not be complete without a sincere "благодариа много" to all the individuals who make the ABLE project the best it can be. Nancy Bolt, Iskra Mihailova and Vania Grashkina are all dynamo advocates for librarianship in Bulgaria. Ani Popova helped me find my way in Bulgaria and graciously translated the abstract to this work so that it could be shared with all Bulgarian participants. The participants, both past and present, gave freely of their time, knowledge and insights. This case study has life because of them and I greatly appreciate all their help. It was a joy and an honor to get to know each of you. The ABLE project continues to expand and I look forward to being a part of its growth.

I respectfully extend my appreciation to the Library Research Round Table of the American Library Association for the 2006 Jesse H. Shera Award for Support of Dissertation Research.

DEDICATION

For Max and Magic, having gone the distance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Partnerships between libraries from different nations are called "library twinning" or "sister libraries" and are an oft-used approach for connecting librarians from different cultures through a shared profession for the purpose of transferring professional knowledge across national borders. National and international professional associations, such as the American Library Association (ALA), the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA), the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), and UNESCO, have established partnering programs to assist libraries in finding and developing partnerships. The goals of these programs usually include items such as those found in the ALA Sister Libraries program: "Raise awareness of issues and needs facing libraries in various countries," "Share techniques and technologies to help solve problems," and "Share strengths through exchange of resources and expertise" (*Why Become a Sister Library*, 2007). An international partnership between libraries aims to strengthen and improve both libraries.

Unfortunately, not all partnerships between libraries are successful and little is known about the reasons. The library and information science (LIS) literature focuses on anecdotally describing the activities of individual partnerships, instead of assessing them either individually or generally. International partnerships are currently more readily discussed in terms of potential, instead of actual, applications and outcomes, as a result of the unspoken assumption that such partnerships are positive means to transfer knowledge. The factors that contribute to a partnership's success or failure—and thus its success in transferring knowledge—have not been fully analytically and empirically examined.

How a partnership can be a conduit for the transfer of professional knowledge between the participants deserves explicit attention. The process of knowledge transfer is the interpersonal and interactive communication known as "diffusion of information" (Chatman, 1986; Rogers, 2003). The relationships built and nurtured in an international partnership are conducive to transferring professional knowledge through the sharing of experiences and lessons learned. The partners come to understand and make meaning of new information, incorporating it into their own knowledge. They may even become more reflective practitioners of librarianship as they are encouraged to contemplate their own experiences and practices in contrast to those of their partners. Such interactive interpersonal communication as found in the diffusion process within an international partnership results in the transfer of professional knowledge.

International partnerships appear to be an ideal means for professional knowledge transfer. However, anecdotal evidence shows that many partnerships do not last very long, nor is it apparent to what extent professional knowledge is actually transferred. While the LIS profession has embraced international partnerships in the assumption that they develop libraries, little empirical research has been conducted on the nature of the knowledge transfer process within a partnership. How does this process occur and what factors affect it? My dissertation attempts to shed some light upon this problem by exploring the processes of the transfer of professional knowledge within international partnerships and the factors that affect them, as demonstrated in a case study of a group of international partnerships between American and Bulgarian librarians. This chapter introduces the purpose of international partnerships in LIS, describes the context and history of the ABLE project, and provides an overview of the entire dissertation.

International Partnerships in Library and Information Science

The notion of international partnering for mutual benefit has been recognized in the LIS profession for at least the last four decades. Asheim (1966) was an early advocate and likened such partnerships to bridges, noting "if a bridge is going to be built, it should be needed, wanted, well placed, and capable of functioning safely, efficiently, and for a long time to come" (p. 63). Asheim pointed out:

> In librarianship, the United States can be said also to be, still, a developing country. And, because these are universal rather than local problems, there can be a real exchange of knowledge and learning, not only from us to them, but from them to us. (p. 83)

He called for partnership with libraries in developing countries, with this admonishment: "we must begin to see ourselves as an equal partner in an exchange rather than as a condescending Lady Bountiful… We must listen as well as tell, learn as well as teach, receive as well as give" (p. 83). Perhaps Asheim's early recognition of partnership between libraries sparked the interest that continues to this day.

Doyle (1994) defined "library twinning" as "the ongoing relationship between two libraries in different countries for the purposes of improving the practice of librarianship across national boundaries" (p. 403). He emphasized that both participating libraries should receive mutual and easily identifiable benefits, even if the benefits are not equal. He suggested that partnerships be formally recognized through a written document (i.e., memorandum of agreement or contract between the libraries) and expected to last for a minimum of two years. However, Doyle did agree that the flexible nature of more casual and informal agreements can also result in successful partnerships.

International partnerships should be entered into with a purpose. Lampart (1991) identified six issues to which library twinning should contribute:

1. the enrichment and enhancement of the programs and services of the institutions involved;
2. increased knowledge and greater understanding of indigenous cultures;
3. personal growth and development of members of staff through the sharing of concerns and problem-solving;
4. direct interaction between professionals;
5. sharing of strengths through exchanges of expertise, skills, and material resources;
6. addressing weaknesses through the provision of training, technical know-how, and exposure. (p. 32)

John (1991) listed multiple benefits that are more specific to the LIS field:

1. exchange of information about libraries;
2. improved access to published information, in both developed and less developed countries;
3. information about new techniques for library management and new technologies for library programs made available more widely in developing countries;
4. greater awareness by libraries in developed nations of the issues facing libraries in developing countries;
5. involvement of all levels of library staff sharing information about their problems and common concerns; and
6. a broader view of the library profession. (pp. 316-317)

Multiple benefits can come from successful knowledge transfer in partnerships.

To assist libraries in creating successful partnerships, UNESCO commissioned IFLA in the early 1990s to develop library twinning guidelines. Doyle and Scarry (1994) co-wrote a document that defined twinning and its benefits, established guidelines for setting up an agreement, and gave examples of active partnerships. Furthermore, with financial support from UNESCO, IFLA set up a database in 1996 to act as a "dating agency" to match libraries seeking partners (Connolly, 2000). However, this database was discontinued after three years after the IFLA administration decided that the demands on time and personnel needed to maintain the database were too much in relation to its paltry success (Connolly, 2000).

In 1998, the United States' National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) partnered with Sister Cities International to create the "Sister Libraries: A White House Millennium Project" initiative (National Commission on Libraries and Information Science [NCLIS], 1998). NCLIS wanted the program to involve both library staff and patrons, with particular focus placed on young patrons. The NCLIS saw the partnerships as an "opportunity for children to communicate with other children both nationally and internationally and through that contact to learn from one another about their similarities and differences" (1997-98, p. 19). Although not explicitly articulated by the project, the same goal could be said for the library staff participating in the partnerships. By mid-1999, 51 libraries had been selected to participate ("NCLIS Names 51," 1999; Long, 1999).

In approximately 2002 (the report is undated) the NCLIS released an evaluation of the Sister Libraries project. In the report, several beneficial results for the participants and their communities were recognized, including expanded worldviews, improved collections, electronic connections, and stronger ties with the community and government (NCLIS, n.d.). Challenges were also identified, specifically in terms of communication, time, funding and materials. It appears the program became dormant until ALA took over responsibility for facilitating the partnerships in 2004 (Brey-Casiano, 2004). While the status of most of these partnerships is presently unknown, a few partnerships between American and Bulgarian libraries continue to flourish as members of a different partnership project: the American Bulgarian Library Exchange.

The American Bulgarian Library Exchange

The American Bulgarian Library Exchange (ABLE) is a partnership project formed by librarians in the United States and Bulgaria, in response to the recognition by leaders of the Bulgarian library profession that the practice of librarianship there must be modified to support rapid social, economic and political changes caused by the transition from a communist government to a new member of the European Union in 2007 (*American Bulgarian Library Exchange Grant Proposal [ABLE Grant]*, 2002; Dimchev, 2003). ABLE was funded by a grant from the United States' Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (Department of State). The goals of the project, jointly formulated by the American and Bulgarian coordinators, were to support the creation and development of partnerships between libraries, to share professional knowledge, to establish pilot community information centers at five Bulgarian libraries, and to improve the professional development and cultural knowledge of all participants (*ABLE Grant*, 2002). ABLE demonstrates a mutually designed, voluntary and interactive program of intercultural knowledge transfer with the aim of developing the profession in both countries.

Bulgaria and Its Libraries

The Republic of Bulgaria is located on the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe. Its land mass is slightly larger than Tennessee and is home to approximately 7.4 million people (*Bulgaria*, 2007). Bulgaria sits at a crossroads between Europe and Asia and has a long history of settlement and subjugation to conquering powers, including the Turks for over 500 years and most recently the Soviet Union (Crampton, 2005). On January 1, 2007, Bulgaria entered the European Union in conjunction with Romania, culminating an application process begun in 1995 (European Commission, 2007). Acceptance into the EU is the latest step toward solidifying the economic and societal transitions from communism to democracy in Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian people have a literacy rate of nearly 99% (*Bulgaria*, 2007) and place great importance upon literature and poetry. They are proud to be the homeland of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, creators of the Cyrillic alphabet. On the day recognizing these saints, May 24th, they celebrate their language and literate culture with a national holiday, the Day of Bulgarian Alphabet and Culture. The literary heritage of the Bulgarian people is also represented in the unique tradition of community cultural and educational centers known as "*chitalishta*," which translates as "reading rooms." Nearly every community in Bulgaria has a *chitalishte*, and every *chitalishte* has a library, be it a small room with a few books or a separate large building fully stocked and staffed.

The *chitalishta* libraries were the fore-runners of Bulgaria's current library system. The first *chitalishta* were established in 1856 in three major trade cities and then throughout Bulgaria as a key element to promote and stimulate the national revival and consolidation occurring during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Gavrilova, Daskalova, Alexandrov, Kirilov, Chichek, & Lissichkova, 2000). After the Bulgarian Liberation in 1878, the state depended fully upon the libraries in the *chitalishta* to provide the public with access to information (*Calimera Country Report: Bulgaria* [*Calimera*], 2000). During communist control, the *chitalishta* libraries had the role of promoting political and ideological propaganda and were placed under the purview of the Ministry of Culture (Gavrilova et al., 2000). Some *chitalishta* were combined to form municipal libraries during this time; in 1953, 27 district libraries were created, one for each district of Bulgaria; and in 2000, 11 of the 27 district libraries were transformed into larger regional libraries (*Calimera*, 2000). As of 2000 there were 6,942 libraries in Bulgaria, of which 3,877 were classified as public libraries and of those, 3,414 were *chitalishta* (*Calimera*, 2000).

The purpose of the *chitalishta* and other public libraries in Bulgaria is to provide the Bulgarian population with access to books and periodicals, thereby encouraging the development of Bulgaria's civil society (*Calimera*, 2000; Gavrilova et al., 2000). However, the total number of libraries reported in the 2000 *Calimera Country Report* is about 24% lower than in 1990, evidence of the difficult economic transition of the 1990s (Dimchev, 2001). The transition has been particularly challenging for the public libraries. Dimchev (2003) noted that public libraries are not able to carry out their functions due to (a) inadequate funding; (b) aging collections that are losing their information potential; (c) a slow introduction of new technologies; (d) a lack of public and governmental awareness of the new role and realities of libraries; and (e) a lack of a national conception of libraries and legislation to govern them. Unfortunately, these are the same issues that were identified nearly a decade earlier (Dimchev, 1995).

Bulgarian researchers and practitioners in LIS have recognized and been working on the need for a new approach to librarianship since the changes of 1989 (Dimchev, 2001; Doncheva, 2004; Gherghova, 2004; Savova, 2001). One of the first steps was to create a national democratic professional union in 1990: the Union of Library and Information Services Officers (ULISO). ULISO supports and advocates for all libraries and librarians in Bulgaria, bringing to light issues of intellectual freedom, information policy, and social and economic challenges for libraries (IFLA/FAIFE, 1999; ULISO, 1997, 2007). Although some advances have been made through the efforts of ULISO, public libraries in Bulgaria remain in grave need of improvement (Dimchev, 2001; Doncheva, 2004; Gherghova, 2004; Savova, 2001).

Brief History of ABLE

A response to the needs of Bulgarian public libraries was found in the formation of partnerships between libraries in Colorado and Bulgaria in the late 1990s. These partnerships began as a grassroots campaign in 1996 through the efforts of the Colorado State Librarian and a Bulgarian librarian (Bolt & Cole, 2004). A formal Resolution of Cooperation was approved by ULISO and the Colorado Association of Libraries in 2000, establishing the Colorado/Bulgarian Library Partner Project (Bolt & Cole, 2004; Bolt & Ianeva, 2000). Five Colorado-Bulgarian partnerships were recognized in the "Sister Libraries" program by the NCLIS in 2000 as well (NCLIS, n.d.). The success of these partnerships led to an increased interest in both Bulgaria and Colorado, resulting in 10 partnerships by 2003—primarily between public libraries, but a few academic or school libraries also participated. These partnerships laid the groundwork for the formation of the ABLE project.

In 2002 the Colorado and Bulgarian partnership leaders were approached by an Iowa non-profit association to submit a joint proposal to the United States' State Department to expand upon the Colorado/Bulgarian Library Partner Project. The proposal was funded and the ABLE project was established in 2003. The 10 existing partnerships in Colorado were joined by 8 Iowa libraries, totaling 18 partnerships primarily between public libraries. The libraries range in size from small municipal or *chitalishte* libraries to regional libraries or library districts. The basis for the establishment of a partnership was an enthusiastic and committed belief that the partnership could improve both libraries.

The grant proposal outlined the following goals (*ABLE Grant*, 2002):

1. Increase capacity of Bulgarian libraries to provide online community information services to local government offices and Bulgarian citizens in a minimum of five Bulgarian public libraries.
2. Increase understanding and support by Bulgarian government and community leaders for the role of libraries in a democratic society.
3. Utilize Partner Libraries as a means of sharing information about our two countries.
4. Develop a continuing network of Bulgarian and U.S. libraries that will seek additional funding through philanthropic sources to upgrade the computer capacity of Bulgarian libraries. (p. 2)

The grant was designed to "build on the early leadership of the CAL and [ULISO] partnership, to strengthen existing relationships, and to focus on professional development and the practical use of new technologies for library services to citizens" (pp. 4-5). The ABLE project endeavors to encourage professional development in both countries through the voluntary and interactive transfer of professional knowledge, making it an appropriate case study on the processes of intercultural knowledge transfer and the factors that affect it.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 presents the problem underlying this research: the assumption in LIS that international partnerships are a good means of transferring professional knowledge, even though little empirical research has addressed the nature of the processes within international partnerships and the factors that affect their success. From this problem comes the research question that prompted my study. Also discussed are definitions of three key concepts and the scope, limitations and importance of this study.

Chapter 3 reviews literature relevant to intercultural knowledge transfer, international partnerships in general and partnerships between libraries in particular. I present an overview of intercultural knowledge transfer from the literature groups concerning diffusion of innovations and business and organizational studies. Literature from the education, nursing and international development fields contributes to understanding international partnerships, which I review before addressing the LIS literature on this topic.

Chapter 4 presents the theoretical framework that gave structure to the data collection and analysis. Because I am interested in the intercultural transfer of knowledge, the body of theory from the diffusion of innovations research tradition is an appropriate guide (Rogers, 2003). However, I chose a lesser-used model by Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) over the usual model by Rogers (2003) to guide the specific development of my inquiry and the interpretation of collected data. The Katz, Levin and Hamilton model consists of seven elements instead of four as in Rogers' model, which allows for a more detailed analysis. I compare and contrast these models, discuss my choice of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton model, and conclude with operational definitions for each of the seven elements.

Thus guided by the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model, I constructed an in-depth case study of the ABLE project. Couched in a naturalistic inquiry approach, I implemented several qualitative methods to explore factors affecting the participants' experiences in their partnerships. Chapter 5 addresses the design issues of concern to an intercultural and qualitative case study. First, naturalistic inquiry, its ontological and epistemological assumptions, and issues concerning generalization are described. I then discuss issues related to doing intercultural research, before concluding with a discussion of the case study research strategy.

Chapter 6 presents the methods used in the study. I first describe my usage of purposive sampling and present the timeframe of the data collection. Six research methods are then discussed: individual interviews, focus group interviews, documentation collection, direct observation, participant journals, and reflexive journaling. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the data management procedures and analysis by constant and iterative comparison to previous data, theory, and the research questions. The support provided by NVivo7, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, is also addressed.

The description of the ABLE case is in Chapter 7. An overall description of the ABLE case as a whole is followed by a description of the three sets of embedded cases that emerged during data collection, based upon the geographical regions, the participant roles, and the duration of the partnerships. Seven "mini-cases" were also created by the seven individuals whom I observed and they are described as well.

Chapter 8 presents the findings. The first element of the model—acceptance—is considered independently, as this element demonstrates knowledge transfer instead of contributing to it. The remaining six elements of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model were all found to be contributing factors and components that facilitate or inhibit knowledge transfer were found in each element. Although the elements were found to be tightly connected to each other, I use the linear statement of the model to organize the presentation of the findings.

In Chapter 9 I discuss and offer interpretations of the findings. I begin the chapter by revisiting the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model in light of its usage in my research and explain the interconnected nature of the model. Then I discuss the findings within each element in relation to the research problem, the extant literature, and components of diffusion theory. Future research avenues are also presented as appropriate.

Finally, Chapter 10 completes my dissertation. I first present a summary of the study and its findings. I then address implications of this research in terms of its application to international partnerships in LIS as well as more generally. Recommendations for international partnerships are also proposed. I conclude with proposed avenues of future research inspired by my research, in terms of intercultural knowledge transfer in general, international partnerships in particular, other contexts for such studies, and alternative research methods.

Chapter Summary

International partnerships are assumed by the LIS field to be a good means of enabling the transfer of professional knowledge between librarians from different countries. However, such partnerships have been used for many years without solid empirical and analytical research into the nature and processes of knowledge transfer within them, so they are not used to their full potential. Using a model from the diffusion of innovations research tradition to guide a case study, my research is an attempt to shed light on the internal processes of international partnerships, making them a practical—instead of only potential—solution to worldwide library development.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEM

In the LIS field, international partnerships are a popular way to support and develop libraries around the world, particularly libraries in developing countries. The unstated assumption is that these partnerships enable the transfer of professional knowledge, resulting in the improvement of libraries and the library profession worldwide. However, anecdotal evidence from unsuccessful partnerships indicates this assumption must be unpacked to understand the factors that affect how partners in an international partnership establish and sustain a communicative environment that enables the transfer of professional knowledge. This is the problem my dissertation addresses. In this chapter I describe the problem and its context, present the research questions that guided the study, define key concepts related to the research, outline the scope of the study and justify its importance.

Professional Knowledge Transfer as the Purpose of International Partnerships

The basis for establishing an international library partnership is frequently the need of a library in a developing country for access to resources, both material and intellectual (Doyle & Scarry, 1994). By partnering with a library in a developed country, the librarians in the developing country can expand their collections by receiving print materials and gaining access to electronic materials. More importantly, they can partake of guidance and advice for developing the profession in their country (Gross & Riyaz, 2004; Long, 2001). The librarians in the developed country, in return, can also receive access to print and electronic materials. Of greater significance, however, is the opportunity to gain a richer and deeper understanding of librarianship throughout the world. As a partnership, both participants should benefit from the relationship (Doyle & Scarry, 1994; John, 1994; Long, 2001). Löhner (1991) summarized succinctly: "Library twinning supports moral and intellectual solidarity, promotes the dialogue between different cultures, reduces the difference between developed and developing countries, and means after all resource-sharing" (p. 9). Thus, the ultimate purpose of international library partnerships is to develop mutually beneficial relationships between librarians from different nations for the exchange of both tangible and intangible resources.

In a seminal article on international partnerships between libraries, John (1991) suggested eight reasons for partnering:

1. Improved *exchange of information about the issues facing libraries* irrespective of location [...]
2. Improved access to information published in the Third World [...]
3. Improved access to information published in the developed world [...]
4. Increased *information about new techniques* for library management and new technology for library programs made available more widely to libraries in the developing countries [...]
5. *Greater awareness by libraries outside the Third World* of the issues facing libraries in developing countries [...]
6. International *sharing of problems at the operational level* on a more regular and wide basis [...]
7. Involvement of *all levels of library staff sharing information* about their problems and common concerns [...]
8. Librarians *gain a broader view* of the profession. (pp. 316-317, emphasis added)

Although John preferred to use “information” instead of “knowledge," the point is the same: while the most visible result of a partnership is the exchange of material or people, of more importance is the less tangible aspect, the transfer of professional knowledge. Clearly, for John, the benefits gained from the intangible aspects of partnerships are the fundamental reason for partnering.

Similarly, the ALA’s Sister Libraries program emphasizes the knowledge transfer that can occur between partners. From the *Why Become a Sister Library* webpage (2007), reasons to form a partnership include:

- Raise awareness of issues and needs facing libraries in various countries
- Share techniques and technologies to help solve problems
- Broaden both your own and your staff’s view of the library profession
- Share strengths through exchange of resources and expertise
- Address weaknesses by providing resources, training and exposure.

Again, these reasons emphasize the importance of knowledge transfer in the partnership. Fundamentally, partnerships exist because the partners wish to transfer their knowledge and learn from each other. Although the goals and objectives set out in individual partnership planning documents may not always overtly address the need for knowledge transfer, it actually underpins every activity between partners. Even if the purpose of a partnership as enabling knowledge transfer may be clearly stated in the partnership agreement, how it is accomplished is not always so evident. The actual diffusion process undertaken by the partners is usually not spelled out in the partnership agreement. While the assumption that international partnerships are good ways to transfer professional knowledge may be plausible, how it actually occurs is not well understood.

Interpretive Space for Knowledge Transfer

The concept of a shared "space" is helpful in understanding knowledge transfer in international partnerships. Assuming that knowledge is subjectively constructed and consumed, Tenkasi and Mohrman (1999) argued that a community of knowing creates its own "unique interpretive repertoire" regarding the world. The authors used the concept of "thought worlds," which is characterized by a "fund of knowledge," or *what* one knows, and by "systems of meaning," or *how* one knows. Tenaksi and Mohrman argued that

> … because each community of knowing bases its definition of reality on its unique interpretive conventions, any information or knowledge, regardless of how well it is empirically determined by an outside authority, may still be subjectively consumed in reference to the community's interpretive repertoire. (p. 121)

To address the ability for individuals from different thought worlds to interact and share knowledge, Tenkasi and Mohrman proposed "interpretive spaces":

> Interpretive spaces are interactional mechanisms that create the conditions for understanding by intervening at the level of knowledge structures, interpretive schemes, or thought worlds and bringing them to conscious awareness and facilitating their exchange in a process of mutual dialogue. (p. 133)

Within an interpretive space, collaborative learning takes place, "a process whereby distinctive individual knowledge, values, meanings, assumptions, and beliefs are exchanged, evaluated and integrated with those of others" (p. 130). To accomplish collaborative learning, "mutual perspective taking" must occur, in which each participant's tacit knowledge is made explicit in order to identify areas of similarities and differences, and ultimately comprehend the other person's thought world.

Similar to the notion of interpretive space, "*ba*," is a term used by Nonaka and Konno (1998) to designate the locus of interaction between people that enables knowledge sharing and creation. *Ba* is a Japanese philosophical concept that loosely translates as "place" in English; Nonaka and Konno defined *ba* as "a shared space for emerging relationships… that serves as a foundation for knowledge creation" (p. 40). This space can be "physical (e.g., office, dispersed business space), virtual (e.g., e-mail, teleconference), mental (e.g., shared experiences, ideas, ideals), or any combination of them" (p. 40). *Ba* is an interpretive space where individuals share their knowledge and create new knowledge.

The concept of *ba* serves as the platform for Nonaka's model of knowledge creation within organizations (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Konno, 1998; Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2001). However, the concept can be applied in any situation where individuals come together and knowledge is transferred, whether formally or informally. In the case of an international library partnership, the virtual space is perhaps most frequently employed, as the majority of partner interactions may occur via e-mail or some other Internet-based communication. The shared mental space is also present; although partners come from different cultural backgrounds and mindsets, their shared profession offers the possibility of recognizing the same ideas and ideals. Furthermore, sharing the experiences during their partnered activities contributes to the creation of a shared mental space. Finally, shared physical space may not frequently occur, but there can still be instances when the partners meet face-to-face, such as at a conference, visit, or work exchange. Within these shared spaces, the *ba* of the partnership is established, enabling the partners to share their knowledge through collaborative learning.

This notion of an interpretive space, or *ba*, provides a window to examining the process of professional knowledge within an international partnership. In line with the assumption that international partnerships are good, the LIS field also assumes that interpretive spaces are naturally created by the partners as they establish a partnership. However, anecdotal evidence from the failures of partnerships between libraries would indicate that this assumption may not be valid as well. The lack of empirical research on international partnerships between libraries has hindered the field's understanding of this space and the nature of processes and factors affecting the transfer of professional knowledge within it.

Purpose of the Study

With challenges such as physical distance and language and cultural differences, a major problem for international partnerships is creating the shared interpretive space (be it physical, virtual, mental, or some combination) that is conducive to supporting knowledge transfer. When planning an international partnership, this space is often assumed to emerge as the partnership develops. Although superficial issues with distance, language and cultural barriers might be considered in the design of a partnership, the deeper issue of establishing a space where knowledge transfer can effectively take place is usually not overtly considered. A better understanding of the nature of the factors that affect the creation of this space would contribute to establishing international partnerships that can successfully meet the aim of transferring professional knowledge. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine more closely one international partnership so as to understand the factors and processes that establish and sustain a communicative environment that enables the transfer of professional knowledge.

Research Questions

The overall research question guiding my study was:

RQ1: What factors affect the transfer of professional knowledge in international partnerships?

Two sub-questions followed:

SQ1: What factors *facilitate* transfer?

SQ2: What factors *inhibit* transfer?

I used these questions to guide my research to a deeper understanding of the knowledge transfer process in one international library partnership.

Definitions of Key Concepts

Three key concepts in this research required a clear articulation of their meanings: international partnership, professional knowledge, and knowledge transfer. This section discusses each concept and its operational definition used in the research.

International Partnership

In the LIS field, a professional partnership between librarians in different countries is typically called "sister libraries" or "library twinning." The definition of these terms is not frequently addressed in the LIS literature; usually the reader is left to surmise their meanings. One of the most complete definitions is by Doyle and Scarry (1994), who defined library twinning as "the ongoing relationship between two libraries in different countries for the purposes of improving the practice of librarianship across national boundaries" (p. 3). They went on to note that this relationship should offer mutual benefits that are readily identifiable to the participants, and the relationship should be "formally secured" in writing through a contract, letter of agreement or written record of agreed upon objectives (p. 3). They also considered the duration of the relationship, which should be agreed upon by the participants and last for at least two years (p. 3). The LIS literature prefers the field-specific labels of sister library or library twinning, but the relationship really ought to be termed an *international partnership*.

To unpack the meaning of the term "partnership" and establish an operational definition for my research, I needed to look beyond the LIS literature. The field of international development provided help, as much discussion on the meaning of this term has ensued in this literature. For example, Brinkerhoff (2002) identified key criteria of a partnership, describing the ideal principles used to formulate "a generally accepted partnership rhetoric" as "mutual trust, respect, accountability, and influence, with mutual determination of ends and means" (p. 14). The description of an ideal partnership according to Brinkerhoff is "a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labor based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner" (p. 14). Biddle, Vamesu and Lopes (2004) took into account these key criteria, adding the elements of duration and continuity. For these authors, partnership meant durability, synergy, equitability, and shared decision making.

Kott, Charles and Biddle (2001) described a partnership as "a voluntary collaboration between two or more entities (U.S. and host country) where the parties have agreed to cooperate to achieve mutually desirable objectives" (p. 1). They identified four elements that are normally part of a partnership:

1. A belief that both entities will benefit from the partnership
2. A transfer of human resources, financial resources, or both

3. A written agreement that establishes a set of objectives and responsibilities and outlines operating procedures, such as how the entities will communicate with each other
4. Some evidence that the two organizations intend to collaborate in a manner that reflects the principles of partnership: balance, equity, sharing, and transparency. (p. 1)

The above elements ought to be present whether the partnership is at an organizational or individual level.

It is also important to point out that "partnership" is often used interchangeably with other related terms. Rege (2006) observed that "partnership is synonymous with collaboration, coordination, cooperation, joint working, interagency, networking, liaison and alliances" and distinction between these terms is unclear (p. 217). As mentioned above, the LIS field uses two different terms to indicate a relationship between libraries from different parts of the world and neither field-specific term has been fully defined in the LIS literature. However, the relationship in question can be accurately described as an international partnership and I chose to use this term throughout my research to give a common designation to two synonyms used disparately. For the purpose of my work, I define an international partnership as follows:

> **An *international partnership* is a relationship established by written agreement that is durable, dynamic, and equitable between autonomous actors from different nations, who mutually construct and agree upon rules, norms and structures to guide the interactive and mutually beneficial transfer of resources, whether tangible or intangible.**

Professional Knowledge

While an international partnership is a structure for the relationships between librarians from different countries, the purpose of the partnership is to transfer professional knowledge. To form an operational definition of professional knowledge, both elements of this term needed to be explicated.

Knowledge

Knowledge is traditionally considered in conjunction with a sequence of terms representing a continuum of data—information—knowledge—wisdom (Ackoff, 1989; Cleveland, 1982; Rowley, 2007). This hierarchy indicates that each element builds upon the previous one, becoming more complex, as it is processed by a human's mental abilities. Based on a review of several recent information science textbooks, Rowley (2007) defined data as symbols that lack meaning until they are processed to be useful, at which point they become information. Defining knowledge is a more difficult task, but Rowley noted that "knowledge might be viewed as a mix of information, understanding, capability, experience, skills and values" (p. 174). Finally, a definition of wisdom is even more elusive than knowledge, but Rowley argued that wisdom should be viewed as the output of a funnel instead of the apex of a mountain: "a wisdom funnel, where data naturally become more concentrated, but the whole edifice is delicately balanced on wisdom and will collapse without sufficient wisdom" (p. 176).

Although the data—information—knowledge hierarchy is typically illustrated as a linear continuum, it can be argued that these elements are fluid and interact in a circular fashion during communication. Knowledge is held inside one's head, but can be made explicit through writing, speaking or doing, which transforms it into information. Rowley

(2007) explained this transformation: "if knowledge is a property of the human mind, with the potential for action, explicit knowledge cannot be any more or less than information" (p. 178). When knowledge is turned into explicit and communicable information, it can then be transferred and assimilated into knowledge inside another person's head (Boisot, 1995, 2002; Roberts, 2000).

The need to explain the sharing of tacit knowledge has stimulated the analysis of the transformation of knowledge to information and back. The SECI (socialization-externalization-combination-internalization) model proposed by Nonaka and his colleagues attempts to illustrate the process of codification and re-codification of tacit knowledge during knowledge transfer (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). Socialization is the tacit transfer of knowledge, which happens as experiences are shared in person. When tacit knowledge is made explicit (externalization), it turns into information, which can then be communicated (combination) and integrated into the other person's knowledge system (internalization). The SECI model is represented as a spiral, indicative of the circular interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. As participants in an international partnership interact through e-mail and other virtual means, their communication processes require the transformation of knowledge into information and then back into knowledge. Information is thus the representation of knowledge to allow for its communication.

Another approach to categorizing knowledge can be found in Blackler's taxonomy (2002, pp. 48-49). Embrained knowledge is "dependent on conceptual skills and cognitive abilities," the type of knowledge that Ryle (1949) called "knowing that." Embodied knowledge is "action oriented and is likely to be only partly explicit"; what

Ryle called "knowing how." These two types of knowledge are held within an individual. Encultured knowledge is "the process of achieving shared understandings," which arises from socialization and acculturation. Embedded knowledge "resides in systemic routines" and contextual factors. Finally, encoded knowledge is "information conveyed by signs and symbols," such as books, manuals, and electronically encoded and transmitted information such as e-mail and websites. This stage is more frequently referred to as information. As individuals in a partnership communicate their embrained and embodied knowledge, it must pass through the encoded knowledge stage. Through this interaction, the partners jointly create shared understandings and systemic routines that become embedded and encultured knowledge in the context of their relationship.

The transfer of information can be carried out mechanistically (Ackoff, 1989), whereas the transfer of knowledge requires the presence of a human being to decide what to share and to interpret what is being shared. Knowledge is therefore differentiated from information by the necessity of a human's interpretive ability based upon his or her own unique knowledge structure. I chose to examine the transfer of knowledge instead of information to emphasize the importance of people in the interactions within a partnership.

Knowing

Some scholars balk at the rationalist implications of the term "knowledge," preferring to use "knowing" to connote its active nature evident through practice. As Orlikowski (2002) pointed out, treating knowledge as "either a thing (to be captured, stored, transmitted, etc.) or a disposition (whether individual or collective)" leads to "objectivist reification" or "subjectivist reduction" (p. 250). In a review of international development literature concerning knowledge transfer, Tenkasi and Mohrman (1999) discussed the objectivist reification found in three conventional models of knowledge transmission in development, concluding that all the models treat knowledge as objective, applicable across contexts, and complete.

McFarlane (2006a) addressed the notion of a rational model of knowledge that underlies the work of major international development organizations such as the World Bank. He argued that a different way of conceptualizing knowledge—as formed through interaction, situated in contexts, and consisting of both tacit and codified forms—opens the way for a new understanding of how knowledge is shared through "translation." The translation model, he postulated, challenges the diffusion model in that the latter "focuses on travel [of knowledge] as the product of the action of an authoritative center transmitting knowledge," whereas the translation model "focuses on travel as the product of what different actors do with objects (statements, orders, artifacts, products, goods, etc)" (p. 293). By reframing knowledge as a social construction shared through translation, McFarlane pointed the way to recasting development projects as joint learning experiences emphasizing the knowing of all involved.

The philosophers Polanyi (1966) and Ryle (1949) used the term "knowing" instead of "knowledge" to emphasize the active nature of what one knows. Polanyi explained, "knowledge is an activity that would be better described as a process of knowing" (p. 55). Cook and Brown (1999) described knowing as "part of concrete, dynamic human action… [that] does not focus on what we possess in our heads; it focuses on our interactions with the things of the social and physical world" (p. 387-388). Orlikowski (2002) explicated the notion of possession versus practice: "knowing is an ongoing social accomplishment, constituted and reconstituted in everyday practice. As such, knowing cannot be understood as stable or enduring. Because it is enacted in the moment, its existence is virtual, its status provisional" (p. 252-253). She focused further on the mutual constitution of knowing and practice, arguing that "knowledgeability, or knowing-in-practice," is a better noun-form than knowledge: "When we focus primarily on knowledge, we lose the centrality of action in knowledgeability" (p. 251).

Although Cook and Brown (1999), Orlikowski (2002), and McFarlane (2006a) made good arguments against the use of the term "knowledge," I will continue to use it for this research because it is more widely recognized. However, for the operational definition of knowledge used in this study, I have included some elements of action and practice connoted by "knowing." Thus, the definition of knowledge I used in my study is:

> ***Knowledge*** **is information that has been incorporated into one's structure of understanding the world, couched within a set of values, and whose activation, either tacitly or explicitly, is demonstrated through practices and interactions with the social and physical worlds.**

Professional

My research focused on a particular kind of knowledge: professional knowledge of librarianship. Sociologists would classify librarianship as a "semi-profession," placing it in the same league as teaching, nursing and social work. Practitioners of "semi-professions" have shorter training periods, a less legitimated social status, a less specialized body of knowledge, and less autonomy from supervision, as compared to "true" professions like medicine (Etzioni, 1969; see also Abbott, 1988, 1998). While these characteristics of a semi-profession may indeed describe librarianship, there are other definitions of professionalism that apply to librarianship. Siegrist (2001) simply defined a profession as having "special functions and structures, motives, representations, forms of knowledge, and sociocultural styles" (p. 12154). Moore (1970) identified five criteria of professionalism: a full-time occupation, a commitment to a calling, extensive specialized training and education, a service orientation, and autonomy (pp. 5-6). It can certainly be argued that librarianship is more than a semi-profession.

In the American library field, there is an on-going debate over the meaning of the term "professional." A dichotomy has been drawn between professionals and paraprofessionals (Johnson, 1996; Martin & Bosseau, 1997; Wilson & Hermanson, 1998). The typical measure that divides the two groups is whether or not one holds the Master's degree in library science. Although undergraduate degrees in librarianship do exist, the Master's degree remains the standard for the profession in the United States. Positions in a library deemed to require the training and education of a Master's degree are classified as professional, whereas those that do not are classified as paraprofessionals. There is typically a commensurate difference in pay and responsibility. However, this line has been blurring since the 1990s, when the introduction of information technology allowed people without professional training to do many tasks of the traditional librarian (Han & Chaudhry, 1999). Still, librarians in the United States may continue to recognize themselves in the five criteria put forth by Moore (1970).

In Bulgaria, individuals are considered professional librarians following a two-year specialist degree after high school. This undergraduate degree is more developed in specialist knowledge than the American undergraduate library degree. While graduate diplomas in librarianship are available, librarians in Bulgaria do not need this level of education to obtain professional-grade positions within a library. Jobs typically considered to be paraprofessional in the United States are held by professionals in Bulgaria. However, the Master's degree enables a librarian to move up the hierarchy of a library and is typically a requirement to become the director of a library.

Although there are degrees of interpretation of Moore's (1970) criteria for professionalism, librarians in both the United States and Bulgaria can be considered professionals. In both nations, librarianship is typically a full-time occupation, except for small libraries that only require staffing for a few hours. Librarianship is frequently considered a calling in both nations as well; the low pay usually deters all but the most devoted practitioners. Librarians in both nations must undergo extensive specialist training, but Bulgarian librarians have the option of taking this training immediately after high school. A service orientation is the one component where there have been significant differences due to cultural factors. While the value of access to information underpins the service orientation in the United States, the communist legacy of limited access is eroding slowly in Bulgaria. With the recent collapse of the Soviet Union and even more recent admission to the European Union, Bulgarian librarians are beginning to understand and implement the American concept of a service orientation. Finally, librarians in both nations enjoy a certain level of autonomy in their professional activities. The criteria from Moore are applicable to the professionalism in librarianship within both nations. The operational definition I used in my study is:

> **A *professional* is an autonomous practitioner of a specific occupation who has had extensive and specialized higher education in that occupation and who demonstrates a commitment to a calling and a service orientation.**

Professional Knowledge

Combining the above discussions, professional knowledge can be simply defined as that knowledge used by a professional. However, it is more than just that, as one taxonomy of professional knowledge in the business field demonstrates (Mazza, 1998). According to Mazza's taxonomy, professional knowledge can be categorized as disciplinary knowledge, informed opinion, practical knowledge, and general folklore. Each category has certain producers, propagators, and channels for the content. Table 2-1 summarizes Mazza's taxonomy and modifications for the LIS profession have been added in italics.

Although this taxonomy was specifically designed for knowledge in the business field, it is applicable to any professional field by substituting certain terms, as is indicated in Table 2-1. Mazza's (1998) taxonomy provides a useful organization of the various types of professional knowledge, where it comes from, and how it is channeled throughout the profession.

Table 2-1

A Taxonomy of Professional Knowledge (adapted from Mazza, 1998)

	Content	Producers	Propagators	Channels
Disciplinary knowledge	Formal research Technical solutions	Academic community Business schools *(LIS schools)*	Business schools *(LIS schools)* Universities	Academic journals Published research
Informed opinion	Heuristics Operating rules	Business schools *(LIS schools)* Consulting firms *(Libraries)*	Consultants *(Librarians)* Managers *(Librarians)*	Conferences Management education *(LIS education)*
Practical knowledge	Operating rules 'Rules of thumb'	Consulting firms *(Libraries)* Business schools *(LIS schools)*	Consultants *(Librarians)* Business schools *(LIS schools)*	Management books *(LIS books)* Business magazines *(LIS magazines)*
General folklore	Myths Metaphors Social expectations	Management gurus *(LIS leaders)* Academic community	Opinion leaders Journalists	Popular media Opinion leaders Handbooks

Examples of professional knowledge related to libraries would include "know-what" (Ryle, 1949), such as specific classification systems, specific databases and resources, and Boolean operators, as well as "know-how" (Ryle, 1949), such as navigating the concept of classification, creating a selection policy, dealing with patrons, and understanding the local and national public government systems. These are all examples from the disciplinary and practical knowledge categories from Mazza's (1998) taxonomy. Moreover, this knowledge is couched within a set of values and beliefs held by the profession and found in the general folklore, which in turn distinguishes it from other professions that use similar information resources. For example, the value placed by American public librarians on the public's accessibility to information has an effect on the creation of resource use policies, which in turn affects the choice of resources included in the library's holdings. The disciplinary and practical knowledge, informed opinion, and general folklore combine to create a particular network of professional knowledge in librarianship.

It must be emphasized that professional knowledge is inextricably couched within a set of values. Swank (as cited in Asheim, 1966, p. 78) identified six values of the American library profession that he believed were "suitable for export":

> (1) the conception of the library as an organization of books, (2) the evolution of a library profession, (3) the attitude of service, (4) the function of the library as an educational institution, (5) the role of the library in the advancement of intellectual freedom, and (6) the conception of organized information as a public resource and responsibility.

According to Asheim, these values are themselves couched in the overarching value of the American conception of education as being open to all, with the library playing a role in "promoting, supporting, extending, and enriching formal education" (p. 79). The values of the profession, influenced by the national culture, are transmitted through the formal and informal education of a librarian. Consequently, professional knowledge is tacitly held and thus difficult to state explicitly and share with others. While knowledge about values is typically tacit, the practices of a professional are tangible and visible evidence of those values (Schein, 1992). Knowledge of values can be shared indirectly by witnessing, discussing, and participating in practices.

Based upon the above definitions of "knowledge" and "professional," the operational definition I used in my research for "professional knowledge" is:

> ***Professional knowledge*** **is internalized information related to a specific occupation, gained through extensive and specialized higher education, couched within a set of values; its activation, either tacitly or explicitly, enables the individual to practice the profession autonomously as evidenced through practices and interactions with the social and physical worlds.**

Knowledge Transfer

At the heart of international partnership is knowledge transfer, which is carried out through the process of diffusion. Roberts (2000) explained that "knowledge transfer occurs when knowledge is diffused from the individual to others… Consequently, knowledge transfer is affected by all of those things that encourage or inhibit interpersonal communication" (p. 432). Knowledge transfer in international partnerships is conducted through intercultural diffusion; thus the terms "diffusion" and "intercultural diffusion" must first be defined.

Diffusion

The definition by Rogers (2003) is the most widely used: "diffusion is the process by which (1) an *innovation* (2) is *communicated* through certain *channels* (3) over *time* (4) among the members of a *social system*" (p. 11, emphasis in original). For Rogers, an innovation is anything perceived as new to a receiver and typically composed of a product and its accompanying knowledge base necessary to understand its intended usage. However, an innovation can be only knowledge, such as an ideology or process.

Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) offered a more detailed definition of diffusion:

> Viewed sociologically, the process of diffusion may be characterized as the (1) *acceptance*, (2) over *time*, (3) of some specific *item* – an idea or practice, (4) by individuals, groups, or other *adopting units*, linked (5) to specific *channels of communication*, (6) to a *social structure*, and (7) to a given system of values, or *culture*. (p. 240, emphasis in original)

This definition, though not widely used, is more finely grained, with the additional elements of acceptance, adopting units, social structure, and culture. The Katz, Levin and Hamilton definition is more appropriate for use in a study on knowledge transfer in international partnerships, as I will argue in Chapter 4 on the theoretical framework for my study.

Even though Rogers' definition of "diffusion" is widely accepted, the term is often used interchangeably with "dissemination," especially outside of the diffusion field. McCarthy and Kuh (1980) noted:

> The term "dissemination" has been used to connote several related but distinct processes: (1) spread or one-way casting out of knowledge; (2) two-way or

> multiway exchange of information; (3) consideration and selection of relevant innovations by potential users; and (4) adoption, adaptation, and implementation of the innovation. (p. 204)

The lack of precision remains over 20 years later. I believe, as the quote from McCarthy and Kuh (1980) illustrates, that much of the imprecision stems from the element of "channels of communication" encompassing both notions of one-way and two-way communication. Diffusion theory includes both interpersonal relationships and mass media as communication channels. Indeed, Rogers (2003) asserted that both mass media and interpersonal relationships should be used in conjunction for effective diffusion programs.

However, there is a critical conceptual difference in the approach to knowledge transfer taken by these two channels. Interpersonal relationships are a dialogic mode of sharing information, involving the interaction between individuals. Mass media, on the other hand, relies on the hope that interested recipients will tune in to scattershot messages, however focused the scattershot may be. The two channels ought to be—and usually are—enacted together to effect widespread social change. For example, messages on a radio or TV program may stimulate conversation among friends or family, which in turn may affect one's consideration of a new product or practice. However, in the case of international partnership, the emphasis is on interpersonal interaction; mass media are typically not involved in a relationship between individuals.

For the purpose of my study, I must clearly differentiate these two modes of communication. Dissemination differs from diffusion in that: (a) information flow is one-way versus two-way; (b) immediate feedback is not possible versus immediate and interactive; and (c) propagation is scattershot versus focused. Going back to the quote from McCarthy and Kuh (1980), dissemination is the first process: the "spread or one-way casting out of knowledge;" and diffusion is the second: the "two-way or multiway exchange of information" (p. 204). Thus, the term "dissemination" denotes the one-way spread of information from one to many, typically through mass media. The term "diffusion" denotes the two-way spread of information between individuals through interpersonal relationships. Because of the interactive nature of two-way information exchange, diffusion emphasizes understanding and meaning-making. A modified version of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) definition of diffusion can be used to more explicitly recognize the difference in communication modes:

> ***Diffusion*** **is the process of communicating through interpersonal dialogue about a specific idea or practice, over time, between adopting units, within a given social structure and culture, in support of meaning-making and understanding for the purpose of potential adoption and implementation.**

Intercultural Diffusion

This study is about *international* partnerships; knowledge is transferred between professionals who come from different nations and thus different cultures. Therefore, a modifier ought to be used with the term "diffusion." There are two ways to view the use of culture in diffusion studies: (a) comparing the diffusion of the same innovation within two or more cultures; or (b) examining the interaction of people from differing cultures within the process of diffusion (Rogers & Hart, 2002; Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999). Comparing and contrasting the diffusion processes in two or more cultures is typically connoted in the diffusion literature by the term "cross-cultural." Examining the interactions of two people from different cultures is connoted by the term "intercultural," meaning the "exchange of information between individuals who are unalike culturally" (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999, p. 1). Because my research examines the diffusion of knowledge *between* professionals from different cultures, it can be termed "intercultural diffusion." Thus, the definition of diffusion from above is modified:

> ***Intercultural diffusion*** **is the process of communicating through interpersonal dialogue about a specific idea or practice, over time, between adopting units from differing social structures and cultures, in support of meaning-making and understanding for the purpose of potential adoption and implementation.**

As posited earlier, the diffusion process underpins the process of knowledge transfer in international partnerships. Having defined diffusion and intercultural diffusion, knowledge transfer is thus operationally defined as follows:

> ***Knowledge transfer*** **is the result of communicating knowledge through diffusion; knowledge transfer in international partnerships is the result of communicating knowledge through intercultural diffusion.**

The operational definitions for three key terms give clarity and focus to my study. The scope of the study—the boundaries determining what is relevant to my research—also provides focus.

Scope of the Study

Any study needs to set boundaries to its work in order to effectively address the underlying problem through clear and focused research. The scope of my study can be set in two ways: the problem being addressed and the case study I used to address it.

My research addresses the assumption in the LIS field that international partnerships are good means for transferring professional knowledge without any empirical understanding of the nature of the process in this particular context. This problem focused the study on the LIS field and international partnerships between libraries. It also classifies the study as exploratory, as the research aimed to identify factors.

I chose to investigate this problem through a case study of one international partnership. The individuals involved in the partnership were the coordinators of the project, the partnered librarians, and the library directors of some participating libraries. The ABLE project is only between the United States and Bulgaria; furthermore, the partners in the United States were only from two states: Colorado and Iowa. Thus, my study looks at one profession and three geographical regions. Because a case study focuses on a particular and specific bounded system (Stake, 1995, 2005), the scope of my study is necessarily limited to the system that comprises one case.

Limitations to the Study

With a focused scope come certain limitations. The primary limitation of my research is inherent to the case study strategy: the findings are not necessarily applicable to other cases and they do not automatically lead to generalizations (Hartley, 1994; Kennedy, 1979; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). This is a limitation of research that focuses on the phenomenological experiences of a specific group of people. One way to address this limitation is through comparing and contrasting more than one unit of analysis within the study, using either multiple cases or multiple sub-cases (Yin, 2003). The ABLE case is an instance of multiple sub-cases; the individuals who comprised the bounded system of the

ABLE project could be grouped according to their geographic locations, their roles, and their partnership length. Furthermore, there were seven participants from whom I collected a significant amount of data; they comprised a set of "mini-cases." By grouping the overall case into multiple sub-cases, I was able to create multiple embedded cases and consequently compare and contrast from within the overall case (Hartley 1994; Stake, 2005; Yin, 1989).

There were also two important methodological limitations to my study. First was my inability to communicate with the Bulgarians in their native language. I had to rely on interpreters and translators to attain some of the data, resulting in the intervention of a third party and the consequent layers of interpretation that naturally occur. Second, I was unable to spend long periods of time in the field with the participants, requiring me to rely on records of experiences (e-mails and participant journals) instead of first-hand experiences. I do not feel, however, that either of these two methodological limitations greatly reduced the quality of the data I accumulated. I specifically employed multiple data collection methods to achieve a triangulation approach and account for these methodological limitations.

Importance of the Study

Although the research questions provide guidelines for the purpose and conduct of the actual research, they do not answer the most important question: why does this study matter? Why explore the nature of the processes and factors in an international partnership? Why should a researcher be interested in a case study of the transfer of professional knowledge within an international partnership of libraries? Why should the profession—or for that matter, the public—be concerned?

The answer can be found in one word: globalization. This study matters because the problem it addresses will become more important as the world becomes smaller through globalization. The feasibility of globalization rests on the relationships between humans. The interconnectedness of the world enabled by the information and communication technology revolution has greatly enhanced the ability to create international partnerships between professionals from nearly every country in the world. Understanding how librarians from different countries, working within a partnership framework, establish an interpretive space to enable the transfer of knowledge is a key component of encouraging the use of such partnerships to forge supportive relationships. The assumption that international partnerships are good invites a closer examination of them; by more completely understanding their construction and activities, librarians can better use them to enable the diffusion of professional knowledge throughout the world. These relationships could then be used to foster professional development of librarians and drive the progress of the library profession globally.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the problem addressed in this dissertation: the assumption held by the LIS profession that international partnerships are good mechanisms to support and develop librarianship worldwide, through the establishment of an interpretive space that enables successful transfer of professional knowledge. Although this assumption seems logical in theory, in reality anecdotal evidence demonstrates the difficulty in sustaining a long-term partnership. Furthermore, there is a significant lack of empirical research on the processes of knowledge transfer within international partnerships. The research question guiding my work was "What factors affect—either facilitate or inhibit—the intercultural transfer of knowledge?" The definition of three key concepts was critical: international partnership, professional knowledge, and knowledge transfer. Without understanding the processes of knowledge transfer occurring within an international partnership and the factors that affect them, LIS professionals will not make the best use of partnerships to improve the profession worldwide. By illuminating these factors, the results of this study may shed light on how an international partnership can support effective intercultural knowledge transfer between LIS professionals. Given the on-going globalization of the world, understanding the ability of international partnerships to support knowledge transfer is becoming ever more important. The next chapter explores the several bodies of literature related to the problem and orients my research within them.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses extant literature relevant to knowledge transfer in international partnerships in order to situate the present study. The chapter begins with an overview of pertinent literature regarding intercultural knowledge transfer in general, drawing from the multidisciplinary field of diffusion and the business and organizational studies literature. I then turn to literature on international partnerships and focus on intercultural knowledge transfer in this specific context, drawing from the education, nursing and international development literatures. The chapter concludes with an in-depth review of literature concerning international partnerships in LIS.

The terms used to describe partnerships in intercultural contexts are frequently vague. "Partnership" is often synonymously used with terms like "collaboration," "cooperation," and "alliances" (Rege, 2006).Other terms specific to business also overlap in meaning with partnership, such as joint ventures, foreign subsidiaries, and communities of practice. Also, it became evident during the search that the terms "knowledge transfer," "diffusion" and "technology transfer" are sometimes used to describe the same process. Several synonymous terms contributed to the literature search.

Intercultural Knowledge Transfer

The literature on knowledge transfer in intercultural contexts is vast and multi-disciplinary; a complete review is certainly beyond the scope of this chapter. Thus, I will trace a path through extant literature, highlighting those pieces that are most pertinent to my study. I focused on two fields in particular that have a significant interest in this area: knowledge transfer: diffusion of innovations, and business and organizational studies.

Diffusion of Innovations Literature

The role played by culture in the diffusion process is considered through two different perspectives in the multi-disciplinary field of diffusion of innovations. Cross-cultural diffusion focuses on comparing and contrasting the spread of a given innovation in different cultures, typically using countries (as proxies for culture) for the unit of analysis (Barnett & Lee, 2002). Scholars with this perspective have followed Kedia and Bhagat's (1988) theoretical article on the usefulness of Hofstede's (1997, 2001) five dimensions of culture to analyze and compare innovation adoption in countries. Research in this area has demonstrated the potential application of the dimensions for comparing diffusion rates in different countries to evaluate the spread of an innovation, often by using a quantitative model for prediction purposes (see, for example, Herbig and Palumbo, 1994, or La Ferle, Edwards and Mizuno, 2002). However, the nature of such research requires a macro-level unit of analysis, using national statistics, and thus can only address the outcome of diffusion, not the process.

The intercultural perspective, in contrast, examines the diffusion process at the individual level. Researchers from anthropology especially tend to use a micro-level view to research the effects of culture in the diffusion process, particularly to examine an innovation's effects on the populace of the receiving end. When a diffusion program does not consider the potential consequences of importing an innovation from a different culture, imbued with that culture's values, the program may end up with unintended—and often devastating—consequences (see Niehoff, 1966, Pelto, 1973, Sharp, 1952, and Spicer, 1952, for examples). An important example of such consequences can be found in the evaluative literature of the Green Revolution.

The Green Revolution

A significant portion of literature in the diffusion field that deals with intercultural diffusion addresses the multiple diffusion programs that took place worldwide from the 1950s to the 1970s. Known collectively as the "Green Revolution," these programs attempted to solve the growing hunger crisis in the Third World (Gaud, 1968). International research centers for corn, wheat and rice, funded by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, created "miracle" hybrid grains that gave much higher yields than traditional grains, but required fertilizer, pesticides, and new agricultural practices to make them productive (Cleaver, 1972; Pray, 1981; Rogers, 1971). Although touted early on as "a success story of major proportions in the transfer of knowledge and skills" (Thompson, 1972, pp. 174-175), the Green Revolution did not live up to the enthusiastic promises of its promoters and only resulted in a small increase in agricultural development in certain geographical areas (Pray, 1981). Investigating why the hybrid grains were not widely adopted sheds light upon the factors that affect diffusion from one cultural environment to another.

Karim (1986) conducted an extensive review of the extant literature on the Green Revolution and concluded that "one of the main problems of the Green Revolution is the introduction of the new agricultural technologies to social structures into which they do not fit" (p. xxiv). For example, the attempt to replace traditional rice agricultural techniques in Bali with the "miracle rice" innovation package severely disrupted the centuries-old traditional techniques of rice planting and harvesting, which also happened to be the most successful techniques according to computer simulation models (Bardini, 1994; Lansing, 1987; Rogers, 2003). Clawson and Hoy (1979) evaluated the rejection of agricultural modernization techniques by a community in Mexico, concluding that the development program did not take the local culture into account. They asserted that "[p]easant adoption of Green Revolution technologies comes only when the true needs of the farmer have been ascertained and programs instituted that fill those needs" (p. 372). These cases from Bali and Mexico explicitly illustrated the requirement for assessment of local needs and adaptation of the development program to take into account cultural norms and sensitivities before the innovation is introduced to the target community.

Given the typical lack of local needs assessment and the frequent ethnocentric nature of diffusion programs in the Green Revolution, a major issue raised from its evaluation was the inherent opinion that the innovation is the perfect answer no matter what the context. This "pro-innovation bias" is the tacit assumption that "an innovation should be diffused and adopted by all members of a social system, that it should be diffused more rapidly, and that the innovation should be neither reinvented nor rejected" (Rogers, 2003, p. 106). Such tacit bias emphasizes the pre-supposed improvements to be wrought when adopting the innovation and plays down the actual needs of the potential adopters and the appropriateness of the innovation to them (Diaz Bordenave, 1976, 1977; Downs & Mohr, 1976; Glaeser, 1987; Monu, 1982; Rogers, 1995, 2003). Clawson and Hoy (1979) highlighted the ethnocentric attitude in the pro-innovation bias, noting that "it implies a belief that farmers who have rejected the Green Revolution have been unable to recognize what is best for them" (p. 372). The evaluations of the Green Revolution demonstrated that the negative consequences were often due to the pro-innovation bias found in traditional, ethnocentric diffusion programs that did not involve the participation of the local population.

Unfortunately, the lessons learned from the Green Revolution have not been widely accepted. In a recent article assessing the transfer of American administrative policies to post-war Bosnia, Huddleston (1999) noted the persistence of a pro-innovation bias: "...we were convinced—rightly or wrongly—that our recommendations were sound. We believed that good ideas were enough to carry the day..." (p. 149). The author argued that the bias is inherent in the system of development agencies that insist upon selecting consultants based on technical expertise and not previous experience in development. The need to adapt development programs to local environments endures.

Intercultural diffusion programs such as the Green Revolution emphasized the need for understanding local needs and cultures, as well as the cultural qualities imbued in the innovation. While potentially harmful consequences of an innovation can never be entirely predicted, they could be reduced if programs took into greater account the possible reactions when different cultures meet. Executors of such programs may believe they have the best interests of the receiving population in mind, but their perceptions might not match those held by the population in question. Without an understanding of the cultural context that the innovation is entering, as well as the cultural context from which the innovation came, it is likely that the desired outcomes will not be achieved or that the resulting consequences will not be positive. Rogers (2003, p. 116) pointed out:

> If diffusion scholars could more adequately see an innovation through the eyes of their respondents, including why the innovation was adopted or rejected, diffusion research would be in a better position to shed the pro-innovation bias of the past.

Understanding the role of culture during the diffusion process is critical to developing successful intercultural knowledge transfer programs.

Regarding the ABLE project, the creators of the original Colorado-Bulgarian partnership program made clear from the beginning that it was to be jointly run by both Americans and Bulgarians. The project was not conceived as a means to diffuse a specific innovation selected by an outsider. Americans and Bulgarians jointly developed the project, so the two groups had equal say in its founding purpose and goals. The notions of equality and cooperation have underpinned the ABLE project from the start, enabling the participants to address the cultural differences that may impede the transfer of knowledge.

Business and Organizational Studies Literature

In the fields of business and organizational studies, intercultural knowledge transfer is associated with the knowledge-based theory of the firm. This theory holds the creation and transfer of knowledge within the firm is critical to develop and maintain competitive advantage (Bresmen, Birkinshaw & Noel, 1999; Grant, 2002; Kogut & Zander, 1992). Knowledge transfer in these fields falls under the umbrella concept of "organizational learning"—the notion that when knowledge is transferred, new knowledge is created and the organization "learns" (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The organizational mechanism to support knowledge transfer is known as "knowledge management," which Holden (2001) described as becoming "increasingly the management of the transfer of knowledge generated by cross-cultural teams" (p. 156). Yet "the literature appears to give the impression that knowledge management operates in a kind of unitary vacuum, in which diversity in terms of language, cultural and ethnic background, gender and professional affiliation are compressed into one giant independent variable" (p. 156). That variable is intercultural transfer of knowledge.

Given the increasing international and multicultural make-up of today's organizations, the business and organizational studies literature has turned attention to knowledge transfer in intercultural contexts. In this literature, intercultural contexts include joint ventures, foreign subsidies, overseas consultants, and multinational teams or communities of practice. Studies on the germination and maintenance of intercultural transfer of knowledge have tended to focus on large multinational corporations and followed two major lines: (a) the use of particular organizational structures; and (b) the use of virtual global teams or communities of practice.

Organizational Structures

One approach to the treatment of intercultural knowledge transfer is to consider it in terms of the organization's structure. Bartlett and Ghoshal (1998) identified the development and diffusion of knowledge as a key differentiating organizational characteristic that can be used to distinguish four types of firms, depending upon where knowledge is developed, shared and retained. Multiple forms of knowledge flow between and within multinational corporations and their subsidiaries have been studied as the contexts for intercultural knowledge transfer: from the headquarters to the overseas subsidiary (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1998); from the overseas subsidiary back to the headquarters, known as reverse diffusion (Fajana, 1995; Ferner & Varul, 2000; Zhang, 2003); within international subsidiaries (Ford & Chan, 2003); and during international mergers and acquisitions (Bresman, Birkinshaw, & Nobel, 1998). The structure of the organization can be used to assist in mapping the flow of knowledge within a large global organization, providing one way of investigating factors that affect intercultural transfer of knowledge.

Teece (1981) considered the transfer of technology enabled by the transfer of skilled personnel within one multinational corporation. He concluded that prior experience with the technology in question and with diffusion processes "appear to be key considerations with respect to the ease with which technology can be transferred abroad" (p. 84). However, he further emphasized that transferring personnel within the firm is critical to knowledge transfer: "the transfer of knowledge may be impossible in the absence of the transfer of people" (p. 86). Fortunately, multinational corporations are ideal organizational structures for international technology transfer, as "an important attribute of the multinational firm is that it is an organizational mode capable of internally transferring know-how among its various business units in a relatively efficient and effective fashion" (p. 87). By moving people within the structure of the multinational, the transfer of technology—including its knowledge component—can be achieved.

Teece's (1981) findings regarding knowledge transfer through people transfer have been supported by more recent studies. Beaverstock (2004) studied the use of expatriate employees in professional service firms as a means to share primarily tacit knowledge. He concluded that "expatriation is a strategic organizational policy to develop and diffuse knowledge in the evolving network of the firm" (p. 175). Williams (2006) examined the international migration of employees, finding it an effective means of "translating" knowledge from one setting to another. The face-to-face communication between employees who work physically together encourages the successful transfer of knowledge, particularly tacit knowledge such as that found in professional knowledge. These works illustrate how moving people throughout an organizational structure can greatly contribute to the development and diffusion of knowledge within the firm.

The reciprocal flow of knowledge has been addressed in terms of "reverse transfer" of knowledge, switching the typical sending (headquarters) and receiving (subsidiaries) ends. For example, Ferner and Varul (2000) examined the transfer of knowledge from Anglo-Saxon subsidiaries to the German headquarters of a multinational corporation, finding that the headquarters were willing to adopt techniques developed in the subsidiaries. The willingness on the part of the headquarters to adopt from these subsidiaries indicated that similar cultures may facilitate reverse diffusion.

However, when transfer is from firms in lesser developed countries to firms in more developed countries, difficulties are frequently encountered. Fajana (1995) looked at the transfer of industrial relations (IR) practices from Nigeria to Britain and found significant reluctance on the part of British firms to even consider practices that had originated in Nigeria. He noted that "the willingness factor is thus the essential clog against reverse transfer of IR practices not only to Britain, but possibly to all Europe" (p. 338). McFarlane (2006b) took a post-rationalist approach to defining knowledge as something that is subjective, situated, and both tacit and explicit to explain the possibilities for reverse transfer. He stated that:

> Specific development strategies in the South, like public works, food policy or participation, may appear to offer little opportunity for learning in the North if the approach is to ask whether the strategies can be transferred directly. They may offer more, however, if the approach is to engage in debate around these strategies without a rigid predetermined notion of how they may be useful. (p. 1426)

Fajana's and McFarlane's works have suggested that significant cultural differences may be important barriers to reverse transfer.

The importance of communication between employees, especially expatriate and local employees, is frequently discussed as relevant to the success of multinational enterprises, but the factors that affect the exchange of information within this relationship have not frequently been the topics of in-depth study. One approach to identifying factors has been to consider the organizational structure of a multinational firm and the flow of knowledge within it. From the works discussed above, it is clear that interaction in person is a critical component of successful knowledge transfer, particularly when it comes to gaining tacit knowledge. The willingness to learn is also critical, as the examples of "reverse diffusion" have shown. Fortunately, the organizational structure of multinational firms permits the physical movement of individuals within it, enabling face-to-face communication.

The ABLE project does not have the formal organizational structure of a multinational firm, as the partnerships function independently and are only loosely connected through the regional coordinators. Furthermore, they do not have the imposed motivation to share knowledge that may be felt by those in a business-oriented structure such as a multinational. However, the importance of face-to-face communication was recognized by the participants in the early partnerships that formed the basis for the ABLE project. The funding purpose of the grant that created the ABLE project was to pay for travel and extended stays by all partners to the two countries. In the grant proposal, the coordinators made the argument that the visits between the partners were the linchpin of the project (*ABLE Grant*, 2002). The opportunity to interact in person during the visits was considered critical to the transfer of knowledge, particularly tacit knowledge, and consequently the success of the partnerships.

Virtual Global Teams

The second approach to the treatment of intercultural knowledge transfer in organizational studies is through virtual global teams, also called "communities of practice." As the development of powerful information and communication technologies (ICTs) has grown, multinational corporations have oriented their use in response to the need for in-house collaboration that requires spanning time and space. The global teams use computer mediated communication to leverage the knowledge dispersed throughout the organization's geography, creating virtual social networks (Benson-Armer & Hsieh, 1997; Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000; Townsend, DeMarie, & Hendrickson, 1998; Wellman et al., 1996). Researchers of virtual teams have been most interested in the social aspects that pose challenges to virtual group work, such as technophobia, trust and cohesion, stress from overwork, and organizational restructuring (Townsend, DeMarie, & Hendrickson, 1998).

Sarker, Sarker, Nicholson and Joshi (2005) recently summarized literature on knowledge transfer in virtual teams and identified four factors related to the knowledge sender that could contribute to successful knowledge transfer. These factors were a difference in capability (the source had greater expertise); a high level of credibility and trustworthiness; a large amount of communication (messages sent); and a national culture that is less individualistic. They then examined knowledge transfer in virtual systems development teams by focusing on the knowledge senders. Their own research findings supported all but the first factor; differences in capability had a weak correlation statistic in their study. Their research identified major issues in the topic of knowledge transfer in virtual global teams: trustworthiness, frequency of communication, and cultural effects.

The ability to establish trust in global virtual teams is perhaps the most studied phenomenon of these groups. Early researchers on the topic argued for both sides: building trust in a virtual environment is possible versus impossible. Handy (1995) questioned the possibility of creating trust without touch, while Boisot (1998) argued that trust can be established virtually because electronic communication permits "co-presence" without "co-location." However, Boisot did recognize that cultures with a tradition of tolerance and pluralism are best suited for establishing trust in geographically separate contexts.

Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) examined the text exchanges of four virtual global teams for the creation and development of trust through communication behaviors and member actions. Communication behaviors that facilitated trust early in a team's time together included messages of a social nature or that conveyed enthusiasm and encouragement, while behaviors that maintained trust were predictable communication and timely substantive responses. Member actions that facilitated trust early on included individual initiative and the development of a system to cope with technical and task uncertainty. Actions that facilitated trust throughout the team's existence were effective leadership, the ability to transition from procedural communication to focus on the task, and a "phlegmatic reaction to crisis" (p. 809). The authors also addressed the issue of cultural effects on the communications between the case study teams, noting that they perceived no cultural effects. They surmised this might be due to the similar ages and educational levels of the participants, as well as the lack of nonverbal cues and accents: "by making cultural differences less noticeable, the medium may thereby increase the perceived similarity among members," making cultural differences "insalient" (p. 811).

Roberts (2000) argued against the ability of ICTs to support trust development due to the lack of in-person interaction, inhibiting the understanding of tacit knowledge. He asserted that "the need for trust to exist between parties exchanging knowledge, especially tacit knowledge, is a major constraint on the capacity of ICTs to facilitate successful knowledge transfer" (p. 436). Roberts cited many studies of multinational R&D teams to demonstrate "the importance of socialization and face-to-face contact in the process of knowledge transfer and the failure of ICTs to provide a perfect substitute for this interaction" (p. 438). To compensate for the lack of physical proximity, Benson-Armer and Hsieh (1997) recommended virtual teams work to shape a set of shared beliefs, build up trust and credibility, and develop shared space (mental and virtual).

Trust is a fundamental enabler of the knowledge transfer process, but particularly challenging to establish in virtual communications, so the literature on virtual global teams offers important considerations. The ABLE project provides an interesting perspective on trust issues in international partnerships due to the preponderant use of e-mail punctuated by the brief occasions of face-to-face interaction during the partner visits. A cultural tendency towards tolerance has been shown to support the building of trust in a virtual environment (Boisot, 1998; Sarker, Sarker, Nicholson, & Joshi, 2005). Both the American and Bulgarian cultures have a tendency towards tolerance as measured with Hofstede's cultural dimension of "uncertainty avoidance" (Hofstede, 1997; 2001). Lower scores on this dimension indicate more of a tolerance for the unknown; each country scored in the mid-range values: Bulgaria scored 68 and the United States scored 46 (Davidkov, 2004). The partners are perhaps already equipped with the tendency toward openness and tolerance that enables virtual trust building.

Discussion

The fields of diffusion of innovations and business and organizational studies were primary contributors to this literature review concerning knowledge transfer in intercultural contexts in general. The diffusion of innovation literature revealed important lessons regarding the need for joint creation of diffusion programs to respect cultural differences and alleviate possible negative consequences. Studies on the structure of multinational firms from the business and organizational studies literature have highlighted the crucial component of face-to-face communication in transferring knowledge. This literature also showed how building trust in a virtual environment is possible, if there is tolerance, frequent communications, effective leadership, and occasional face-to-face meetings. While offering outlines to my own research, there are some gaps that my work may begin to address.

The ABLE project adds another dimension to the literature on virtual teams through its on-going nature and structure. The partnerships are intended to be durable, whereas virtual global teams are typically temporary, lasting only as long as needed. Furthermore, the ABLE project is not composed of a team, but of dyads of individuals, a level of analysis on which both bodies of literature appear to focus little. The business and organizational studies literature speaks in terms of teams and the entire organization, while the diffusion of innovations literature examines systems. My research is addressing the transfer of knowledge between partners, so the interaction between individuals—the dyad—is the focus. This shift in perspective, combined with the durable nature of the partnerships, may shed fresh light on the intercultural transfer of knowledge in any format.

International Partnerships

The above section on intercultural knowledge transfer presented and discussed some key features of this activity in any type of intercultural context from the literatures of diffusion of innovations and business and organizational studies. Now I want to turn attention to intercultural knowledge transfer in the specific context of international partnerships. Addressed first is literature from the field of international development; this field has implemented such partnerships in an attempt to move from ethnocentric diffusion programs, and they have been quite seriously evaluated. Then I focus on partnerships specifically between professionals, drawing from the literature of the education and nursing fields, before concluding this section with a detailed review of the treatment of partnerships in the LIS literature.

International Development Literature

International partnerships became a hot topic in the international development literature during the 1990s in recognition of the harm of unintended consequences caused by the paternalistic and ethnocentric dissemination programs, as discussed above. Borrowed from business and education, the concept of partnerships was introduced to give the sense of a closer and more personal relationship between people through participatory diffusion as compared to the unjust and "alien" framework of early modernization activities (Postma, 1994). By forming a partnership with a local organization or group, international aid agencies could ensure the input of the local recipients of the aid programs (Chambers, 1983; Fowler, 1992). The rationale was solid and the term "international partnerships" quickly became ubiquitous in the development discourse, in conjunction with its equally rapid application (Postma, 1994).

The literature on partnerships in international development forms two clusters: (a) theoretical issues and recommendations for partnership implementation; and (b) evaluations of partnerships in terms of power balances. The first cluster includes literature produced by aid agencies such as USAID; for example, Kott, Charles and Biddle (2001) and Biddle (2000) authored guidebooks for employees of USAID who broker partnerships between aid organizations. Recommendations included "support discussion and joint planning," "allow plenty of time for the partnership to develop," and "place early emphasis on the importance of sustainability" (pp. 26-27). Other scholars have presented recommendations based on lessons learned from specific partnerships; for example, Hoksbergen (2005) presented guidelines for authentic partnerships based on the case study of a faith-based non-government organization and Charles (2003) pointed out the benefits to civil society when organizations from different sectors (for-profit and non-profit) partner to use their differences to create innovative solutions. While these documents provide helpful guidelines in establishing a partnership, they remain at the organizational or agency level and do not address issues that may affect interpersonal interactions of intercultural knowledge transfer.

The majority of literature on partnerships in the international development field falls into the second cluster: evaluating the notion of partnership through the lens of power. Brinkerhoff (2002) and Cooke and Kothari (2001) have published books critiquing the notion of partnership and examining how it has become a rhetorical device in international development. Crawford and Hermawan (2002) concluded that "the rhetoric of 'partnership' and 'ownership' is part of a strategic trend by international agencies by which their intervention in political and economic reforms in sovereign states is disguised and simultaneously accorded greater legitimacy" (p. 225). Fowler (1998) called for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to reject a growing use of contractual relationships as a form of partnership and embrace "authentic" partnerships that re-assert "a social morality and political philosophy which is going out of fashion" (p. 155). Lister (2000) examined a partnership between NGOs using a power framework and concluded that "one of the instrument effects of the discourse of partnership is the adaptation of the power framework and the creation of a slightly changed reality, which serves to hide the fundamental power asymmetries within development activities" (p. 235). Clearly there remain issues concerning the true nature of partnerships between organizations involved with development.

The majority of literature on international partnerships from the international development field focuses on partnerships between organizations and the power structures embedded within them. Only Lister (2000) has pointed out the need to re-examine partnership through the lens of interpersonal relationships. She noted, "The fact that inter-organizational relationships for NGOs are frequently based on personal relationships is recognized by many NGO practitioners but not adequately incorporated into the management theory" (p. 236). There is a lack of literature that addresses the actual processes and factors present in carrying out a partnership, especially as examined from the micro-level. Consequently, little if anything has been written on the intercultural transfer of knowledge within these partnerships. The activities between individuals involved in international development partnerships to create the partnership and its power structure, and the effects these have on intercultural knowledge transfer, have yet to be fully examined.

The literature on international partnerships from the international development field considers partnerships between organizations—international aid agencies and local organizations—instead of individuals. Furthermore, partnership in development tends to be between a change agent and a local opinion leader (Rogers, 2003), which leads to the power imbalances discussed by the field. The ABLE project is a partnership between peers; all participants are trained, professional librarians. While there is an element of international development in the project—a primary purpose is to improve Bulgarian libraries as a means to improve Bulgarian society—my research focuses on the intercultural transfer of knowledge between peers. Literature on this specific context can be found from two other professions: education and nursing.

Education Literature

International partnerships between educators and educational institutions have recently become a means by which education can become more "internationalized" (Stone, 2006). While some partnerships are at the classroom level (McAllister, 1996), those between universities are generally made at the institutional level. Within these partnerships, issues such as student exchanges, curriculum development, faculty research collaboration, foreign student enrollment and other types of institutional linkages are primary (Harper, 1995; National Association of State Universities & Land Grant Colleges, 1997). International organizations have been created to facilitate the meeting and partnering of institutions, such as CARE, the Collaboration and Reciprocity in Education program (Cowan, Torrie, Hausafus, & Swanson, 2004). It appears from the literature that international partnerships in education are primarily conducted between universities at the institutional level.

Certain disciplines in universities are particularly interested in international partnerships. Foreign language educators have developed partnerships between classrooms and colleges to support authentic language learning by interacting with other students using ICTs (Caswell, 1998). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Western educators partnered with colleagues in former communist nations through programs such as "Civitas" to provide a means for developing curriculum about civics and democracy (Quigley & Hoar, 1997, 1999). Partnerships between American universities and universities from countries such as Latvia (Patrick & Sarma, 1997), Poland (Remy & Strzemieczny, 1997), and Hungary (Ridley, Hidveghi, & Pitts, 1997) have reported successful adoption and implementation of civic education curriculum.

Van Audenhove (1998) suggested that educational institutions participating in partnerships are likely to have different goals. According to Audenhove, universities in developed countries view partnerships as enabling joint research and data collection, the internationalization of education, and a sense of solidarity with colleagues in developing countries. Universities in developing countries have a more practical viewpoint, entering into agreements for purposes of institutional development, staff training, and course support, as well as joint research. There is also an aspect of competitive advantage in the pursuit of partnerships, as Ayoubi and Al-Habaibeh (2006) pointed out in their evaluation of international strategy design in four universities in the United Kingdom. They concluded that those universities able to develop and maintain international agreements may leverage them to their advantage by attracting international students and funding for international research projects. In the competitive field of higher education, international partnerships can increase student enrollment and overall funding for universities.

Canto and Hannah (2001) reviewed a cooperative agreement between the United Kingdom and Brazil, under which more than 20 partnerships emerged. They concluded that previous knowledge of the partners' history, curriculum and faculty helped to build trust and launch successful projects from the partnerships. However, language difficulties and a lack of mutual understanding of project goals hindered project successes. The authors concluded that while some of the partnership projects reached a certain level of equal exchange, what they termed "horizontal partnership," there remained a significant residue of the imbalanced power structure from colonial years, what they referred to as "advanced neocolonial partnerships." The critical evaluation of these educational partnerships highlighted the difficulty present in overcoming historical imbalances.

Both scholars and practitioners from the education field have examined international partnerships particularly at the institutional level. Benefits for participants include increased facility in staff and student exchanges, increased global awareness among students, and better developed and funded research projects. Such benefits contribute to an overall competitive advantage for universities participating in partnerships. Challenges include language difficulties and the need for mutual understanding of projects. Partners must be aware of the possibility of reproducing colonial power structures and strive for true partnerships. Although the education literature on international partnerships addressed the specific context of professionals partnered with professionals, there still appeared the need to beware of imbalanced power structures. Finding the balance so that equal benefits can be derived for all who participate is as difficult in partnerships between peers as it is in partnerships based on international development initiatives.

Nursing Literature

Nursing is another profession that has used international partnerships as a key means for advancing professional knowledge. International partnerships in this profession are typically linked to nursing education programs, and are typically undertaken, like in higher education, to promote exchanges and research collaboration to increase participants' "internationalization" (Leinonen, 2006). Partnerships between nursing schools often lead to physical exchanges, in the vein of "service learning" (Riner & Becklenberg, 2001). Such visits have been found to have had positive effects on the students and their perceptions of nursing throughout the world, as well as aiding the development of trust, leading to a sustainable partnership (Bosworth et al., 2006).

Girot and Enders (2003) discussed a successful partnership between two nursing schools in the United Kingdom and Brazil that aimed to reduce infant morbidity and mortality by improving training for Brazilian nurse-midwives. Factors related to the success of this program were summed up as effective communication, commitment, and a mutual understanding of the countries' cultural contexts of care. The authors also argued that the choice of individuals who link the two schools is critical to success, as they ought to provide consistency in leadership of the program. Zheng et al. (2001) presented a successful partnership between the nursing schools at Peking University, China, and the University of Michigan. The benefits of the partnership have reached beyond the nursing schools, by laying the groundwork for a model community-based clinic at Peking University and developing successful research and demonstration programs with the Chinese population of Michigan. The authors concluded that mutual respect and common interests and goals have been the supporting factors of this partnership.

The literature on international partnerships in nursing overlaps to a certain degree with the literature on partnerships in education, as the nursing partnerships are generally between educational institutions and not practicing nurses. The partnerships between nursing education institutions emphasized an international perspective of nursing, collaborative research, and onsite "service learning." The challenges faced in these partnerships are the same as those identified in the education literature: practical barriers, like language, time, and physical distance; cultural barriers, like different beliefs and values; and institutional barriers, like financing visits and obtaining human subject use approval. Although the literature provided helpful suggestions concerning factors that affected international partnerships, it is important to keep in mind that these partnerships were ultimately between educators (and their students) and not active practitioners. The ABLE project brings together "in the field" practitioners, who may take a different approach to international partnerships and offer fresh insights from their perspectives.

Library and Information Science Literature

The final portion of this section on international partnerships directly addresses the topic of my dissertation: partnerships between libraries. Partnerships are one aspect of international collaboration initiatives in LIS, which also include gift and exchange programs, staff exchanges, and collaborative projects. While there is overlap in these four aspects, partnerships have specific features that the others do not. I want to briefly discuss the first three areas to demonstrate the scope of international cooperation in LIS and explain how they differ from partnerships. I then present a more detailed review and discussion of the LIS literature that specifically pertains to international partnerships, both between LIS educators and practicing librarians.

Gift and Exchange Programs

Libraries in developed countries have long had gift and exchange agreements with libraries in developing countries to support both libraries' collection development (Lane, 1980; Lorkovic & Eric, 1997; Miller, 1987; Yu, 1981; Zilper, 2002). Through such agreements, libraries receive print materials that are otherwise difficult to obtain, due to budgetary restrictions or a lack of commercial availability. With increasing accessibility to the Internet and the development of electronic collections, the international exchange of print materials has declined, but is by no means dead (Zilper, 2002). While international partnerships may include the exchange of materials, gift and exchange programs differ in that they typically do not involve much interaction between librarians once the exchange profile is arranged.

Staff Exchanges

International cooperation in LIS is also demonstrated through staff exchanges. Many visits have occurred over the last few decades with librarians of all varieties: academic (Bonta, 1988; Davis, 1993; Dokansky, 1987; Peters, Rader, & Smith, 1992; Rader & Greene, 1989); public (Collinge & Maynard, 1985; Grimes, 2003; Williams, 2000); school (Dunoon, 1994; Houston, 2006); special (Barr, 2002; Burnett & Martino, 2000); and government (Myers, 1995; Till, 1986). Publications about visits tend to be short reports on the participants' experiences (such as those cited above) or suggestions and tips on how to arrange visits (for example, Cran, 1994; Hary & Hary, 1995; Keane, 1989; McChesney, 1989). Kidd and Roughton (1994) offered the single piece of empirical research with their survey of staff exchanges in Anglophone university research libraries. Their results compiled in one place the same findings recounted in the personal and anecdotal observations from the reports. While staff exchanges frequently are a component of international partnerships, many are not a part of any larger, enduring partnership program.

Project Collaboration

The third aspect of international cooperation in LIS concerns projects that are collaborated upon by an international team. This area includes literature on creating access to materials through digital libraries (Bjorner, 2006; Dauphine, Ochs, & Joos, 2003; Fineberg, 2006); jointly creating websites ("The U.S. and Brazil," 2004) or manifestos (Galler, 2001); and creating digital reference cooperatives (Kresh, 2002; Marcum, 2003; Truelson, 2004). Establishing consortia of libraries (Allmand, Ramos, & Soeripto, 2003; Hirshon, 2001) and standardizing bibliographic control (Clavel-Merrin, 2004; Landry, 2006) are also emphasized in this area. For my research, I differentiate collaboration from partnership in that the former has a specific goal to accomplish in a given timeframe whereas the latter has general goals and an indefinite timeframe (but may have specific objectives to accomplish within a certain period). Thus, specific projects accomplished through international cooperation are separate from partnerships.

Although these aspects of international cooperative endeavors overlap, my research focuses on relationships formed between libraries and their staffs with the intent of lasting duration. Exchanges of staff and books are important pieces of such relationships, but without the framework of a partnership, many tend to be one-shot or simply occasional. The context of my research problem is an on-going relationship that provides the participants with a comfort level that encourages trust and knowledge sharing. Thus international partnerships differ from the above aspects of collaboration.

Partnerships

During the course of the literature review, two groups of partnerships in LIS emerged: (a) partnerships between LIS schools; and (b) partnerships between libraries. First I will address partnerships between LIS schools and then turn to the literature on the partnerships that form the context for my research: partnership between libraries.

Partnerships between LIS Schools

Similar to other areas of higher education, LIS educators have been reaching out to their counterparts in other countries to forge relationships with the intent to address curriculum issues and offer international exposure for students. American LIS schools have attempted programs such as the Association for Library and Information Science Educators (ALISE) "Adopt-A-Twin," a material and staff exchange program that ran in 1985-86 and the 1990s with limited success (Agada, 1998; Aman, 1992). Unfortunately, "many of the ties were initiated and sustained by individuals rather than their respective institutions," resulting in their dissolution when those individual relationships ended (Agada, 1998; p. 68). However, American LIS schools have successfully established some partnerships, for example, between the University of Texas at Austin and three LIS schools in Latin America (Hallmark & Gonzalez, 2002); between Emporia State University in Kansas and three Nigerian universities (Agada, 2002); and between the University of Tennessee, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Makerere University in Uganda (Cortez, Britz, Albright, Kigongo-Bukenya, & Hernandez, 2007). Although formal attempts to "match" partners have not done well, LIS schools in the United States are taking their own initiative to forge successful partnerships through their own personal and professional connections.

European LIS schools are especially interested in forging ties with each other under the auspices of the Bologna Declaration (Kajberg, 2002, 2003, 2004). However, Berger (cited in Kajberg, 2004) noted obstacles to cooperation involve structural barriers, such as different study cycles and regulations, and different academic traditions and cultures, such as language, student mentalities and financial support. From a survey of 30 European LIS schools, Kajberg (2004) noted that tangible results have been meager and "on the whole, LIS schools have been very slow to get involved in cross-country partnerships that go beyond the often small-scale student mobility activity" (p. 355). Anguelova, Przastek-Samokowa and Kisilowska (2006) reported on the partnership between the LIS schools at Sofia University, Bulgaria, and Warsaw University, Poland, calling for a shift from student exchanges to "using the resources of the various international cooperation programs to implement and coordinate joint scientific research projects" (p. 11). While partnering would seem quite plausible in Europe given the geographic proximities, it has been slow to launch.

With the appearance and growth of the Internet, it is only logical that possibilities to establish partnerships would increase to take advantage of the technology. However, "the benefits of face-to-face contact and the lessons of comparative education through travel and immersion in different 'realities' need not be abandoned completely for the glitter of cyberspace" (Agada, 1998, p. 73). Even with the astronomical growth of access to the Internet and subsequent possibility for easier communication, face-to-face contact continues to hold an honored position. Staff exchanges are perhaps the most important element, underlining the necessity of face-to-face interaction to develop a strong partnership (Agada, 2002; Cortez et al., 2007; Kajberg, 2004).

While the need for balancing technology with exchanges has been noted, other factors related to successful partnerships have been suggested. Cortez et al. (2007) argued for the necessity of a common language and the importance of a memorandum of understanding that clearly spelled out the goals and expectations of every partner. Cortez et al. also proposed 10 shared values and assumptions that ground partnerships:

1. Sharing resources and promoting access to information on an equal basis.
2. Intellectual and academic freedom.
3. Cultural sensitivity, cross-cultural perspectives and learning to promote a global knowledge society, understanding among peoples, peace and social justice.
4. Respect and tolerance of individual differences and of diversity in a democratic society.
5. The ability of the individual to make a difference; to impact and improve our quality of life.
6. Human creativity and innovation for positive social change.
7. An interdisciplinary, global, and cross-cultural education.
8. An active, participatory approach to graduate level education, where student assume a leadership role in directing their own educational experiences.
9. Information technology and telecommunications networks as tools for people to build virtual communities and facilitate distance learning.
10. Managing information and knowledge jointly to promote innovation and change in higher education and society at large. (p. 10)

These values and assumptions form the common ground for effective partnerships.

Johnson (2005) investigated factors critical to success through a case study of an international team writing a partnership proposal. He found 12 general factors:

1. A thoroughly researched understanding of the professional context, underpinned by evidence of relevant developments;
2. The increasingly important and evident role of libraries and information services in facilitating access to networked information resources;
3. A funding agency established to operate in the specific geographic and occupational areas, and with potentially relevant priorities;
4. A high level professional network from which political support for the proposal could be enlisted;
5. The expansion of access to the World Wide Web in the region;
6. The expansion of the European Union's international development programs;
7. A regional political environment supportive of the development of the 'Information Society';
8. A supportive lead institution, able to release staff time and to provide additional financial support when needed, and supportive partner institutions;
9. The ability to accommodate the required funding within the agency's guidelines;
10. An individual required to undertake research, and thus able to shoulder the additional task of developing the proposal and leading the activity;
11. An individual with a well developed network of potential collaborators with interests and expertise relevant to the proposed activity;
12. A group of individuals whose professional and institutional interests relate to the project goals, albeit differing in detail. (p. 33)

While Johnson studied the partnership created by the international team as they were writing the proposal, the factors he identified may be translatable to international partnerships between libraries. Although factor 6 is pertinent strictly to the European continent, and the research mentioned in factor 10 is an issue typically for a university environment, with slight adjustments, this list of critical factors could be useful for measuring the potential success of proposed partnerships. The list emphasizes the importance of time, financial backing, and human interest to support the partnership. Clearly a partnership is not an activity to enter into without significant contemplation.

The lists from Cortez et al. (2007) and Johnson (2005) present numerous helpful considerations concerning the formation of international partnerships, but only a few factors from these lists have a direct impact on the knowledge transfer process. From Cortez et al. (2007), only cultural sensitivity, respect and tolerance of individual differences, and information technology and telecommunications networks could be said to have any impact on the actual transfer of knowledge. From Johnson (2005), only the expansion of access to the World Wide Web and the group of individuals with related interests are directly pertinent. The creation of the partnership and the knowledge transfer process that goes on within it appear to have different affecting factors.

LIS faculty are concerned about the future of LIS in developing countries as well as about the need for all students to become more aware of the role librarianship has to play in a globalized future. There is more critically evaluative research on partnerships between LIS educators than in the fields of higher education and nursing, particularly in the establishment of a partnership. However, there are still significant gaps in understanding the intercultural knowledge transfer process that takes place within them.

Partnerships between Libraries

Having examined the literature on international cooperative agreements of various sorts and the literature on partnerships between LIS schools, now I shall focus on the literature that deals with partnerships between libraries. At first glance, the practice of partnering between libraries from different countries is widely practiced and embraced as an effective solution to sharing professional knowledge throughout the LIS world. However, a closer look reveals that the literature on these partnerships is primarily descriptive and does not address the efficacy of the partnerships, nor how they function. The literature on partnerships between libraries is similar to the literature on staff exchanges: suggestions of how to do it and reports of how it was done. In this section, I map out and critique the LIS literature specifically dealing with partnerships.

One category of literature addresses the establishment of partnerships, stating a case for the benefits of partnership and noting challenges or offering tips on developing one. The handbook on library twinning developed by Doyle and Scarry (1994; Doyle, 1994) for UNESCO is an excellent example, as it provides sample goals for twinning programs, suggests a process to set up an agreement, presents example programs, and includes a long annotated list of organizations that may provide financial support. Even though the handbook is over a decade old, it is still a very useful guide. Another portion of this category is the articles describing the Sister Library program, such as Long's (1999, 2001) pieces that recap the initiative and request participation, and brief articles in professional publications alerting the profession to the opportunity (Ford & Schnuer, 2006; Malenfant & Pedersoli, 2005; McDonald, 1999; Sager, 2000; Wilson-Lingbloom, 2000). These publications are primarily publicity pieces, inviting participation.

The second category consists of descriptive reports of actual partnerships. By far the majority of publications in this group describes partnerships between academic librarians. Recent reports include the College of St. Catherine, Minnesota and the Unidad Academica Campesina, Bolivia (Wagner & Rickert, 2002); McGill University, Canada and China Medical University, China (Groen, 1997); Edith Cowan University, Australia and Maldives College of Higher Education, Republic of Maldives (Gross & Riyaz, 2004); University of Tennessee and Makerere University, Uganda (Atkins, Smith, & Dewey, 2005); and West Virginia State College and National University of Benin (Sharma & Bess, 2000). In Europe, the "Tempus/Phare" project has brought together university librarians from West and Eastern Europe (Pors & Edwards, 2001).

Some interesting variations also exist. For example, the partnership project set up at Texas A&M University does not actually extend beyond the university, as it is between American librarians at the home campus in Texas and Mexican librarians at the outreach campus in Mexico City (DePetro, 2002). Academic libraries have also partnered with non-academic libraries that share a related mission and collection, such as the partnership between Vassar College, New York and the Library for Foreign Literature, Russia, both of which view libraries as "embassies of international culture" (Sinitsyna & Hill, 1997).

Partnerships between other types of libraries are represented only sparsely in the literature. A partnership between two archives, the Archives of Scientific Philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and the Philosophisches Archiv at the University of Konstanz, Germany, was created from the recognition that European visitors to the Pittsburgh archives could be better served in Germany (Heverly, 2005). Partnerships are also present among special libraries; Seidman (1993) presented two accounts of partnerships between librarians within multinational corporations such as KPMG and SmithKline Beecham. Although there is anecdotal evidence of many partnerships between public libraries, the only published account I could find concerns the set of partnerships forming the American Bulgarian Library Exchange (Bolt, 2002, 2004; Bolt & Cole, 2004), coincidentally the case study of this dissertation.

From this literature, factors affecting a partnership's success can be sifted. The academic library partnerships viewed challenges to a partnership as different cultures, physical distance, language, costs, and reliability and performance of technology. Factors that were viewed as facilitators were face-to-face visits, personal relationships, memoranda of understanding and other written agreements, cultural sensitivity, and a common mission. For the partnership between archives, Heverly (2005) stated that intellectual property rights and challenges with securing a microfilming vendor were obstacles, while the mutual respect from personal friendships, knowledge of the German language, and rapid communications technology were facilitators. Seidman (1993) identified several factors in the special libraries' partnerships: advanced technology; face-to-face visits at conferences; language differences; cultural differences; differences in standards, methods, and available technology; and economic difficulties such as currency exchanges and embargoes. For the public libraries, Bolt (2004) and Bolt and Cole (2004) found that a desire to learn about another culture, a willingness to frequently communicate, a common language, and reliable e-mail were the most important supporting factors. Although there are slight differences depending on the specific library context, it appears that several factors affect international partnerships between librarians no matter what the type of library.

Unlike the factors identified in the literature on partnerships between LIS schools, the factors above appear to be more closely relevant to successful knowledge transfer in an international partnership. Issues such as mutual respect, a common language, face-to-face visits, cultural sensitivity, and reliable communications technology would each have a role in establishing an interpretive space in which partners could transfer knowledge. The opposite of these issues, such as the inability to visit face-to-face, severe language and cultural barriers, and little or no access to communications technology, would quickly doom the partners' abilities to communicate and thus prevent knowledge transfer.

The LIS literature concerning partnerships between libraries, while scant, does present important factors to consider. However, these factors have been identified primarily by anecdotal evidence and descriptive writings, as there is a lack of scholarly and empirical research on international library partnerships. Curry, Thiessen and Kelley (2002) conducted a review of the LIS literature concerning aid to libraries in developing countries but were dismayed to find a lack of scholarship and research on the variety of programs, including partnerships. They noted "without these projects, we will not move knowledge in this area beyond opinion pieces to the reliable research results that will better inform the relations of donors and recipients" (Recommendations for Further Study section, para. 4). Johnson (2005) has also remarked upon the lack of publication in this area, stating:

> Although there may be more objective accounts in the archives of the sponsoring agencies and the participating institutions, most of the few other reports of international projects that have been published appear to have been intended only to publicize the activities. (p. 12)

Only a few instances of theory-based and evaluative literature were found, primarily about the failure of IFLA's match-making database (Connolly, 2000; IFLA, 2000). The only evaluative piece on an active international partnership was by Bolt and Cole (2004), in which an evaluation conducted by Cole was reported (see also Cole, 2002). This evaluation used surveys and interviews to identify factors related to partnership success but lacked a theoretical framework to guide a detailed discussion and interpretation of them. Clearly there is a need for empirical, theoretically grounded, scholarly research on international partnerships between librarians.

With the exception of the study by Cole (2002; Bolt and Cole, 2004), there has not been any empirical research conducted on international partnerships between libraries. As Curry, Thiessen and Kelley (2002), Johnson (2005), and my own review have found, the LIS literature on this topic has been written primarily by practitioners, not scholars. Consequently, the literature describes current partnerships; reports the activities undertaken, the challenges faced and the lessons learned; and offers tips on establishing partnerships. While these articles provide important examples of partnerships that may be instructive to librarians who are considering establishing a partnership, they do not take a deeper look at how international partnerships between professionals work and what affects knowledge transfer within them. Frequently the issue of knowledge transfer is not overtly addressed but implied in the discussion of the proposed goals and the lessons learned. Furthermore, no theoretical perspectives were employed in the literature to explain knowledge transfer issues. There is clearly a need in the LIS literature for empirical research grounded in theory on this topic that has primarily seen only anecdotal accounts.

Discussion

International partnerships are a solution for knowledge transfer proposed in several professional areas besides librarianship. Literature from the fields of international development, education, nursing, and LIS addresses the benefits and challenges of international partnerships. Recognized benefits include exposure to new knowledge, practices and unique research opportunities, as well as the possibility of extending positive results to surrounding environments. Practical, cultural and institutional barriers all contribute to difficulties encountered in setting up and maintaining a sustainable partnership. Whereas the international development field stands out with the use of theoretical frameworks to guide research and critiques of partnerships, the literature from the professions tends toward simple descriptive reports. There seems to be an unstated assumption in these fields that partnerships are good, without fully examining why they are good or how they are enacted.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the extant literature pertinent to intercultural knowledge transfer in international partnerships. I first presented an overview of intercultural knowledge transfer, based on literature from the fields of diffusion of innovations and business and organizational studies. Then, I focused the review on the notion of international partnership in the literatures of international development, education, and nursing, before turning to LIS. It appears that a scholarly and empirical investigation of the processes of intercultural knowledge transfer within international partnerships, and the factors that affect them, is overdue. In the next three chapters, I describe the study undertaken for this dissertation in an effort to contribute to the research base on this topic.

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hartley (1994) posited that "without a theoretical framework, the researcher is in severe danger of providing description without wider meaning" (p. 210). This is particularly important for a case study such as this dissertation, which has to be "defined in terms of its theoretical orientation" instead of its methodological techniques (Hartley, 1994, p. 210). Glaser and Strauss (1967) asserted that the jobs of theory are to "enable prediction and explanation of behavior… be useful in theoretical advance… be usable in practical applications… provide a perspective on behavior… and guide and provide a style for research" (p. 3). Littlejohn (1999) included the functions of organizing and summarizing knowledge; focusing attention on certain variables and relationships and pointing out how to observe them; providing clarification for interpreting, explaining and understanding; creating common ground to allow communication between researchers; and generating change through a reconsideration of what is taken for granted. Theory guides the researcher in the quest for knowledge, enabling one to formulate questions and interpret findings.

The theoretical framework I used for this study was the diffusion of innovations. As I described in Chapter 2, diffusion is a process of knowledge transfer, so diffusion theory will assist in understanding this phenomenon within the specific context of international partnerships between professionals. In this chapter I give a brief introduction to the overall theory, and then discuss the model chosen to structure the questions and interpretation of findings in my study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the elements from this model, including operational definitions.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The purpose of diffusion of innovations theory is to explain how innovations—be they new products or new knowledge—are shared. Diffusion theory is multi-faceted, covering innovation development, adaptation and re-invention; the adoption decision process; innovation attributes; characteristics of adopters, particularly the roles of opinion leaders and change agents; networks of communication; and consequences of innovation adoption. The field of diffusion draws from several different disciplines. With roots in anthropology and sociology going back to the late 19th century, diffusion theory has grown to the point where it can be found in almost every social science, including LIS (Chatman, 1986; Rogers, 2003).

The Dominant Model: Rogers

Rogers (1962, 1983, 1995, 2003, with Shoemaker, 1971) has literally written the book on diffusion theory; the multiple editions of *Diffusion of Innovations* attest to the development of the theory over the last 40 years. Rogers (2003) defined diffusion as "the process by which (1) an *innovation* (2) is *communicated* through certain *channels* (3) over *time* (4) among the members of a *social system*" (p. 11, emphasis in the original). This definition of diffusion is the field standard and has become the dominant model used throughout publications in all the disciplines that contribute to diffusion.

Rogers identified multiple components of diffusion theory related to each element of this model, as Table 4-1 illustrates.

Table 4-1

Theoretical Components and Elements from the Rogers (2003) Model

Element	Related Theoretical Components
Innovation	Attributes of innovations (relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, observability)
	Reinvention/Adaptation
Communication Channels	Roles of mass media and interpersonal channels
	Heterophily/homophily
	Cosmopolite/localite channels
Time	Innovation-decision process (knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, confirmation)
	Adopter categories (innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, laggards)
	Rate of adoption (S-shaped curve)
Social System	Social networks
	Opinion leaders
	Change agents
	Type of innovation-decision (optional, collective, authority)
	Consequences of diffusion (desirable/undesirable, direct/indirect, anticipated/unanticipated)

As Table 4-1 shows, there are many components to diffusion theory. What is not evident is the extent to which elements from the model overlap and are present in several of the same theoretical components. For example, while Rogers discussed heterophily and homophily in terms of communication channels, the level of difference or similarity in regards to other individuals depends on the relative places of individuals in the social system. Another example is the attributes of an innovation; the innovation's advantage, complexity and compatibility are all relative to the social system it is penetrating. The theoretical components thus intertwine and create a cohesive theory of diffusion.

An Alternative Model: Katz, Levin and Hamilton

Although Rogers' four-element model of diffusion has become dominant, there exists another model that I will argue is more pertinent to research in intercultural situations such as international partnerships. In 1963, shortly after Rogers published the first edition of *Diffusion of Innovations*, Katz, Levin and Hamilton published an article reviewing research from various disciplines that had been accumulating diffusion studies. The authors noted that each discipline emphasized different variables and approaches. They proposed an "accounting scheme" of the elements of diffusion:

> The (1) *acceptance*, (2) over *time*, (3) of some specific *item*—an idea or practice, (4) by individuals, groups or other *adopting units*, linked (5) to specific *channels of communication*, (6) to a *social structure*, and (7) to a given system of values, or *culture*. (p. 240, emphasis in original)

Using this scheme, Katz, Levin and Hamilton then attempted to "'locate' the characteristic emphases of each of the research traditions" in terms of one or more of these elements (p. 240). Their primary conclusion was the need for research from any discipline to incorporate all seven of the elements in diffusion studies, instead of favoring certain elements over the rest. Ryan (1969) concurred:

> This definition covers the crucial processes and conditions which together constitute the total process. … No diffusion will be fully comprehended without reference to each of the constituent parts of this definition, although numerous research studies have been focused upon only one or two aspects of the complete process. (p. 144)

However, the research traditions have continued to favor the elements that most readily align with their particular area of focus (Rogers, 2003).

Comparison of the Models

There are many similarities between the models by Rogers (2003) and Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963), yet there are also some critical differences. These differences merit discussion, as they are the reason I chose the Katz, Levin and Hamilton model as the basis for data collection, analysis and interpretation. Table 4-2 compares the early versions of these two models and Table 4-3 compares the later versions.

Table 4-2

Comparison of the Rogers (1962) and Katz (1961) Models

Katz (1961)	Rogers (1962)
(1) a given new practice;	(1) the *innovation*,
(2) over time;	(2) its *communication* from one individual to another
(3) through specific channels of communication;	(3) in a *social system*
(4) within a social structure	(4) over *time*

Table 4-3

Comparison of the Rogers (1971 [with Shoemaker], 1985, 2003) and Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) Models

Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963)	Rogers (1971, 1985, 2003)
(1) *acceptance*,	(1) an *innovation*
(2) over *time*,	(2) is *communicated* through certain *channels*
(3) of some specific *item* – an idea or practice,	(3) over *time*
(4) by individuals, groups or other *adopting units*, linked	(4) among the members of a *social system*
(5) to specific *channels of communication*,	
(6) to a *social structure*, and	
(7) to a given system of values, or *culture*	

Although the Rogers model has become the most widely used, it was originally based on the work of Katz (1961) and Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963). In Rogers' first edition of *Diffusion of Innovations* (1962), he acknowledged that the four elements of his model are "generally similar to those listed by Katz (1961) as essential in any diffusion study" (p. 12). The only difference is Katz's use of "social structure" and Rogers' use of "social system," but Rogers did not explain why he opted for his choice of terminology. He did explain, however, why he chose to continue to use his model of four elements, instead of expanding to seven elements as Katz later did with Levin and Hamilton. In a footnote in the 1971 edition, *Communications of Innovations* (with Shoemaker), Rogers commented, "These four elements are similar to those listed by Katz and others (1963) as essential in any diffusion study" (p. 18ff). He went on to explain his rationale for staying with four elements:

> We do not include element 1 [acceptance] as a separate item among our four, as we see acceptance or adoption as an effect of communication (our element 2). We collapse Katz and others' (1963) elements 4 [adopting units], 6 [social structure], and 7 [culture] in our fourth element, because they make up various aspects of the social system. (p. 18ff)

Three specific categories accorded importance by Katz, Levin and Hamilton were subsumed into a single encompassing element by Rogers. Thus, a robust model that specifically accounted for multiple factors in diffusion was transformed into a simplified version and explained away in a footnote. Whether due to its simplicity, its publication in a book, or Rogers' prolific writing, this simple model of diffusion has become the most widely accepted.

Critique of the Rogers Model

Although it can be argued that the simplicity of Rogers' model contributed to its general acceptance and has provided helpful guidance for the diffusion field, others have seen it as creating a premature consensus. Early on, Feller (1979) argued that "the classical diffusion model [Rogers' model] … produced a situation in which research became first too simple and then too simplistic" (p. 299-300). Feller further noted that:

> The acceptance … of a dominant diffusion model has created a situation in which each new study starts out with the set of variables and relationships posited by the model and then stops at the point where findings are reached which may be either consistent or inconsistent with earlier studies. Little effort, however, is made to go beyond the confines of the existing framework. (p. 300)

The model proposed by Rogers was so quickly adopted by diffusion scholars that it has become a limiting factor in developing the diffusion field.

McAnany (1984) pointed out that Rogers frequently addressed the treatment of unequal consequences of innovation adoption in his books, noting that "it points up a blind spot in much traditional research" (p. 441), a fact that Rogers himself also admitted (1995, 2003). McAnany questioned Rogers' treatment of the unequal consequences, stating "it is a mystery to this reader why Rogers does not propose a more reasonable sociological explanation of what appears to be the consequences of social stratification and the political economy of given societies" (p. 441). I would argue that issues related to social structure and culture—such as social stratification and political economy—are not easily considered and explained because the Rogers model does not explicitly account for them in its framework.

The Rogers model further loses analytic power when it comes to issues of intercultural transfer of knowledge. The implications for its inability to account specifically for cultural, structural and personal effects in diffusion have been demonstrated in evaluations of failed intercultural diffusion projects, such as in the Green Revolution (Glaeser, 1987; Lansing, 1987; Bardini, 1994). Rogers (1984) himself critiques the applicability of the "classical diffusion model"—a model based on the American agricultural extension services—to situations in other countries. More recently, Chabot and Duyvendak (2002) have questioned the use of Rogers' model to interpret the "transnational diffusion" of "contentious politics." They claimed that a model of "essentialist diffusion" such as Rogers' cannot account for "bottom-up as well as top-down adoption processes, creative reinvention by 'followers' as well as 'opinion leaders,' and centripetal as well as centrifugal directions of transmission" (p. 728). The Rogers model is too simplistic for the complexity inherent in intercultural transfer of knowledge.

Even while Rogers (2003) acknowledged in each of his books the inevitability of unintended and unequal cultural and socio-economic consequences of diffusion through culturally insensitive diffusion programs, his model does not enable their investigation beyond the superficial. By using the term "social system," the model inhibits the individual consideration of the elements of individuals, culture and social structure to allow for a detailed discussion of their specific effects on intercultural diffusion. There is no doubt that these are indeed interconnected elements, but being able to discuss each element individually is a critical pre-requisite for an analysis of intercultural diffusion. The Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model supplies this ability through its seven distinct elements.

Rationale for Choosing the Katz, Levin and Hamilton Model

Given the above argument, I have chosen to use the more specific and precise model of Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) to provide structure to my study. Designed as an accounting system, this complex model identified each contributing factor in the overall process of diffusion, giving each one an equal balance of importance. The elements in the model reveal the specific contributing factors and require the diffusion researcher to clearly account for them in a study.

To learn more about the model, I conducted a citation analysis of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton article using the online version of the *Social Science Citation Index*. My citation analysis revealed that the article has been cited only 116 times since its publication, compared to the over 7,000 claimed by Rogers (2003, p. 551). From the citation analysis, it appears that the Katz, Levin and Hamilton model has never been used as a theoretical guide for a diffusion study before. This may be due to the model's complexity, but any difficulty in using a complex model is outweighed by the clearer attribution of effects in the diffusion process through the more finely grained and discrete units of the model. The consequent analytical power makes this model particularly relevant to intercultural knowledge transfer projects such as an international partnership.

Returning to the list of theoretical components and mapping them onto the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model shows the intertwining of the elements, as Table 4-4 illustrates. Many of these theoretical components appeared in my study.

Table 4-4

Theoretical Components and Elements from the Katz, Levin and Hamilton Model (1963)

Element	Related Theoretical Components
Acceptance	Innovation-decision process
Time	Rate of adoption
	Adopter categories
Item	Attributes of innovations
	Reinvention/Adaptation
Adopting Units	Adopter categories
	Heterophily/homophily
	Opinion leaders
Communication Channels	Roles of mass media and interpersonal channels
	Heterophily/homophily
Social Structure	Social networks
	Opinion leaders
	Change agents
	Type of innovation-decision
Culture	Attributes of innovations
	Roles of mass media and interpersonal channels
	Consequences of diffusion
	Reinvention/adaptation
	Type of innovation-decision

Operational Definitions

In this section, I outline the operational definitions for the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model as I used them in my study. The model states that diffusion is:

> The (1) *acceptance*, (2) over *time*, (3) of some specific *item*—an idea or practice, (4) by individuals, groups or other *adopting units*, linked (5) to specific *channels of communication*, (6) to a *social structure*, and (7) to a given system of values, or *culture*. (p. 240, emphasis in original)

Katz, Levin and Hamilton discussed meanings for each element, but operational definitions in relation to my particular study were also necessary.

Acceptance

Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) noted *acceptance* is "rather arbitrarily" defined by diffusion studies (p. 240). Acceptance can be discussed in terms of (a) time—between "time of first use" and "length of sustained use"; and (b) item—how the form, meaning and function of the item are adopted. In the case of ABLE, a particular innovation was not offered; instead, the partners exchange knowledge and may decide not to implement new knowledge because they do not agree with the application of the knowledge in particular circumstances or because of organizational limitations that prevent implementation. Although examples of actual application of professional knowledge and practices were sought, the acceptance element was also realized when participants acknowledged an understanding of the knowledge in question, or what is termed "awareness-knowledge" (Rogers, 2003, p. 173).

***Acceptance* is the understanding of new knowledge by a participant, whether or not the knowledge is ever implemented.**

Time

According to Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963), *time* is "more characteristic of the diffusion process" than any of the other elements (p. 241). They summarized the presence of the time element in the studies they reviewed in terms of recall by a respondent, records of time of acceptance, and inferences to when an item may have been adopted. Traditional diffusion studies track an item throughout a population over time to graph the "S-curve" of adoption (Rogers, 2003). In my study I examined the dyad-level interactions of the diffusion process and did not attempt to trace the S-curve of the spread of any one innovation over time. Therefore, my study is not a traditional diffusion study and I define time in a different manner. For this research, I just needed to know when the participants entered the project and were partnered with another participant, and when, if ever, the partnership ended.

> ***Time* is the period from the start of the partnership as identified by the participant to the current moment, or end of the partnership if identified by the participant.**

Item

Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) identified the *item* in diffusion as either an idea or a practice. Rogers (1983, 1995, 2003) emphasized items that are physically manifested, noting that what is diffused has both "a *hardware* aspect, consisting of the tool that embodies the technology as a material or physical object, and … a *software* aspect, consisting of the information base for the tool" (2003, p. 13, emphasis in original). For a new product to be considered successfully diffused, the information base for that product must also be adopted so the product is used as it was originally intended.

An example can be found in the Native Americans' adaptation of horses as pack animals instead of being ridden; they did not have the information base for the practice of riding, so they applied their knowledge of using dogs as pack animals to the horses (Spicer, 1952). The hardware—the horse—was adopted, but the software—how to ride the horse—was not. Adaptation or only partial adoption of an item is likely to occur when the information base about an item is not fully understood or adopted as well.

The potential adoptability of an innovation depends upon five characteristics according to Rogers (2003): relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, observability, and complexity. If an innovation is perceived to have greater relative advantage and compatibility, less complexity, and can be tried and observed, then it will probably be adopted rapidly (Rogers, 2003, p. 16). However, these characteristics were developed in studies on the diffusion of tangible products (albeit with an accompanying software aspect). What if the "innovation" is intangible, such as knowledge? Chatman (1986) argued that even "ordinary information" can be considered innovative when it is new to an individual: "it is conceivable that information which has not been part of one's awareness…can also be classified as new, and thus be considered an innovation" (p. 379). Thus, the innovation was simply ordinary information that an individual had not encountered before, an intangible item with the characteristics of tangible ones.

My study is not like a traditional diffusion study in terms of this element as well. Because the coordinators of the ABLE project did not pre-determine any specific library innovations to be diffused among the participants, this research could not track the spread of one item. Instead, the partners transfer professional knowledge as the situation demands it; the knowledge being transferred is decided upon by the paired partners and varies among the participants. A handbook to assist the Bulgarian librarians in developing community information centers has been published by ABLE, covering such topics as community collaboration, marketing, fundraising, and lobbying; some of these topics would naturally have been part of the transferred knowledge. Furthermore, given the international nature of this project, another obvious item would be an understanding of librarianship in other cultures as well as knowledge about culture in general. Similar to Chatman's (1986) definition of an innovation, the item in the ABLE case is intangible but may be physically represented.

***Item* is the professional knowledge being transferred, represented as an idea, a practice, or a technology, as related to libraries and librarianship.**

Adopting Units

In the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model, *adopting units* can be individuals or groups, and the use of either "may vary as a function of the 'requirements' of the item or the 'prescription' of the culture" (p. 245). Some items require adoption by an entire group or just an individual, while some cultures require adoption by the entire group instead of an individual. In the case of ABLE, the adopting units are the individuals participating in the partnership. Although implementation of some new knowledge must occur at a group level, such as fundraising, an individual within the group must first accept the idea. My level of analysis is at the individual level, as is the definition of acceptance presented above, thus individuals will be considered the adopting units.

***Adopting units* are the individuals who are participating in the project by being paired with a participant in the other country and who send and receive items of professional knowledge.**

Channels of Communication

Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) and Rogers (1983, 1995, 2003) both recognized two *channels of communication*: mass media and interpersonal. Mass media are communication channels that disseminate information, such as TV, radio, or newspapers, in which a message from one individual can reach an audience of many. There may be a generally defined audience targeted by such a channel, but the messages reach many non-targeted individuals as well. On the other hand, interpersonal channels relay dialogue between individuals. Katz, Levin and Hamilton noted that "different media are appropriate for different tasks" (p. 246); mass media are better for creating awareness while interpersonal relations are better for persuading acceptance (Rogers, 2003).

A significant difference between the two channels is the availability and immediacy of interaction and feedback. Mass media do not allow for immediate interaction, whereas interpersonal communication does. Mass media channels are ideal for dissemination as they are asynchronous, unidirectional and one-to-many or few-to-many. On the other hand, interpersonal channels are ideal for diffusion, being synchronous, bidirectional and one-to-one, one-to-few, or few-to-few. A hybrid channel has emerged with the advent of the Internet, a medium that combines all the features of mass media and interpersonal channels. Interaction can be limited or non-existent (webpages, newsfeeds) or immediate (e-mail, Internet relay chat, voice over IP); asynchronous (e-mail, webpages) or synchronous (Internet relay chat, voice over IP, newsfeeds). The ability of the Internet to support the various permutations of availability and immediacy of human interaction makes it a unique, hybrid communication channel, supporting both dissemination and diffusion.

In the case of ABLE, mass media communication does not play a role. The goals of the ABLE project were to encourage interaction between participants, so interpersonal channels of communication are critical. Participants rely primarily on the Internet for the bulk of communication between them, through e-mail, a project website, and to a lesser degree, Internet relay chat. The project website is perhaps the closest to mass media, as it is assembled by a few people and broadcast to the World Wide Web at large (although targeted to the participants in the project). Besides using the Internet, participants have also had the opportunity to communicate face-to-face, during on-site visits to their partners. Two coordinators held a workshop in Bulgaria, where they presented to a group of participants; another instance of face-to-face interaction. Tables 4-5 and 4-6 outline the different forms of communication channels that are used in the ABLE project and the corresponding aspects of synchronicity and directional flow.

> ***Channels of communication*** **are the means by which the individuals participating in the ABLE project send and receive knowledge; specifically face-to-face interaction during visits and Internet supported interaction through e-mail, relay chat, and webpages.**

Table 4-5

Text-based Communication Channels Used in the ABLE Project

Communication Channel	Actors	Flow	Synchronicity
E-mail	Participant↔Participant Coordinator↔Participant	One-to-one	Asynchronous
Electronic Mailing List	Coordinator↔Participants	One-to-many	Asynchronous
Website	Coordinators↔Participants	One-to-many	Asynchronous
Internet Relay Chat	Participant↔Participant Participant↔Coordinator	One-to-one	Synchronous

Table 4-6

Oral-based Communication Channels Used in the ABLE Project

Communication Channel	Actors	Flow	Synchronicity
On-site Visit	Participant↔Participant Participant↔Coordinator Coordinator↔Participants Participants↔Participants	One-to-one One-to-many Many-to-one Many-to-many	Synchronous
Workshop	Coordinator↔Participants	One-to-many Many-to-one	Synchronous

Social Structure

According to Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963), the *social structure* sets boundaries and describes the interpersonal channels of communication. Consequently, through the boundaries and interpersonal relations, the statuses, roles and patterns of interaction between the actors in the system are established (p. 247). Although he did not include this element in his model, Rogers (2003) discussed social structure and noted that it "gives regularity and stability to human behavior in a system" (p. 24). The social networks that create and are created by the interaction between actors operate on many inter-related levels: individual, organizational, regional and national. Understandings of hierarchy, power and informal relationships are only possible through the greater lens of the overall social structure.

In the ABLE case, there are multiple social networks within complex structures that can be grouped into two categories. First, there are the structures that define the partner libraries: the social and political environments and relationships inside the libraries and the larger local, regional and national contexts. Second, there are the structures that define the ABLE project itself: the networks of interaction between the dyads of the partners, between the coordinators and the partners, and among all the participants. These two categories summarize very complex social structures represented by the social networks that emerge from them. The overall social structure addressed by the model is comprised of these categories.

> ***Social structure* is formed by the social networks created by the interactions of the participants within the social and political environments of the project and the participants' libraries, communities and nations.**

Culture

Underpinning all of the above elements are the "shared attitudes and values" that make up a given *culture* (Katz, Levin & Hamilton, 1963, p. 249). In the intercultural context of an international partnership there is a strong point of homophily—the shared profession, and a strong point of heterophily—the different national cultures. Therefore, how culture affects diffusion in an international partnership is an important consideration.

Although culture is notoriously difficult to define (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952), it deserves a brief discussion here. Keesing and Keesing (1971) argued that culture is an abstraction, made up of composites and generalizations, creating "ideational codes of a people with which they conceptualize their world and interact with one another" (p. 27). Any definition of culture includes concepts that serve to guide behavior, such as beliefs, assumptions, core values, or norms (Sackmann, 1991), which are more likely tacit than explicit (Geertz, 1973; Schein, 1992). Although cultural bearings are difficult to access, they often become more evident when they are in contrast with another culture.

The ABLE participants may be able to identify what effect culture has on their interactions by considering the contrast of their own national culture to that of the other participant. Other levels of culture, such as regional or organizational, may also require attention. Of course, both regional and organizational cultures are framed by the national culture underlying them, but these "sub-cultures" may play a role in knowledge transfer.

> ***Culture* is the tacitly held system of values and norms within which each participant exists and consequently helps to create, organized by multiple differentiated levels (organizational, regional and national), and that guides the behavior and thinking of the participant.**

Chapter Summary

My study examined the transfer of professional knowledge between librarians participating in an international partnership. The appropriate theory to frame this research is the diffusion of innovations. The majority of studies in the various disciplines that comprise the field of diffusion have used the Rogers (2003) model to structure research and interpret findings. However, this model does not allow for the specificity needed to identify all the factors that affect diffusion in intercultural contexts. Therefore, I chose to use the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model, which does distinctly identify the elements of the social system: adopting units, social structure, and culture. My choice of model is a definite departure from traditional diffusion studies. As far as I can tell, this model has never been used before to collect, analyze, and interpret data, which I find surprising. I believe the model has significant analytical power, especially for understanding intercultural diffusion contexts, due to the explicitly stated components of a social system. By using this model, I tried to achieve a better understanding of the precise role of each element in the context of an international partnership and how these elements relate to the factors that affect the partnership.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter presents the research design implemented in my study. First I describe the naturalistic inquiry approach, including the ontological and epistemological issues concerning naturalistic inquiry and techniques for developing a "trustworthy" study. Then I discuss gaining access and trust in an intercultural research context, and how I dealt with language differences. The strategy used for this research is the case study, and I discuss case selection and typology and the possibility of generalizing from a case.

Approach: Naturalistic Inquiry

The research question driving my study asked what factors affect the intercultural transfer of professional knowledge, using a diffusion model as the theoretical framework. However, I could not use typical diffusion research methods that focus on measuring the rate of adoption of a given innovation through surveys or social network maps (Rogers, 2003; Rogers & Kincaid, 1981; Valente, 1994). Due to the intercultural nature and loose formal structure of the ABLE project, the participants are constantly mutually constructing the meaning of their partnerships, between themselves as partners and within the entire group through the coordinators; the ABLE case is a socially constructed reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). To understand such a reality, the most appropriate research approach supplies ontological and epistemological assumptions that are subjective and relative to the context of the investigation, as well as methods that permit flexibility and in-depth study (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Gioa & Pitre, 1990). This approach is naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ontological Assumption: Socially Constructed Reality

Underpinning the naturalistic inquiry approach is the notion of reality being socially constructed (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Opposing the positivist ontology of a "single, tangible reality 'out there'," Lincoln and Guba (1985) articulated the naturalist ontology as "multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically" (p. 37). The assumption is of "multiple realities, with differences among them that cannot be resolved through rational processes or increased data… convergence comes only as the interrelationships between all the elements of reality are seen" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 14). Reality is created by the relationships that weave together a group of people, yet each individual will have a different perspective of that reality.

The context of my research is intercultural diffusion, the transfer of knowledge between people from differing cultural backgrounds. The constructivist approach privileged by naturalistic inquiry is particularly applicable to studies on intercultural diffusion. As Erlandson et al. (1993) explained:

> As people from different cultures and settings come into contact with each other, they begin to share their constructed realities with each other. This sharing is never a straightforward, clear communication of the original constructions; it is shaped by the host of realities already constructed by each group, based on their collective experiences as well as the relationships between the two groups. These shared constructions, in turn do much to structure the future activities and relationships between the groups. (p. 25)

The above quote perfectly describes the ABLE partners; they negotiate the construction of their partnerships based on their own previously constructed realities.

The socially constructed nature of international partnerships has not been widely investigated. As Chapter 3 showed, the extant literature on partnerships, especially between libraries, is primarily descriptive and bases any "lessons learned" on anecdotal stories from personal experiences. The one empirical study of a library partnership took a positivistic approach, using surveys to capture the "reality" of the partnership through descriptive numerical data (Bolt & Cole, 2004; Cole, 2002). As useful as surveys are, they do not easily get to the core of the issue at hand: the participants' perspectives on factors that affected the transfer of knowledge within the partnership. The depth and tacit nature of this issue require an approach that reflects its subjectivity and relativity.

Epistemological Assumption: Interaction between Knower and Known

Given this ontological view, the naturalistic approach then holds that the researcher cannot be separated from what is researched; the construction of reality extends to the researcher. The epistemology of naturalist inquiry states that "the inquirer and the 'object' of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). Erlandson et al. (1993) remarked that "the deeper the understanding the researcher gains of the setting and the persons in it, the more his or her own constructions will be affected" (p. 26). If this reciprocal relationship is ignored, the resulting data are flawed and cannot be meaningfully interpreted. Thus, there is no objective truth to be found; the interactions between researcher and researched create the "truth"—their socially constructed reality.

With this epistemological stance, naturalistic inquiry relies on the researcher as a human instrument for data collection and analysis. The human instrument, argued Lincoln and Guba (1985), brings to bear his or her adaptability, intelligence and tacit knowledge of the research situation, which is best implemented through "frequent, continuing and meaningful interactions" (p. 107). The good naturalistic researcher, then, "seeks to establish relationships through which the mutual shaping of constructions is a collaborative exercise in which researcher and respondents voluntarily participate" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 26). Thus, the quality of interactions between the researcher and the researched determines the quality of the data collected and the analyses made.

Naturalist researchers undertake research as a subjective relationship, which over time becomes like a partnership (Toma, 2000). I tried to develop these relationships with the participants as my study unfolded. At the beginning, my perception of my study was shaped by prior propositional knowledge about the ABLE project and issues in intercultural diffusion. Later, once I was in the field and actively engaging with the participants, I was able to gain the tacit knowledge about the ABLE project that served me in guiding the study's progression and interpreting the findings.

Researcher's Background

Because the researcher is the primary instrument of a naturalistic inquiry, a brief discussion of my background is appropriate. I have been actively interested and engaged in intercultural activities for a long time. I began learning French at a young age; as an undergraduate student, I majored in French and spent my junior year in France, taking classes and traveling extensively to visit several Western and Eastern European countries. I was also married for several years to an Algerian man, during which I lived in France for two more years and visited his home country for an extended stay. My interest in other cultures has not declined and I continue to travel extensively and learn languages for pleasure.

Professionally, I have attended several international conferences and have played key roles in producing four international conferences, all hosted in Sofia, Bulgaria, over the last six years. This prior experience in Bulgaria was a clear advantage to my entrée in the ABLE case. The other asset I brought to establishing my role as researcher with the ABLE participants was my credentials as a librarian. Previous employment in an academic library and familiarity with public library issues based on LIS courses allowed me to relate quickly to the participants.

My life has been enriched by a combination of personal and professional experiences, which has also prepared me well for conducting this research. The extensive sojourns in foreign lands gave me an "intercultural competence" that has influenced my personal perspective on the world (Taylor, 1994). By drawing on both my personal and professional history, I was able to establish fruitful relationships and enter into frequent and meaningful interactions with study participants from two cultures.

Generalization and Trustworthiness

Given the subjective and interactive nature of a naturalistic inquiry, the question naturally arises of generalizing findings to other situations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) answered that "the only generalization is: there is no generalization" (p. 110). This foundation in relativity has been a common criticism of the naturalistic inquiry approach (Erlandson et al., 1993; Firestone, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba argued that the naturalist inquiry is ultimately an idiographic inquiry that cannot be generalized; however, it can produce working hypotheses that may be transferable to other contexts. The only responsibility of the naturalist researcher regarding generalization is to provide as "thick" a description as possible to assist other researchers in the application of the findings to other situations. Thick descriptions and working hypotheses are the naturalist equivalent of the traditional positivist goal of generalization.

In the positivist paradigm, the quality of a study, i.e., its generalizability, is assessed by validity, reliability, and objectivity. Naturalistic inquiries also have measures of rigor to determine a study's quality, what Lincoln and Guba (1985) called "trustworthiness." Authenticity is demonstrated through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. As developing and maintaining trustworthiness through these criteria is the only way to provide validity and reliability to a study based on the naturalist approach, I was careful to follow Lincoln and Guba's recommendations to maintain my trustworthiness as the human instrument.

Credibility

Credibility addresses the internal validity of the study by asking the "constructors of the multiple realities being studied" to approve the study's truth value (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). To establish credibility, I used five techniques suggested by Lincoln and Guba: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks.

Prolonged Engagement

The first technique, prolonged engagement in the field, leads to "learning the 'culture,' testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and building trust" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). Spending a long time at the sites to get to know the participants was my desire, but given the geographical and practical considerations of my study it was difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, I was able to spend 100 days in the field, visiting the participants at their libraries.

The time that I physically spent with the participants ranged from hour long interviews to nearly constant presence during the in-depth data collection periods. Because the ABLE project consists of primarily virtual partnerships with multiple libraries involved, there simply was not just one physical setting for me to visit for a prolonged time. The majority of my visits to libraries were brief, lasting no more than half a day. During the in-depth data collection periods, I spent at least the whole working day with the participants, but even then I spent no more than four days with any one of them. Fortunately, all the participants were open-minded and interested in helping me, so by relying heavily on my listening and people skills I fortunately was quickly able to establish a basic trust and rapport with everyone when I was able to visit in person.

Overall, my prolonged engagement with the field came from frequent periodic communication with the participants during a long period of time. I relied on frequent e-mails with the participants, and I tried to avoid an "out of sight, out of mind" tendency that can appear with only periodic physical visits. In a way, this form of prolonged engagement was much easier than being at a site for an extended period, as the "site" was available whenever and wherever I had a connection to the Internet.

Persistent Observation

The second technique I implemented was persistent observation to "identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). While the technique of prolonged engagement sets out the scope of the data collection, the technique of persistent observation identifies the areas to plumb for depth. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation go hand in hand.

To identify areas to plumb before entering the field, I thoroughly read the historical material given to me by the Colorado coordinator. This material included several evaluations of previous visits and highlighted some areas for more detailed questioning. Once in the field, I constantly referred to my research question and previous reading to determine elements that were most relevant to the problem. Periodically during the interviews a participant responded with an intriguing comment that prompted further questioning of that participant, as well as returning to previous participants and modifying the interview protocol. Some interesting avenues presented themselves in the course of interviews, but after reflection I determined they did not fall under the purview of this study. My research question and persistent observation of the data kept me grounded and able to identify relevant and irrelevant data.

Triangulation

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) third recommendation for credibility was triangulation through multiple sources, methods, investigators or theories; I used multiple sources and multiple methods. Multiple sources can imply either "*multiple* copies of one *type* of source ... or *different* sources of the *same* information" (p. 305, emphasis in original). I collected both types, as Tables 5-1 and 5-2 illustrate. My research design called for five different methods of data collection, which I detail in the next chapter. These different methods resulted in multiple copies of five types of data sources, for example, over 70 individual interviews (Table 5-1). By combining the different methods, I could also gather information about the same topic from multiple sources (Table 5-2). I took triangulation very seriously in order to reach a degree of convergence in my findings that leads to a greater confidence in those findings (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Table 5-1

Examples of Multiple Copies of One Type of Source

One Type of Source	Multiple Copies
Interview	70+ individuals; 4 groups
E-mail	17 individuals
Observation	7 individuals
Journal	10 individuals

Table 5-2

Examples of Different Sources of the Same Information

Same Information	Different Sources
Relationship between participants A & B	Individual Interviews with participants A & B
	E-mail between participants A & B
	Observation of participants A & B together
	Journals from participants A & B
Language as a factor	Individual Interviews
	Group Interviews
	E-mail
	Observation
	Journal

Peer Debriefing

Another recommendation I followed to create credibility was "peer debriefing," or talking with a peer outside the context of the research about the work. I spoke most with two fellow PhD dissertators, who could certainly relate to my emotional responses and helped me to process what I was experiencing. They were also very useful in helping me to expose analytical ideas that were only implicit in my thoughts by asking "devil's advocate" questions. Sometimes just the act of talking out loud about the obstacle was enough for me to think through to a solution.

Member Checks

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" is frequent checks with the participants in the study regarding the accuracy of the data collected and the notions conceived based on those data (p. 314). I set up several checkpoints during my study. First, I asked clarification questions and restated my understanding to the participant throughout the interviews. I sent copies of the transcripts and follow-up questions to the participants for their feedback. Finally, as I developed the findings, I ran them past the participants to make sure they agreed with my conclusions. Through the combination of these techniques I attempted to reflect the meanings provided by the participants.

Sometimes member checking posed problems. Because I interacted with the participants through e-mail, I sometimes found it difficult to receive feedback. For the Americans, I e-mailed them once, then if no response, a second time; if still no response I would call them. If I could not connect with them after one phone call, I would not pursue further. For the Bulgarians, I e-mailed them up to four times before stopping;

calling them was too difficult. If they did not respond after four e-mails, I assumed they had no comment. Such "virtual" member checks were challenging.

Transferability

Instead of the external validity mandated by positivist research, a naturalist inquiry aims for applicability of findings through a detailed description of the study to allow for transferability. I strived to create a "thick description" of the ABLE case, its participants and context (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ryle, 1949). This included in-depth writing about the project's history, the libraries, and the people, especially those seven participants with whom I spent a few days during the intensive data collection periods. Yet again, the virtual nature of the case significantly affected my development of a thick description. There were only a few physical settings and interactions I could describe in depth, when the participants visited each other and I spent significant time with them. Abbreviated descriptions of the case, the three sets of embedded case, and the seven mini-cases are in Chapter 7.

Dependability and Confirmability

The criteria of dependability and confirmability of findings are demonstrated through an inquiry audit trail. The inquiry audit is "based metaphorically on the fiscal audit" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 317) and is used to examine both the process and the product of the inquiry. Table 5-3 presents six categories in an audit trail and the materials I collected to fulfill them. These categories were very useful for creating a system to handle all the documentation that came with such a large case study. The materials also contributed to the thick description of the case (Schwandt & Halpern, 1988), enabling the transferability as well as ensuring the dependability and confirmability of my research.

Table 5-3

Inquiry Audit Categories and Materials

Audit Trail Category	Materials
Raw data	Interview protocol guides, questions
	Interview transcripts
	Interview feedback sheets and questions
	E-mail
	Journals
	Documents, photographs
	Field notes, Reflexive journal entries
Data reduction and analysis products	Category lists
	Theme lists
	N-Vivo summaries
	Memos
Data reconstruction and synthesis products	Memos
	Illustrations, figures
	Early drafts of dissertation
Process notes	Reflexive journal
	E-mail updates to advisor
Intentions and dispositions materials	Dissertation proposal
	Reflexive journal
Instrument development materials	Interview protocol development notes
	Journal instructions

Reflexive Journaling

Finally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended reflexive journaling to support all the criteria of trustworthiness; Janesick (1999) referred to its use as a "check and balance." The instrument of choice for naturalistic inquiry is the human researcher, because of naturally human characteristics like responsiveness, adaptability, and the ability to immediately process data, make summaries, and explore responses (pp. 193-194). Erlandson et al. (1993) argued that the human instrument's "sensitivity and flexibility derive from its ability to interact with the data it encounters, and this interaction means that it will be affected, sometimes positively and sometimes adversely, by these encounters" (p. 107). Because of the reliance on a single fallible instrument, it is critical to maintain its balance and calibration.

Therefore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended keeping a reflexive journal: "a kind of diary in which the investigator on a daily basis, or as needed, records a variety of information about *self*... and *method*" (p. 327, emphasis in original). I used Microsoft's OneNote software; its flexibility allowed me to capture thoughts on the fly as well as link to documents on my computer. One section of my reflexive journal compiled the practical aspects of the research: a log of the schedule and logistical arrangements for data collection. Another section recorded methodological changes and shifts. I also used the journal to debrief, exploring feelings, struggles, triumphs, and other personal issues. Based on the suggestions of Sternberg (1981), I also included sections to capture and explore ideas sparked by the data, to propose and examine trouble spots in my study, and to assess my progress regularly. My reflexive journal was critical to remaining a calibrated instrument.

Summary

The ontological and epistemological assumptions of the naturalistic inquiry approach mesh with my own worldview as well as the case under study. The ABLE project is a socially constructed reality, with the participants constantly mutually constructing the meaning of their partnerships. While I have become quite attached to the ABLE case and do not deny the subjective nature of my research, I also believe that it can act as an example for other studies on international partnerships. By following the above eight techniques to establish trustworthiness, I believe my research is credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable, resulting in a useful study for other researchers.

Context: Intercultural Research

Given the international aspect of these partnerships, one of the defining issues of my research was the interaction between people from different cultures. I am interested in "heterophilous interpersonal communication between individuals of different cultures," what Rogers and Hart (2002) called *intercultural* communications (p. 2). Although my study examined the structural elements at the meso-level that affected the individual partnerships, I was particularly interested in the interpersonal dyads of the partnerships themselves, which are also the typical unit of analysis in intercultural communication (Barnett & Lee, 2002; Rogers & Hart, 2002). Thus, I needed to implement certain measures to respect the cultural nuances of gathering data at a micro level in a different culture (Barrett & Cason, 1997; Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Three important issues evolved as I prepared to enter the intercultural field: (a) how to gain access; (b) how to establish trust; and (c) how to handle the different languages.

Gaining Access

One of the most difficult components of conducting intercultural research is gaining access to the participants. A "gatekeeper" is the central and pivotal individual who can allow or prevent access to a group; Metoyer-Duran (1991) defined gatekeepers as "those persons who help individuals gain access to resources needed to solve problems" (p. 320, see also Agada, 1999; Broadhead & Rist, 1976; Corra & Willer, 2002). For my study, the resources needed were the individuals who participated in the ABLE project; I needed the permission and support of the coordinators of the project.

Through my previous experience with an international conference series in Bulgaria, I was acquainted with the coordinator from Colorado. I contacted her, explained my purpose, and was met with enthusiasm. It turned out that the project needed an evaluation, to which my research could contribute. Before I submitted my dissertation proposal, I went to Colorado to meet with her and the previous and current Bulgarian coordinators, who happened to be in Colorado for a visit. While there, I also participated in a group phone call to the Iowa coordinator. Spending time with them and discussing my research proposal allowed me to garner their input and approval.

Later on, the support from the gatekeepers was very helpful in contacting the participants and arranging the data collection. The Colorado and Bulgarian coordinators sent out e-mails to their groups to introduce me and my work and made sure that I had the correct contact information for everyone. The Colorado coordinator and the current Bulgarian coordinator also personally introduced me to groups of participants. The Iowa coordinator held a group interview in my stead when I could not attend. I was fortunate to have willing and helpful gatekeepers.

Establishing Trust

While preparing to enter the field and begin the data collection, I worried about earning the trust of the participants. Although I had the sanction of the gatekeepers, I needed to create a trusting relationship with all the participants. I relied on methodological protocols and my own intercultural competence to establish positive relationships with the participants.

The first step toward developing trust was creating and implementing methodological protocols to assure the participants protection from any potentially harmful effects while participating in the study. First, I gained approval for my study from Emporia State University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A). I wrote an introductory letter and informed consent forms for the study overall and each of the methods, in both English and Bulgarian (see Appendixes B through O), and gave ample opportunity for questions. I assigned identification codes to the participants, secured the audiotapes used for recording interviews after transcription, stripped overtly identifying information in documents, and conducted persistent member checks with the participants to allow them to indicate what they considered too sensitive. These methodological procedures helped to guarantee confidentiality to the best of my ability as a sign of my ethical research conduct.

I found the various reactions to the informed consent forms interesting. During my early interactions with the Bulgarian coordinators, I inquired as to the usefulness of the informed consent forms and was assured that the Bulgarians would understand the purpose and not be offended. Indeed, the reactions to the informed consent forms from both cultural groups were similar: some participants read them very carefully and signed them in an official manner, while others skimmed them and scrawled a signature. This did not appear to be due to a cultural difference; the reaction to the informed consent forms was one of personality. Regardless of how the participants treated the informed consent protocol, they took the study very seriously, which ultimately is all that mattered.

Perhaps the most important way I gained trust with the participants was by simply enacting the intercultural competency traits I have developed during my previous intercultural experiences. I found that the most helpful traits were being open-minded, curious, flexible, easy-going and friendly—personal characteristics that are important in any research that takes the constructivist approach. I easily developed informal relationships with the Bulgarian participants because they are exceptional hosts with an innate sense of hospitality and concern for guests. They were very curious about me, my family and my work, and did not hesitate to ask questions. I honored their curiosity with honest answers and returned the questions, emphasizing my willingness to openly and sincerely interact with them. I had the privilege of meeting and even staying with some participants' families. Spending a lot of time with the Bulgarian participants enabled me to establish those informal relationships so important to creating trust with a person from another culture (Barrett & Cason, 1997) and to enter into the co-construction of the research process with them (Hong, 1998).

Forming trust with the American participants was based more upon a respect for my role as researcher than a personal relationship. Although I got to know some of the American participants in an informal manner too, it seemed to me that most of these participants relied upon my word as a researcher more than a personal judgment of my character to gauge my trustworthiness. Most conversations outside of the interview were about professional topics, especially with those participants whom I only briefly visited. The difference in the way trust was built with the Americans than with the Bulgarians, I believe, was due to the short time that I spent with most of the Americans, lasting for only the interview. Also, being in my home country where I could understand the language and get along by myself provided a level of independence in the United States that I did not have in Bulgaria, where the participants were very concerned about my well-being in a foreign land. Overall, I found that I was able to build trust with all the participants to at least a superficial degree, but often more profoundly.

Language

A primary issue in intercultural research is the interaction of different languages (Barrett & Cason, 1997). When embarking upon intercultural research, one must fully assess one's language abilities in all languages involved and make decisions regarding how language levels will be utilized or accommodated. It is most often the case that the researcher is not fluent in both languages, so consideration of the need for translation or interpretation is necessary.

I am not fluent in Bulgarian, which was an issue when writing the informed consent documents and implementing the interview and journal data collection methods. The college-aged son of my outside reader graciously translated the multiple informed consent forms into Bulgarian, which were checked for accuracy by another Bulgarian colleague. However, right before going to Bulgaria, I realized that I had left out the line for signature and date on the forms, so I looked up these words in my Bulgarian/English dictionary and inserted them at the end of the forms. My first interviewee was kind enough not to laugh too hard while she pointed out to me that I had written "Подрис" (*podris*—diarrhea) instead of "Подпис" (*podpis*—signature). I am not sure if I simply mistyped (the keys for "п" and "p" are next to each other on the keyboard), or if I was confused by the Cyrillic alphabet. In any case, it was a cause for laughter and gentle teasing, and it was certainly an ice breaker! I did not correct my mistake, mostly for practical reasons, but I was also curious to see if anyone else caught it. A few did and it was always a tension relieving moment.

When it came to interviewing the Bulgarian participants, I faced the question of whether to conduct the interviews in English or in Bulgarian with an interpreter. I ended up using both options, each with a different set of participants. For those participants who could speak English, we conducted the interview in English. My rationale for this choice was because the interview is already a co-constructed event, so I could in good faith work with the participants to help them find the words they needed to express themselves. I always had my Bulgarian/English dictionary handy, but it was never used; they preferred to explain their intent and meaning rather than look up a word. The process of conversing was enough to help them formulate their thoughts and opinions in a way that I could understand. I was very careful to state back to the participant what I heard, to make sure that I correctly understood. While this ran the risk of the participant agreeing with what I was stating just to continue the conversation or show respect for me, I felt that the Bulgarian participants were sincere in their "research work" with me, as they would correct me without compunction. I am sure that I did not receive the deep details that I would have if I understood Bulgarian, but I firmly believe that together these Bulgarian participants and I were able to construct interviews that accurately reflected their thoughts and opinions.

The other set of Bulgarian participants were those who could not speak English, the library directors. For these participants, I needed interpretation. When I arranged the interviews with the library directors, I requested an interpreter from outside the ABLE project—even the library if possible. I believed that an independent interpreter would be less likely to be tempted to give a judgmental or subjective twist on the responses from the library directors. However, finding an independent interpreter was not always possible and sometimes the participating partner had to interpret. The first time this happened, I was careful to note the nonverbal cues of the library director and the interpreter/partner, to try to assess an alignment between what the library director was saying and what the interpreter was conveying. The participant seemed sincerely concerned with accurately conveying the library director's comments. Thereafter, I made a note of who did the interpretation and paid close attention to the verbal and nonverbal cues, no matter who did the interpreting. A particular benefit to the ABLE participant interpreting was their familiarity with library terminology. Sometimes a pause to explain terms to an independent interpreter was necessary, interrupting the flow of the interview for a moment. Interpretation is never a perfect solution, but it sometimes must be done.

As for the journals, the Bulgarians had the option of writing in their native language, which all but one did. I then employed a professional native Bulgarian translator, not involved with the ABLE project, to translate the four journals into English. The translator also included notes if there were any unclear portions of the text or to explicate a cultural element. Upon receiving the translations, I e-mailed them as attachments back to their authors for a cross-check of the accuracy of the translations. The participants who responded all accepted the English translations of their work.

The involvement of interpreters and a translator—people outside the case under research—raises important epistemological issues. Temple and Young (2004) argued that if one ascribes to a social constructivist perspective, "then translators *must* also form part of the process of knowledge production" (p. 164). As Shklarov (2007) asserted:

> By aiming at pure objectivity and equivalency, researchers tend to reduce the translation process to a technical act instead of regarding it for what it is, that is, a significant variable in the research process that can influence its content, outcomes, and ethical adequacy. (p. 530)

Involvement of these individuals can range from a technical role to a highly integrated and interactive role, depending upon the needs of the research (Shklarov, 2007; Temple & Edwards, 2002). For my research, I chose to rely on mutually constructing interviews with the Bulgarian participants who spoke English and leaned toward a technical approach to interpretation and translation when it was needed.

In my reflexive journal I debated whether or not the interpreters and translator had an effect upon the data. While I do not deny that the presence of an interpreter may have had an effect upon the interview context and content, I believe it was minimal. I did not involve the outside interpreters and translator with the creation of the research data other than the employment of their technical expertise, because I did not rely solely—or even primarily—on the data created with/by them for the basis of my work. The interviews with the library directors supplemented the interviews with the Bulgarian partners. The journals supplemented my direct experience with the participants onsite. I believe that the participation of the interpreters and translator was superficial enough not to warrant a full consideration of any possible effects on the knowledge produced through them.

Summary

Before going to Bulgaria, I tried to learn as much as possible about the people, language and culture by reading background material about the country. Once there, I called upon the general trait of cultural sensitivity I have cultivated throughout my life to keep an open mind and tactfully asked questions when unsure how to proceed. I have had many life experiences with intercultural communication, as described in the Researcher's Background section, which have helped to sensitize me to different behaviors and values. Also, the reflexive journal that is part of developing trustworthiness of a naturalist study kept me attentive to my positions as outsider and researcher and my own interpretations of what I experienced. Conducting intercultural research certainly has a unique set of challenges, but I could not have achieved answers to my research question any other way.

Strategy: Case Study

A suitable strategy for conducting research within a naturalistic inquiry approach is the case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), because it allows for a thick description through deep investigation into a delimited context. Yin (2003) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Stake (2000) noted, "Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied" (p. 435), the goal of which is to "increase both propositional and experiential knowledge" of the case (p. 442). The purpose of my study was to increase both these forms of knowledge concerning the transfer of professional knowledge between librarians in international partnerships through their descriptions of their experiences.

There is no definitive answer to what determines a "case" (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ragin & Becker, 1992; Stake, 2005). While Yin's (2003) definition indicated that the boundaries between the phenomenon of interest and the context are blurred, Stake (2000) maintained that a case must be a bounded and integrated system with patterned behavior (p. 436). The system of ABLE is bounded by the participating libraries in Colorado, Iowa, and Bulgaria and even further by those people within the libraries who participate in the project. Not everyone in a member library participates; usually it is only one or two people who are charged with partnership liaison responsibilities. These individual members of the system are integrated with each other through their joint communication and through their interactions with the coordinators. The participants have patterned behaviors of interaction and communication with each other. Finally, they became the object of focused inquiry during this study. The ABLE project fits the characteristics of a case study and is indeed "a functioning body" (Stake, 2005, p. 444).

Selection and Classification of the Case

Selecting a case to study can be a complicated endeavor, but understanding the type of case often helps in choosing an appropriate case. Yin (1981, 2003) argued that while case studies may be used primarily for an exploratory purpose, they may also be "used for either descriptive or explanatory purposes as well—i.e., to describe a situation (e.g., a case history), or to test explanations for why specific events have occurred" (1981, p. 98). Stake (2000, 2005) classified case studies as intrinsic, instrumental or collective, although he noted it is often difficult to classify a case into only one type. Intrinsic cases are interesting in and of themselves and are pre-selected based on their unique features; whether or not they contribute to a better understanding of a larger issue is not a critical factor. Instrumental cases, on the other hand, are useful for gaining insight into an issue and are used as examples of that larger issue. Thus, they require thoughtful consideration, with the most important criterion being the ability to "maximize what we can learn" (Stake, 1995, p. 4). A case chosen for instrumental purpose, such as the ABLE case, needs to offer a balance between particularity and typicality of similar situations. Collective case studies compile multiple cases that are themselves either intrinsic or instrumental. It is usually quite difficult to set a case in a clear distinction between intrinsic and instrumental cases. Most cases fall into what Stake (2005) called "a zone of combined purpose," used to describe the case for its own value and provide support for explaining an issue or supporting a generalization (p. 445).

My work can be classified as an exploratory case study, as I used the ABLE case to identify factors that affect the transfer of professional knowledge. The case is also instrumental, with the balance between particularity and typicality. The ABLE project resembles other international partnerships between libraries with the combination of on-going e-mail communication and periodic face-to-face visits. However, the size and geographic scope of the ABLE project sets it apart from other partnerships, which tend to partner only two individual libraries and not create a system of partnered libraries like ABLE. Later, as I worked through data collection and became more familiar and involved with the case, I took on a more intrinsic perspective and my approach to the ABLE case moved into Stake's (2005) zone of combined purpose. The ABLE case is complex and intrinsically interesting, but my primary interest is its ability to contribute to advancing an understanding of knowledge transfer between professionals in international partnerships.

Cases within the Case

Besides the challenges in selecting a case, there are challenges in setting the boundaries of that case. Cases are difficult to define; bounded systems can frequently be porous and decisions must be made about where to draw the line. As Stake (2005) noted, "The case to be studied is a complex entity located in a milieu or situation embedded in a number of contexts or backgrounds" (p. 449). Furthermore, a complex entity identified as a "case" may also contain groups of sub-systems identified by distinguishing factors. These sub-systems can in turn be treated as cases within the larger case, depending on the level of analysis. Yin (2003) identified sub-units of the overall case as "embedded cases" that become evident when the case is examined from more than one level of analysis, through which particular distinguishing factors may be recognized. A more focused approach was taken by Stake (2005), who used the term "mini-cases" to describe cases within the overall case that develop based upon choices about persons, places and events to observe. Investigating and comparing embedded or mini cases allows for a more detailed level of inquiry and analysis.

The ABLE case is certainly a complex entity embedded in multiple contexts, as it is a loosely linked, complex network of people in multiple geographical locations. During my research, three sets of embedded cases emerged, organized by (a) the geographical location of the participants, (b) the role of the participants in ABLE, and (c) the length of time in the project. There were also seven mini-cases created from instances where I chose when and whom to observe: five Bulgarian visitors to the United States and two American visitors to Bulgaria. I present and discuss these seven mini-cases, the three embedded cases, and the ABLE case overall in Chapter 7.

Case Studies and Generalization

As I discussed in Chapter 2, this research has certain limitations due to the nature of a case study, the most significant of which is the limited ability to generalize from a case. The case study strategy parallels naturalistic inquiry and shares many of the same challenges with generalization. As with naturalistic inquiry, the ability to generalize from a case study has often been argued, with most objections arising from the idiographic nature of cases (Steinmetz, 2004; Tsoukas, 1989). However, proponents of the case study research strategy argue that cases can contribute in a significant manner to theory development. Flyvbjerg (2006) defended the usage of case studies for explanation, even theory building, moving beyond simple exploratory quests. He noted that:

> One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas 'the force of example' is underestimated (p. 228).

Using cases to build theory can be done by carefully selecting extreme cases, critical cases or paradigmatic cases, especially when such cases can provide ideal examples for Popperian falsification of theory (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Ruddin, 2006).

Yin (2003) also argued for the usefulness of cases for developing theory, calling the type of generalization that case study supports "analytic generalization," described as when "a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study" and different from statistical generalization (pp. 32-33). Stake (2005) asserted, "even intrinsic case study can be seen as a small step toward grand generalization" (p. 448), because just one case can be used for what Stake termed "naturalistic generalization… conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as it if happened to themselves" (Stake, 1995, p. 85; see also Stake, 2005). When a case study is so well constructed that one feels as if he or she were there, then it is possible to accept the findings proposed by the study and integrate them into one's own theoretical understanding.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) contemplated the concept of naturalistic generalization in relation to naturalistic inquiry, but opted instead to base their concept of transferability on the notion of the "working hypothesis." As I discussed earlier, Lincoln and Guba argued that theories are always modifiable as local conditions are taken into account (pp. 122-124). The only responsibility of the naturalist researcher regarding generalization from case studies is to enable transferability. In this way, case studies—such as the one presented in this dissertation—contribute to the overall body of knowledge collected about an issue, ultimately contributing to theory building through analytic generalization.

Summary

I chose to use the case study strategy to gain an in-depth and experiential understanding of the transfer of professional knowledge between librarians within an international partnership. The ABLE project proved to be complex enough to offer a large learning potential, yet not too large to become unwieldy; it is a good example of an exploratory instrumental case that can add to analytic generalization. Set within a diffusion theory framework, the ultimate purpose of this research is to contribute a small part to the theory that explains the transfer of knowledge between professionals in international partnerships.

Chapter Summary

The problem behind this study is the assumption that international partnerships between libraries are good mechanisms for transferring professional knowledge. Because I used a case study to investigate this problem, the naturalistic inquiry approach and its associated ontological and epistemological assumptions is appropriate. As the "instrument" of research, I took careful measures to protect the trustworthiness of the study, using eight techniques to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability and credibility. Given the international nature of the topic, issues of intercultural research, such as language differences and gaining access to and trust from the participants, had to be addressed. To study the factors affecting knowledge transfer within a socially constructed partnership, I undertook an exploratory and instrumental case study of one such partnership that has elements that are both typical of international partnerships (communication by e-mail and occasional face-to-face visits) and particular to this one case (multiple partnerships and multiple geographic locations). The research design of my study can subsequently be summed up as an exploratory instrumental case study, in an intercultural context and couched in the naturalistic inquiry approach. The next chapter details the methods I followed for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH METHODS

Because the term "case study" refers to the item under study, and not the form of study itself, a variety of research designs and techniques for data collection and analysis can be used (Stake, 2005; Yin 2003). As Yin (1981) astutely noted, "The most challenging aspect of case study research, however, is that a variety of sources of evidence are relevant" (p. 104). However, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of naturalistic inquiry require qualitative methods within an emergent design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Accordingly, I chose to implement multiple qualitative data collection techniques in a manner reliant upon previous interactions with the participants and results from earlier data collection. I used five qualitative methods to tap the ABLE participants for sources of evidence:

- Individual interviews
- Focus group interviews
- Document review
- Direct observation
- Participant journals

In this chapter, I present and discuss these methods and their implementation, including the use of reflexive journaling as an additional data collection method. Concluding the chapter is a discussion of the data analysis process using the constant comparative technique (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) supported by the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software N-Vivo7 (QSR International, 2007). First, I address purposive sampling and present the timeframe of the data collection.

Purposive Sampling

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that purposive or theoretical sampling "increases the scope or range of data exposed…as well as the likelihood that the full array of multiple realities will be uncovered" (p. 40). Purposive sampling has an emergent design that is continuously adjusted through the serial selection of sample units until redundancy of data is reached (pp. 201-202). I agreed with the notion of selecting participants in a purposeful and emergent manner, and although I strived for a saturation sample, I had to choose who to involve as I deployed the methods based upon a consideration of what they might contribute to my data collection. Therefore, my sampling technique can be characterized as a modified purposive saturation sample. The need to purposively select participants for data collection particularly arose during the deployment of two methods: individual interviews and direct observation.

Individual Interviews

I initially planned to conduct individual interviews with the partners—18 in the United States and 18 in Bulgaria—and the coordinators—2 in the United States and 2 in Bulgaria—for a total of 40 participants. Later I realized the need to interview the Bulgarian library directors, adding another 18 people. When I set out into the field, I was expecting to conduct individual interviews with 58 people, but by the end of data collection I had interviewed 72 people. The original number increased as I accepted referrals from American participants to interview other professionals who were active in the project at some point. The purposively selected additional interviews gave me more background information, a better understanding of the activities in the ABLE project, and an overall deeper insight to the interactions between the participants.

Direct Observation

The most important instance of purposive sampling occurred during the direct observation of the American visitors to Bulgaria. I was not able to observe all of the American visitors as there were five of them, each in a different city and only in Bulgaria for two weeks; therefore I decided to observe only two Americans. In consultation with the Colorado coordinator, I chose the two American participants based upon their longevity in the ABLE project: a long-term participant from Colorado and a short-term participant from Iowa. My decision to observe these two participants was the most purposive sampling of my study to the exclusion of the others.

Timeframe

Any in-depth study of a case requires an extensive amount of time spent with the participants—the prolonged engagement recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The timeframe originally proposed for the study was September 2005 through August 2006. These 12 months encompassed the remainder of the ABLE grant timeline and included two instances of visits between the participants. I therefore structured the data collection to reflect the on-going nature of the partnerships and the punctuated events of the two visits. Although originally scheduled to end in August, I extended the study until mid-November, 2006.

It was my desire to spend several days at each participating library, particularly at the Bulgarian libraries, but practical matters made this impossible. I did manage to spend 100 days collecting data in the field, as Table 6-1 presents.

Table 6-1

Data Collection, Arranged by Date

Year	Dates	Location	Activities	Days
2005	26 Sept—11 Oct	Colorado	17 Individual interviews	16
	20 Oct—2 Nov	Iowa	1 Focus group interview	13
			13 Individual interviews	
	9 Nov—13 Nov	Colorado	1 Focus group	5
2006	7 Mar—9 Apr	Colorado; Iowa	5 Journals—Bulgarian visitors	
	7 Mar—17 Mar	Iowa	2 Individual interviews	11
			3 Observations	
	21 Mar—24 Mar	Boston (PLA)	Observation	4
			1 Focus group	
	27 Mar—9 Apr	Colorado	2 Individual interviews	14
			2 Focus groups	
			2 Observations	
	30 Apr—2 Jun	Bulgaria	29 Individual interviews	34
			1 Focus group	
			2 Observations	
	22 May—1 Jun	Bulgaria	5 Journals—American visitors	
	11 Oct	Iowa	1 Focus group	1
	10 Nov	Bulgaria	3 Individual interviews	1
			Total Days on Site:	100

My first voyage into the field was to Colorado for three weeks in fall 2005 to conduct multiple interviews with current and past participants. Almost immediately upon my return from Colorado I went to Iowa for two weeks of interviewing, beginning with a focus group interview at the Iowa Library Association annual meeting. One week later I went back to Colorado to hold a focus group interview during the Colorado Association of Libraries annual meeting.

During spring 2006, I observed the visits of five Bulgarian partners during four weeks. I went to Iowa for nearly two weeks in early March to observe three Bulgarians in three different locations and to hold a few individual interviews with American participants. I then traveled to the Public Library Association biennial meeting in Boston, joining the five visiting Bulgarians plus an additional Bulgarian member of ABLE. I observed their reactions, conducted a few impromptu interviews, and held a focus group interview with them. Immediately after, I spent two weeks in Colorado observing the other two Bulgarian visitors at their locations and gathering a few remaining individual interviews with other American participants.

I spent the month of May in Bulgaria, traveling throughout the country to visit 16 libraries in 15 cities. During this time, I conducted individual interviews with Bulgarian participants and library directors, held a focus group interview with the visiting Americans, and observed two Americans interacting with their Bulgarian partners in two different locations. Later in October, I went to Iowa for one day to conduct a brief focus group at the Iowa Library Association's annual meeting. In early November, I went back to Bulgaria for a tour and a conference; during this time I conducted a few remaining individual interviews with Bulgarian participants.

In the end, I spent 15 months traveling throughout two countries, visiting more than thirty libraries, and meeting dozens of people to collect the enormous dataset to respond to the research questions of my study. Stake (2005) rightfully asks "Not everything about the case can be understood—so how much needs to be?" (p. 448). I believe that by the end of the 15 months I had reached a point of saturation; I had collected and analyzed enough data for a good understanding of the ABLE case and answers to the research questions. In the next six sections I discuss each of the five data collection methods, including the use of reflexive journaling to provide additional raw data as well as to keep myself a balanced instrument.

Individual Interviews

Interviewing is becoming "a universal mode of systematic inquiry" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 1) and widely recognized as "the basic method of data gathering" for qualitative studies (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 646). Qualitative interviewing is ideal for a naturalistic inquiry, because "the epistemology of the qualitative interview tends to be more constructionist than positivist" (Warren, 2002, p. 83). Qualitative interviews actively involve the interviewer and interviewee in the joint construction of an interview event, resulting in a negotiated and contextually based product (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Kvale, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Because what I wanted to know could not be answered simply or briefly, and I wanted the participants to give examples and describe experiences, I chose to rely on in-depth individual interviews with the people in the ABLE project as my primary method of data collection. In this section I discuss the interviews, the sample, and the process used for both face-to-face and e-mail interviews.

Semi-structured Interviews

I chose a semi-structured form of interviewing because I had a specific focus area that interested me, but I wanted the freedom to pursue an interesting and relevant topic if proposed by an interviewee. The literature review guided an initial list of open-ended questions, which I used in combination with story-telling (Linde, 2001) and critical incident (Flanagan, 1954) techniques to develop communicative rapport with the participant while steering the conversation toward a goal (Kvale, 1996). My initial set of questions went through multiple iterations; as I communicated with the coordinators and interviewed current and past partners, there arose more specific questions as well as additional topics to address. I also developed separate question lists for the coordinators and the Bulgarian library directors, which addressed their unique vantage points on the project. The final question lists can be found in Appendixes P through R.

Sample

A saturation sample was my goal: to interview everyone who played a part in the ABLE project in order to understand the entire case. I began by identifying the coordinators and current partners in the project. From these individuals, I then purposively used the snowball sampling technique to identify others who were related to the project in some meaningful way and might helpfully contribute to the data. In this manner I ended up interviewing the active partners and coordinators, the Bulgarian library directors, several past partners, and other individuals who were involved with the project in varying amounts and at varying times, for a total of 72 interviewees. Table 6-2 illustrates the distribution, by geographical location and role, of the participants in the ABLE project with whom I conducted individual interviews.

Table 6-2

Distribution of Individual Interviews by Role and Geographic Location

Type	Colorado	Iowa	Bulgaria	TOTAL
Coordinator	1	2	2	5
Current Partners	10	8	15	33
Past Partners	6	2	2	10
Library Directors (not partners)	0	0	14	14
Other	2	5	3	10
TOTAL	19	17	36	72

From the 72 total individuals, I conducted interviews with 5 coordinators, 33 current partners, 10 past partners, 14 library directors who were not partners (note that these were all Bulgarian), and 10 individuals who held other roles in the ABLE project. Three libraries did not have active current partners during my data collection period, so I was unable to interview three Bulgarian current partners and library directors. So while I interviewed 18 current partners in the United States, I was able to interview only 15 in Bulgaria. Also, I interviewed 14 library directors in Bulgaria, and not 18; one director was also the current partner so she was counted in that category, and I was unable to arrange interviews with the other three directors due to scheduling and language constraints. The "other" category included administrative assistants who helped facilitate the visits, non-partner employees who played an active role, and evaluators of the project. In the end, I believe the 72 individuals I interviewed have provided me with a firm foundation for understanding the factors affecting the experiences of professional knowledge transfer in international partnerships.

Face-to-Face Interviews

Interviewing provides the richest data when it is conducted face-to-face, as the interviewer and participant can react to each other's nonverbal cues to develop a rapport (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). For this study, it was critical for me to meet as many participants as I could face-to-face, in order to establish rapport and gather impressions about the physical locations included in the ABLE project, so I traveled to visit and interview face-to-face as many participants as possible. I visited all the participating libraries (and some extras) in Colorado and Iowa and all but three in Bulgaria, resulting in 67 face-to-face individual interviews in 42 libraries.

I pre-arranged the face-to-face interviews by first sending an e-mail to the participants as a regional group up to four weeks prior to when I would be traveling to their area. After the initial contact, I then made individual arrangements through e-mail and followed up with a phone call a day or two prior to the date of the interview to confirm time and place. Nearly all the interviews took place in a library, but a few took place in other locales to accommodate the interviewee's schedule.

Interpretation of Bulgarian

As I discussed in the previous chapter, a common concern for researchers doing intercultural studies is whether or not to use interpretation and translation. I decided to forgo interpreters during interviews with the Bulgarian participants currently active in the ABLE project (i.e., those who communicate with the American partners) for two reasons. First, a pre-requisite for their participation in the ABLE project was a certain level of communicative ability in English, so they were already able to communicate well enough in English. Second, as a naturalist researcher, I believe that an interview is a construction between the participants, negotiated through cooperative conversation. I felt confident that I would be able to reach an understanding with all interviewees during a dynamic communication event like an interview, which turned out to be the case. An interpreter would have only added a layer of complexity that was not needed.

The Bulgarian library directors, however, did not speak English. Due to the cultural and political nature of the libraries' participation in the ABLE project, the Bulgarian library directors were also considered active participants in the project. To demonstrate respect for their roles, I included them in the set of individual interviews, which required interpretive assistance. When the Bulgarian partners interpreted, an issue with confidentiality was presented: would the Bulgarian library directors feel comfortable giving their opinions of the project with the partners—the very people responsible for the success of the project—translating their words? I developed a separate interview protocol for the library directors that focused on their overall perceptions of the project and not the work of their partnership representative. In the end, using the current partners as interpreters for the library directors was convenient, because they were readily available and knew the library jargon—a difficulty sometimes encountered with the independent interpreters. However, the partners were not always familiar with interpretation techniques, such as simultaneous interpretation, which sometimes resulted in difficulties during the interview. As a constructed event, however, the three of us participating in an interpreted interview worked together to achieve an intelligible end result.

Audio Taping

With the permission of the participants, I audio taped the face-to-face interviews to assure a complete record of the interview for later review and to permit my full concentration while interviewing. During the pre-interview discussion of the informed consent form (see Appendixes F and G), I emphasized the confidentiality of the tapes and reiterated the interviewee's right to stop the interview at any time. Overall, the participants were unconcerned about the presence of the tape recorder.

In addition to the tape recorder, I also took notes on my laptop or with pen and paper. I tried to take as copious notes as possible, to ensure a record of the interview in case of recorder malfunctions as well as to capture my thoughts on the fly. Immediately following the interview, I reviewed my notes and filled in any gaps while the interview was still fresh in my mind. The cleaned up notes later contributed to a complete transcript.

Transcription

A key issue concerning trustworthiness of data based on qualitative interviews is the transcription of the spoken conversation to a written document, especially if the tapes are not transcribed by the researcher (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Poland, 1995, 2002; Silverman, 2000). I chose to transcribe the audio taped interviews myself not only for economic reasons, but so as to review the interview, integrate my notes, and begin the reduction of data that occurs as the transcript is prepared. Transcription is a time-consuming and tiring job, but the benefits of immersing myself in the data outweighed these challenges.

My forays into the field were busy and I did not have the time nor the energy to immediately transcribe the interviews. I slowly transcribed the tapes upon my return from the field; however, I found that this unplanned waiting period allowed me to revisit the interviews with a fresh perspective. I started transcription by first re-reading my interview notes to refresh my memory. As I listened to the interview again while transcribing it, new ideas and interpretations came to mind. I made notes of these ideas as they occurred in a separate document, to inform any questions that I sent back to the participant in the follow-up document. I developed a transcription protocol based on Poland (2002) to be sure that I consistently followed the same process and used the same notation (see Appendix S). After completing a transcription, I rewound the tape and listened to the interview yet again while reading the transcription to check for errors or omissions. I then reviewed my interview notes and added any comments that would augment the transcript with contextual detail. Through this process, I produced an interpretive record documenting the interview event (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Poland, 2002).

Follow-up

Following transcription of the interviews, I sent follow-up documents by e-mail to the participants, except for the Bulgarian library directors. Because the data from the Bulgarian library directors were supplementary, I did not feel the translational work involved was justified. The body of the member check e-mail was a standardized text with a few personalized segments, and a copy of the transcript and a follow-up document, both in Rich Text Format, were attached. In the follow-up document I asked the participant to read the transcript and comment upon or edit it to reflect their assessment. This document also included any other questions that had emerged from my review of the transcript as well as during the course of other interviews. A copy of the standardized e-mail and follow-up document is in Appendix T and U.

I sent out these member checks as I completed the transcriptions. If I did not hear from the participants within one week, I sent another e-mail to request that they consider the member check. Often that was enough stimulus to prompt them to reply. If I did not hear from them after that e-mail, I would attempt to reach the American participants by phone, but continued to send two more e-mails to the Bulgarian participants. Although I offered in the member check document to have a follow-up conversation by telephone, none took this offer. This was not surprising for the Bulgarians, but I was slightly surprised by the Americans' choices to reply by e-mail, which I attributed to convenience.

By the end of the data collection period I had accomplished 67 face-to-face interviews. The documentation associated with these interviews included interview notes, transcripts, and member checks, totaling several hundred pages. Thus, the face-to-face individual interviews comprised the bulk of my dataset.

E-mail Interviews

While face-to-face communication is the preferred mode, qualitative interviewing can also be carried out over the phone or, increasingly, through computer-mediated communication using Internet-based mechanisms, such as e-mail and chat (Mann & Stewart, 2000). The advantages to interviewing using e-mail have been identified as enabling extensive responses, increasing convenience in responding, and reducing the need to transcribe, among others (Mann & Stewart, 2000; McCoyd & Kerson, 2006). Disadvantages include a required minimum of familiarity with the software and the challenges in developing rapport in an online environment (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Often computer-mediated interviewing is chosen because the disadvantages are outweighed by the reduction of practical constraints.

In my study, there were five individuals (one American and four Bulgarians, of which one was a library director, two were participants and two were in the "other" category) with whom I could not arrange a face-to-face interview. Consequently, I had to send the list of questions by e-mail and then follow up by e-mail as well. I sent the list as an attachment with instructions to write their answers on the same document. Because the e-mailed interviews were already in text format, there was no need to transcribe; however, the response from the library director was in Bulgarian and required translation. When I received the answers from the participants, I read through them and noted any further questions raised by their answers. If I had questions sparked by their responses, I added them to the document and e-mailed it back to the participant. If I did not have any further questions, I e-mailed the participant to acknowledge that I had received their answers and thank them for their participation.

An important issue to consider with computer-mediated interviewing is establishing rapport and trust with the participants (James & Busher, 2006; Mann & Stewart, 2000). I had already established some rapport with all but one of the e-mail interview participants through prior face-to-face communication. The one person I had not yet met told me that she had talked with the two other people at her library whom I had already interviewed face-to-face, so she was familiar with my study and willing to participate. I cannot say if the participants responded because of my working to establish rapport and trust, their professional ethics, or a combination of both, but everyone responded quickly.

Compared to the face-to-face interviews, the e-mailed interviews were more convenient to implement, but they did not provide a richness and depth that the face-to-face interviews did. Without a continuous (and time-consuming) back-and-forth correspondence, the final e-mail interview product lacked the personality of an interview co-constructed during a face-to-face exchange. The balance between convenience and depth is difficult to strike.

Summary

Throughout the data collection period I conducted 72 individual interviews. The use of purposive sampling allowed me to delimit the ABLE case and reach a saturation sample. The interviews were with 19 people in Colorado, 17 in Iowa, and 26 in Bulgaria, of which 5 were coordinators, 33 were current partners, 10 were past partners, 14 were Bulgarian library directors, and 10 had other roles. Of the 72 interviews, I conducted 67 face-to-face and 5 by e-mail, making for an interesting comparison of interviewing methods. The documents from these 72 interviews formed the core of my dataset.

Focus Group Interviews

To expand upon the individual interviews, I also interviewed participants in groups. I took Morgan's (1997) approach to focus group interviewing:

> [T]he reliance is on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher who typically takes the role of a moderator. The hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group. (p. 2)

Scholarly writing on the focus group method has noted some clear advantages and disadvantages of the group interview over the individual interview (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990; Morgan, 1997; Morgan & Krueger, 1993). The primary advantages are the possibility of lessening inhibitions in personal reporting, the activation of forgotten details, and the generation of insights from comparing experiences. On the other hand, the main disadvantages are the possible negative interactions between personalities, the interruption of continuity, and group pressure to conform. The actions of the moderator can reduce the disadvantages in favor of the advantages.

I was particularly interested in the activation of forgotten details, as some of my questions addressed events that had occurred at least two years ago. Lofland and Lofland (1995) recommended group interviewing to trigger memories and encourage reflection: "It has the advantage of allowing people more time to reflect and recall experiences; also, something that one person mentions can spur memories and opinions in others" (p. 21). The focus group interviews gave the participants an opportunity they had not previously had to interact and discuss, leading to a richer consideration of their experiences during their participation in the ABLE project.

Focus Group Interviews Compared to Individual Interviews

The focus groups were held throughout the data collection period. The timing of the group interviews provided a convenient means to experience the influence between individual interviews and group interviews (Morgan, 1997). For example, exploratory group interviews can generate topics for deeper investigation during individual interviews, while individual interviews can help develop guides for structured group interviews. Group and individual interviews are complementary, and either type can be used to generate or follow up on topics of discussion.

In my study, I relied on other events (professional meetings or other gatherings) to determine the timing of the group interviews with the Americans. The group interviews and sets of individual interviews ended up collating with each other, and both forms of interviews fed into each other as I alternated between them. Table 6-3 illustrates the collation of interview types.

Table 6-3

Individual and Focus Group Interviews, Arranged by Date

Dates	Location	Activities
25 Sept to 11 Oct 2005	Colorado	Individual interviews
21 Oct 2005	Iowa	Group interview
21 Oct to 2 Nov 2005	Iowa	Individual interviews
13 Nov 2005	Colorado	Group interview
8 Mar & 14 Mar 2006	Iowa	Individual interviews
23 Mar 2006	Boston	Group interview
4 Apr & 6 Apr 2006	Colorado	Individual interviews
8 Apr 2006	Colorado	Group interview (Americans)
	Colorado	Group interview (Bulgarians)
7 Apr 2006	Iowa	Group interview (Bulgarians[a])
2 May to 31 May 2006	Bulgaria	Individual interviews
29 May 2006	Bulgaria	Group interview (Americans)
11 Oct 2006	Iowa	Group interview
10 Nov 2006	Bulgaria	Individual interviews

[a]Group interview led by Iowa coordinator.

Sample

Morgan (1997) identified three important factors affecting group dynamics to consider in the composition of focus groups: (a) an emphasis on theoretical sampling over random sampling; (b) a certain level of homogeneity; and (c) a balance between strangers and acquaintances (pp. 37-38). For my study, however, I could not precisely follow these factors as the sample was composed *a priori* of individuals involved with the ABLE project. Furthermore, due to the geographic distribution of the ABLE participants, I did not feel like I could ask the partners to travel just to participate in a group interview. I only conducted face-to-face group interviews when participants gathered for other purposes, such as professional meetings; the focus groups were thus convenience based. Table 6-4 presents an overview of the focus group interviews.

Although it appears from Table 6-4 that several participants were involved in the group interviews, it was often the same people who were able to participate, because of their location or attendance at conferences. Accounting for repeat participants, I interviewed a total of 11 individuals from Colorado, nine from Iowa and six from Bulgaria. Table 6-5 illustrates the number of participants versus the number of individuals in the focus group interviews, arranged by participant groups. The Bulgarian focus group participants were the five who visited their partners plus an additional Bulgarian involved with the ABLE project (non-participant) who was present at PLA. Unfortunately, I was not able to arrange any group interviews with any of the Bulgarian participants during my visit in Bulgaria.

Table 6-4

Focus Group Interviews, Arranged by Date

Date	Reason for Gathering	Participant Groups	Number of Participants
13 November 2005	CAL meeting	Colorado	6
8 April 2006	Celebratory luncheon	Colorado	5
21 October 2005	ILA meeting (2005)	Iowa	6
11 October 2006	ILA meeting (2006)	Iowa	5
29 May 2006	Visit to Bulgaria	Colorado and Iowa	5
23 March 2006	Visit to Boston	Bulgaria	6
7 April 2006 [a]	Visit to Iowa	Bulgaria	2
8 April 2006	Visit to Colorado	Bulgaria	3

[a]Group interview led by Iowa coordinator.

Table 6-5

Total Number of Participants and Individuals in Focus Group Interviews

Participant Groups	Total Number of Participants	Total Number of Individuals
Colorado	13	11
Iowa	14	9
Bulgaria	6	6

Because the focus groups for my study were convenience based, I could not purposively arrange to take into consideration the factors suggested by Morgan (1997), but that turned out not to be an issue. The groups consisted of participants with a variety of experiences in the ABLE project, yet they had a high enough level of homogeneity through their shared profession and participation in the ABLE project that they were able to converse easily. Also, the participants were a good combination of strangers and acquaintances, having sometimes already met each other through prior professional activities. In the group interviews with the visitors, the participants were more friends than acquaintances because they had recently shared experiences, but they had not been together long enough to have developed the "taken-for-granted assumptions" that Morgan posited (p. 38). So although I could not directly address the factors raised by Morgan, I believe that the focus groups ended up being well balanced.

Process

The process for conducting the focus group interviews was similar to the individual interviews. The biggest difference was my role as moderator instead of interviewer. Otherwise, I had to make the same decisions regarding interpretation, audio taping and transcription as with the individual interviews.

Role as Moderator

In the group interviews, my role became one of moderator or facilitator instead of interviewer. At the beginning of the interviews, I welcomed the participants as they arrived and invited them to sit in a circle. I then introduced myself, thanked the participants for their time and asked them to read and sign the informed consent form for the focus group interview (see Appendixes H and I). I explained the purpose of the meeting and laid out some ground rules, inviting any questions, and then asked the participants to go around the circle and introduce themselves if they did not already know each other. Although I would begin the interview by asking the first question (thereby setting the initial tone for the group interview), I encouraged the group to interact and discuss. I intervened on occasion, following the recommendations of Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1999), when transitions to another topic did not come easily or it appeared that one person was dominating the conversation. I would summarize what they had said so far and ask another question, or carefully interject to encourage another person to speak.

I tried to establish rapport with the participants as quickly as possible. I personally felt more at ease during the group interview with the Colorado participants, because I had already met them all for individual interviews. The first group interview in Iowa was my initial meeting with those participants, so there was no occasion to establish rapport prior to the group interview. However, the Colorado coordinator—whom all the participants present had already met—began the session by introducing me before departing so I could conduct the interview, which established an initial level of professional trust.

Topic Guide

Morgan (1997) argued that "it is the researcher's interest that provides the focus, whereas the data themselves come from the group interaction" (p. 6). I followed the advice of Morgan (1997) and Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1999) to use a topic guide instead of exact questions so I could encourage flexibility in a group while making sure that the group did cover the topics in which I was interested. The topic guide (see Appendix V) maximized the brief time together by keeping the focus of the discussion on experiences of intercultural transfer of professional knowledge during ABLE activities.

Interpretation of Bulgarian

As with the individual interviews, the question of the need for interpretation was also initially present concerning the group interview with the Bulgarian participants. However, I felt that an interpreter was even less necessary for the focus group interviews, as I believed it would be even easier to create a mutually understandable interview as a group. Indeed, this turned out to be the case; the Bulgarian participants readily helped each other to express themselves and together we co-constructed an intelligible interview.

Audio Taping and Transcription

I audio taped the focus group interviews to allow my full concentration on the discussion. During my welcome speech I asked the participants to speak loudly and clearly and would occasionally remind the participants to speak up. I transcribed the tapes as soon as possible, following the transcription protocol, so I would not forget the participants' voices. I took notes on my computer during all but three of the group interviews—I was not present for one interview in Iowa and I took hand written notes for two interviews. I did not send the transcripts from the focus groups out for member checks, because I felt that the transcripts were too complicated for member checking.

Summary

The second method for data gathering throughout the data collection period was focus group interviews. Although the sample was convenience based, I believe the participants who attended the focus groups met Morgan's (1997) group selection recommendations. An interesting aspect of implementing this method was how it intertwined with the individual interviews, an interaction that gave depth to my understanding of the data provided by the participants in both forms of interview.

Document Review

The third data collection method was the accumulation of case-related documents created by the ABLE participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended collecting documents because they are a rich, stable, and usually readily available source of information (pp. 276-277). For Yin (2003), documentation is the first major source of information regarding a case, for which its "most important use is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (p. 87). According to Yin (2003, p. 86), the strengths of using documentation as a source are its stability, exactness of data (such as names and details), and broad coverage of time and multiple events, as well as the possibility of unobtrusive collection. The weaknesses of using documentation are the possibility of low retrievability, possible deliberate blocking of access, and the potential for bias from the author of the document as well as from the researcher's incomplete collection. While obtaining documents can provide stable and unobtrusive access, the researcher must remember that documents remain embedded in the context of the case.

A wide variety of documentation can be collected, ranging from personal letters to administrative records, formal studies, and mass media (Yin, 2003). The Colorado coordinator in particular shared many of her files with me so I could understand the current activities of the ABLE project as well as its history. I also asked participants to share with me any documents they had related to the ABLE project, such as photographs, reports, or presentations. I also periodically e-mailed the current partners to request copies of their e-mail exchanges with their partners. When I received documents, I entered them into a log and completed a cover sheet (see Appendix W). Two forms of documents in particular deserve more detailed discussion: photographs and e-mail.

Photographs

Photographs are a unique form of documentation (Collier, 1979; Kellehar, 1993). Collier (1979) acknowledged that "the camera record *is* an infallible account of all the elements within the focus of the lens" (p. 161, emphasis in original). However, Collier also noted the elements within the focus of the lens are subjective and dependent upon the choices of the person pointing the camera: "It is not the camera image that creates the inaccuracy, but where, when, and how the records are made. It is in those decisions that we may be mistaken and lose the validity of photographs" (p. 162). It is this subjectivity, according to Collier, that makes photos, especially those taken *by* participants, a valuable part of qualitative social research.

I accumulated several photographs, both taken by me and supplied by participants. During individual interviews, many participants asked me if I would like to see photos from their visits; if they did not ask, I would. The participants enjoyed discussing their photos and would also often offer me a copy on CD-ROM. Seeing the environment the participants experienced through their photos offered insight to their visits and sometimes illustrated their opinions about the experience. During my travels I took many digital photographs and movies to help tell the story of what I was experiencing (Kellehar, 1993). I took photos to record the physical environment, and I tried to capture instances of the participants interacting during observation of the visits. I wrote brief descriptions in my observation notes, taking into account the subjectivity of my choices of what to photograph and how to frame it. At the end of the day, when I wrote up full observation notes, I completed individual documentation cover sheets for each photo or movie.

E-Mail

Given the physical distance separating the groups of partners, the participants' main form of communication was e-mail. Thus, for me to "observe" their interactions, I would need to see their e-mail exchanges. My research proposal called for the collection of e-mail for document analysis of the interactions between partners during the project as a form of triangulation to check what they told me in the interviews against the "reality" of their actual exchanges. I planned to protect the identities of the participants and provide some measure of privacy by arranging with the Colorado and Iowa coordinators to request the e-mail correspondence and strip the e-mail of identifying features before sending them to me. I also offered the participants the option of sending the e-mails to me as word processed documents so the participant could edit out any details that he or she did not consider appropriate for my research. However, this process proved more cumbersome than I had originally anticipated. In the end, the participants did not mind forwarding me their e-mails directly, acknowledging the confidentiality agreement in the informed consent form for this method (see Appendixes J and K). When I received the copies of e-mails from between the participants, I compiled all the e-mails from the sending participant into one word processed document (including the header information from each message when available). I then completed a documentation cover sheet, summarizing the content.

Besides the problem with the collection process, I ran into two other challenges with this method. First, e-mail between the participants was only sporadic, substantiating the comments by several participants during interviews about the long stretches of time between e-mails. Second, many of the participants did not keep their e-mails over time, due to a limited storage system or the perception that they were not worth keeping. However, after being told of the importance, some participants began keeping and forwarding to me any e-mail their received from their partner. Finally, in some partnerships, the first few e-mails were not received because of firewalls and other security issues. Ultimately, I was able to capture some e-mails, but not the saturation like I had planned.

Although the original conception of collecting e-mail was good, the execution was difficult. The main reason for the lack of data from this data collection method was the actual lack of correspondence between the participants. Another reason was the timing of the request for copies of their e-mails; if the participants had been asked to keep their e-mails from the start as a condition of the project, perhaps there would have been more available. Retrospectively asking for copies of e-mails sent months—if not years—earlier caused difficulty for the participants.

Summary

The documents I collected from the participants throughout the data collection period were of significant help in understanding the ABLE case, both its background and the interactions between its participants. The photographs and movies taken by the participants as well as myself were helpful visual records of the participants, their activities, and their environments. Although the collection of e-mail exchanges between the participants was significantly more difficult than I had planned, I was still able to gather some observational data of the participants' interactions. These documents provided me with the historical background necessary for a deeper understanding of the case I was investigating, as well as insight to partners' current interactions.

Direct Observation

Data collection through observation has been characterized as "the fundamental base of all research methods" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 389). As Angrosino and Mays de Pérez (2000) affirmed, "Social scientists are observers both of human activities and of the physical settings in which such activities take place" (p. 673). While interviews allow a respondent to "move back and forth in time—to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future," observation provides "here-and-now experience in depth" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273). Observation works hand-in-hand with interviews as the keystones of social research.

I chose to employ the observation method as part of methodological triangulation, to check the recalled information from the individual interviews with the experiences demonstrated through observing actual interactions. However, because the interactions between partners occurred in cyberspace, through e-mail, accessing the e-mail exchanges became the main mode of "observing" the partners' interactions. As discussed in the previous section, this method was fraught with challenges and ultimately did not provide as much data as I had originally planned. Fortunately, I was able to witness face-to-face interactions between participants during two occasions when partners visited each other and direct observation in the traditional sense was possible.

Sample

One purpose of the State Department grant that funded the ABLE project was to enable the participants to visit their partners at their libraries. The Bulgarian participants came to the United States for about five weeks and the American participants went to Bulgaria for about two weeks. These visits happened in two waves. The first group consisted of 24 partners: 12 Bulgarians came to the United States in spring 2004, then 12 Americans went to Bulgaria in spring 2005. The second group consisted of the remaining partners who were unable to make the first trip: five Bulgarians came to the United States and five Americans went to Bulgaria in spring 2006. It was this second group whose visits occurred during the timeframe of my data collection period.

During the visits, I was able to observe each Bulgarian visitor for at least two days during their stays with their hosts, plus four days when all five Bulgarian visitors were together in Boston for PLA. Observing the Americans during their visit to Bulgaria required a purposeful selection of whom to observe, because the participants were scattered throughout the country and the length of the Americans' stay was quite short. In consultation with one of the coordinators, I purposively selected two partnerships for observation. I spent two days with American participants who represented a very old partnership and a very new partnership, offering an interesting juxtaposition of the partners' experiences in the project. Table 6-6 summarizes my time spent in observation.

Table 6-6

Participant Observation, Arranged by Location

Location	Dates	Participants	Days Observed
Iowa	6-8 March	3 Bulgarians, Site 1	3
	9-10 March	1Bulgarian, Site 2	2
	12 March	2 Bulgarians, Site 3	1
	13-14 March	1Bulgarian, Site 4	2
	15-16 March	1 Bulgarian, Site 5	2
Boston	21-24 March	6 Bulgarians, off site	4
Colorado	29-31 March	1 Bulgarian, Site 6	3
	3-5 April	1 Bulgarian, Site 7	3
Bulgaria	23-24 May	1 American, Site 8	2
	25-26 May	1 American, Site 9	2
			Total Days: 24

Participant and Non-Participant Observer

Observation can be categorized as participant or non-participant, and overt or covert (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I was an overt note-taker; the participants knew in advance that I was going to record what I observed. The decision of whether or not to be a participant or non-participant observer, however, was different for the two groups of participants (Bulgarian and American), depending upon the type of activity I observed.

For observing the Bulgarian visitors, I held a non-participant role, similar to what Adler and Adler (1994) termed "peripheral membership." Researchers in a peripheral membership role "observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership" (p. 380). My background in libraries and my status as a doctoral student in LIS and evaluator of the ABLE project, combined with the approval to observe from the directors of the libraries, placed me in an insider's position. However, I did not participate in the activities between the Bulgarian visitor and the library staff member; I placed myself nearby and took notes. The Bulgarians thought this was an unusual strategy; I had to remind them several times that they did not need to address me or pay attention to me while they interacted with the staff.

When it came to observing the two Americans as they visited their Bulgarian hosts, I was forced to play a more active role due to the intense nature of the visits. Whereas the Bulgarians were in the United States for a long internship, the Americans were in Bulgaria for a much shorter period and a different purpose. The Americans only had five days with their Bulgarian hosts, compared to the five weeks the Bulgarians had in the United States. Also, the Americans visited Bulgaria during an important national holiday period. These factors combined to make the Americans' visits more of a celebratory tour than work. I attempted to observe unobtrusively, but the Bulgarians—in their customarily convivial and gracious ways—would not hear of it. They wanted to be sure that I was included in all the activities and appropriately honored as a special guest. Although I carried my notebook with me, I frequently found at the end of the day that I had been to busy to write a single note and had to rely on my photographs, short films and memory to write about the interactions between the partners that I had witnessed. Being a participant observer was certainly more challenging for data collection than being a non-participant observer.

Process

Actually carrying out the observations depended upon the participants and their itineraries. With most participants I made arrangements to meet them at the library in the morning to spend the day with them. When I met the participant for the first observation, I went over the informed consent form for this method (see Appendixes L and M) and invited any questions. Whenever we met any other individuals that would be involved in the observation period, I asked them to sign an informed consent form as well. By requesting consent, I was drawing attention to my work as observer, which in turn affected the natural unfolding of activities between the participants. Not surprisingly, it took some time thereafter for the participants to become used to my observing and engrossed in their interactions (Lee, 2000). During the non-participant observation of the Bulgarian participants, I always tried to position myself to be as unobtrusive as possible. During the participant observation of the American participants in Bulgaria, I tried to keep any note jotting unobtrusive so the participants would not become self-conscious.

I could not carry my computer with me as I shadowed the participants, so all of my notes were kept with pen and paper as running notes with some chronological notes as well (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lofland & Lofland, 1995). At the end of the day, I word processed my handwritten notes. As I keyed in my notes, I elaborated upon them, using my memory and any photos, and also noted any questions or issues raised from the day's experience.

Summary

I used the direct observation method to collect data during two occasions when I was able to observe face-to-face interactions between some ABLE participants. Five Bulgarians came to the United States for five weeks, during which I spent at least two days with each of them. Later, five Americans went to Bulgaria and I was able to spend two days each with two purposively selected participants. I used both participant and non-participant modes of overt and direct observation depending on the situation, and I relied on photographs and short movies to help recall detail during daily note review.

Participant Journal

The final data collection method I employed with the participants was journaling by the 10 participants during the visits in March and May 2006. I chose this method while contemplating how to address the constraining factors in arranging observation of the visitors. Given that I could not observe all the participants during their entire stays, I had to purposively decide who to observe and when. Consequently, there were many days that I could not observe them, yet I did not want to forgo the opportunity to collect data regarding their time with their partners. Thus, I decided to request that the participants keep journals during their visit, to act as a proxy for my observation.

Participant journals are useful means to access the participants' experiences when it is not possible for the researcher to observe, or when the presence of the researcher would significantly alter the behavior of the participant (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005; Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977). Giraud (1999) argued that participant journals have several advantages over interviews: (a) journals do not include the interviewer's influence; (b) they reduce the inconvenience of arranging interviews; and (c) they can be contemporaneous accounts of experiences if regularly collected. Journals that are solicited by the researcher are written with the research issues in mind; the writer agrees to reflect on selected topics and knows that the writing will be read and interpreted by the researcher (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005). Because the participant chooses what to include in the journal, the end result is an authentic account and can be used to augment interviews and observations. In this perspective I requested journals from the visiting participants.

Sample

The 10 journaling participants were selected *a priori* as they were involved in the face-to-face visits during the data collection period. Five Bulgarians kept journals during their five-week stay in the United States in March 2006; then five Americans kept journals during their 10-day stay in Bulgaria in May 2006. Eight of the 10 participants were paired partners, taking turns visiting each other. Thus I received eight journals that could be matched up into four pairs for comparison.

Process

I supplied journals and prompting sheets to the participants upon their arrival in the host country. The prompting sheets were in English and a copy is included in Appendix X, as is a copy of the informed consent form (Appendixes N and O). During the participants' orientations to their visits, I explained the purpose of the journals, asked the participants to try to journal every day if possible, and discussed examples based on the prompts from the sheet included with their journals.

Bulgarians

When the Bulgarians came to the United States, I could not meet with them as one group, as they split into two groups upon their arrival in Chicago (three went to Iowa and two to Colorado). I chose to visit in person the group of three Bulgarians in Iowa. I sent the journals, prompting sheets, and an explanation for the coordinator in Colorado to include during the orientation for the two Bulgarians there.

I encountered some cultural challenges as I explained the journal method to the Bulgarians. Journaling appeared to be an unfamiliar concept to them, and we spent a fair amount of time talking about what I would like to read from them, what was too personal, how this differed from a diary, and what style they should use to write. The Colorado coordinator also commented on a similar discussion held with the two participants she oriented. Given the length of time they were in the United States, I followed up with periodic e-mails to address any questions about the process and remind them to write.

The Bulgarians had the option to write in their native language, in recognition of the intense mental challenge that they faced while in America. I wanted to give them an opportunity to relax and communicate their impressions in their native language. All but one participant did write in Bulgarian. I collected photocopies of the journals from the Bulgarians when I visited them in May 2006. The journals were then translated and keyed into English by a professional native Bulgarian translator, and I returned the English versions for member checks.

Americans

When the Americans went to Bulgaria, I was already on site and participated in their group orientation before they left to visit their respective hosts. I supplied them with notebooks, but several had already brought blank journals with them for their own use; I then made sure everyone had the prompting sheets. Although they were all familiar with the concept of journaling, I gave the same talk I gave to the Bulgarian visitors and reviewed examples of what to include. Because they were only in Bulgaria for 10 days and often did not have access to e-mail, I did not e-mail them reminders to write in their journals.

After the Americans returned home I e-mailed a request for them to send me their journals. In some cases, the journals were handwritten and then scanned to send to me. To include these journals in my digital dataset I had to key them into word processing software. Because they had not been in Bulgaria as long as the Bulgarians had been in the United States, their journals were quite a bit shorter.

Summary

The final data collection method I employed with the participants was asking 10 of them to keep journals of their experiences and reflections during the time in their partners' countries. The impetus behind the journals was my inability to be with and shadow each of them throughout their visit; the journals acted as a proxy for observation. I provided the journals and prompting sheets to guide the participants' entries. All but one of the Bulgarian participants wrote in Bulgarian, which required professional translation. Overall, the method offered an authentic insight to the lived experiences of the participants during their visits.

Reflexive Journal

One more form of data that I collected while in the field was my own reflexive journal. This method did not directly involve the participants in the way the other five methods did, but it was still an important part of the overall dataset. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended the reflexive journal as a means for keeping the human instrument sound; I discussed my use of the reflexive journal as a means to develop trustworthiness of my study in Chapter 5. Here I want to address the use of my reflexive journal as a sixth source of data.

Reflective journaling is often used in many fields to stimulate self-discovery, develop critical thinking and analysis, enable creativity, and encourage reflective practice (Bolton, 2001; Jasper, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Schön, 1983). Kleinasser (2000) asserted, "When thinking becomes visible, it can be inspected, reviewed, held up for consideration and viewed as a set of data" (p. 158). By writing in a reflexive journal, the researcher comes to deeper understandings about the data under consideration and his or her own development as a researcher (Borg, 2001; Janesick, 1999; Jasper, 2005).

Process

I began journal entries upon acceptance of my dissertation proposal and wrote regularly, using Microsoft OneNote. About one half of my journal had to do with the nuts and bolts of carrying out the research process. This part included a log of the data collection, a calendar, notes about logistics and planning for travel, and methodological changes and commentary. I also collected my notes from the interviews and observations in a section of my journal. Finally, reflections on my data analysis procedure, including the development of codes and connections between data, were included in these notes.

The other half of my journal had to do with my emotions, thoughts and analysis of my experience as a budding researcher. I compiled notes and commentary from readings related to my research. I recorded the personal subjective commentary that goes along with the emotional side of conducting research. Following Sternberg's (1981) suggestions I added sections to capture ideas as they developed, troubleshoot problems, and assess progress. The entire journal was included in the dataset to help me interpret what I was experiencing and how it affected my interpretations of the data.

Summary

Through reflexive journaling, I kept track of the development of the study and my personal involvement with it. I wrote about my fieldwork, progress, challenges, and emotions, recording the emerging development of myself as a researcher. My reflective notes eventually became an extra data source that I incorporated into my analysis. These notes became a pivot between the data collection process and the data analysis process, allowing me to move back and forth between the two.

Data Management

An enormous amount of data was generated by the above methods and I relied on a specific computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to handle data organization and management. In 2004, Emporia State University obtained site licenses for doctoral students to use NVivo6, which was updated in 2006 to NVivo7. This software was first introduced over a decade ago under the name "NUD*IST" and has been in constant development since then (Gibbs, 2002). Version 7 is the most recent and is widely used and accepted in qualitative research in the social sciences. I found it to be fairly user friendly and immensely helpful in data processing and analysis.

The ability to process massive amounts of data is the defining benefit of the array of computing programs qualitative researchers have had at their disposal for over two decades (Kelle, 1995, 2004). There is on-going debate in qualitative research about CAQDAS, which contrasts efficiency in data management versus a perceived disconnect from one's data and theoretical orientations. Kelle (2004) pointed out that the argument is moot, as the software requires a researcher to explicate the implicit data management techniques and by extension explicate the connection the theoretical orientation.

The most helpful features for organizing the data were the ability to create documents and files on the fly and the ability to see at one glance the structure my data collection was taking. I followed Richards' (2005) recommendations for "good data housekeeping" (see Appendix Y for the protocol). As data came in, I entered them into NVivo7 by creating a folder and immediately assigning descriptive codes—typically the demographic information about the participant or the event. Each method of data collection formed a large folder, into which folders for each participant and all related documents went. A very helpful feature of NVivo7 is the ability to maintain multiple copies of data in different folders; for example, a copy of a focus group interview transcript went into each participant's folder as well as the folder for that particular focus group. Supporting documents created during method development and deployment went into a folder on Methods. Finally, memos and other data analysis products had their own folders in the larger folder of Analysis. NVivo7 helped me to stay on top of the gradual accumulation of data with the ability to grow a filing system in a virtual cabinet with unlimited drawers and files. Table 6-7 illustrates the final tree structure that emerged as I organized folders into a larger system over time.

Table 6-7

Data Organization in NVivo7

Dissertation

- Participant Data
  - Individual Interviews
    - Colorado
      - CO1
      - CO2
      - *Etc.*
    - Iowa
      - IA1
      - IA2
      - *Etc.*
    - Bulgaria
      - BG1
      - BG2
      - *Etc.*
  - Focus Group Interviews
    - FG1
    - FG2
    - FG3
    - *Etc.*
  - Documents
    - Historical
    - E-mail
      - CO1
      - IA4
    - Photos
    - Videos
    - From Ps.
      - CO1
      - IA12
      - *Etc.*
  - Observation Notes
    - CO7
    - IA3
    - BG1
    - *Etc.*
  - Journals
    - CO7
    - IA3
    - BG1
    - *Etc.*
- Self Data
  - Reflexive Journal
    - Aug05
    - Sep05
    - Oct05
    - *Etc.*
- Methods
  - Questions
  - Logs
  - Forms
  - *Etc.*
- Analysis
  - Memos
  - Themes
  - Charts
  - *Etc.*

NVivo7 can only process documents that are in Microsoft Word or Rich Text formats. Thus, any documentation from the participants that was not in these formats required that I either reformat it or create a separate document; thus the Document Cover Sheet. However, NVivo7 does have a function that links to items on the computer's hard drive, which, when clicked, will open the item in its appropriate software program. The ability of NVivo7 to handle directly only word processed documents was somewhat of a drawback, but understandable given its primary function is text coding and analysis.

Data Analysis

As with all qualitative research, my study was a constantly cycling endeavor of data collection, organization and analysis. I followed the "constant comparative method" of comparing incoming data to diffusion theory as well as previously collected data, slowly building a vetted corpus (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This method assists in reducing data to a sharp and focused form (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and in leading the researcher to deeper consideration of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Appendix Z presents the protocols for analysis. Qualitative analysis is an iterative process to hone meaning.

The data analysis process began before any data from the participants were even collected. Because I was not conducting a grounded theory study and had chosen a model to act as a focusing lens for my research question, I had already established a framework that oriented my research in terms of what to ask and how to analyze it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The seven elements of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model offered an initial structure with which to approach data collection, coding and analysis, and eventually organize findings.

Coding

Both open and axial coding occurred in several iterations throughout the entire study. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained how these two processes are the means of playing with the "puzzle" of data:

> Open coding is like working on a puzzle. The analyst has to get organized, sort the pieces by color…, and build a picture by putting the individual pieces back together. … During axial coding, the analyst begins to fit the pieces of the data puzzle together. (pp. 223, 229)

These two methods slowly made the puzzle pieces of the collected data take form.

Open Coding

After a segment of data had been entered into NVivo7, I made a first pass through the document and assigned initial codes—termed "nodes" in NVivo7—to meaningful pieces of content. Multiple nodes can be assigned to one snippet of data, and, conversely, multiple snippets of data can be assigned to one node. Often this involved using terms taken directly from the document's text, such as words used by a participant during an interview, what Glaser and Strauss called "in vivo codes" (1967). After completing the first pass, I returned to the codes generated for that document and reviewed them, comparing and adding them to the overall list of codes that was generated from the analysis. I completed this process for each document as it was received, reviewing other documents if needed. Eventually a hierarchical tree structure of terms developed as more specific and narrow terms were grouped under more general terms. These umbrella terms eventually became the themes during axial coding. Table 6-8 presents an example of the development of a list of nodes from data.

Table 6-8

Example of Tree Structure of Nodes

Themes/Nodes	Raw Data
Professional Knowledge	
↳ *Received by Bulgarians*	
↳ *Volunteering*	
↳ Volunteer outside:	"Volunteering in other parts of community"
↳ Use of volunteers:	"Not popular here" "Don't want to work after the work"
↳ *Outreach to Community*	
↳ Marketing Strategy:	"Know what citizens need" "Tell community what it does" "Search for sponsors" "Brochures"
↳ Outreach Concepts:	"How to make partners" "Giving back to community" "Organize services out of library building"
↳ Outreach Events:	"Story-time" "Read-a-thon"
↳ *Use of Physical Space*	
↳ Open Plan:	"All departments in one place" "Everything in one room"
↳ Dedicated Spaces:	"Separate responsibilities of departments"
↳ *Technology*	
↳ Technology Concepts:	"How easy with computers"
↳ Technology Applications:	"Websites" "Now can make Power Points, videos"
↳ *Relationship with Government*	
↳ Respect from Authorities:	"Possible to work together" "Relationship with authorities" "Voice opinions"
↳ Lobbying:	"Funding by taxing" "Voice opinions" "Convince policy makers"

Note. Themes are indicated in italics.

Axial Coding

Periodically I reviewed the list of generated codes to keep it at a manageable length by reducing redundancies in terms. At such times I sorted the terms to create larger, umbrella categories—called "themes" in NVivo7. This process was a first pass at axial coding. When a theme had several nodes within it, I conducted more detailed axial coding by accessing the original data snippets related to each node and thoroughly reviewing them. The presence of embedded cases also provided a lens for sorting and examining the data by geographical location, time in the project, or participant role. Thus I could choose to examine and compare nodes or themes across cases. Through these processes, the higher-level patterns and connections were identified and developed.

I used the constant comparative method to weigh the data against my research questions and the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model. Did a theme act as a factor in the transfer of professional knowledge in this partnership? If it did, was it as a facilitating or an inhibiting factor? How did a theme relate to the model elements? In this manner I used the research questions in conjunction with the chosen theoretical framework to analyze the data.

During axial coding I also implemented the analytical tools suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998): (a) ask who/what/where/when/why questions; (b) analyze one word, phrase or sentence to its limit; and (c) compare items or categories to other data and the literature. Through comparison, cross-checking, expansion and reduction techniques, eventually the themes were consolidated and assigned to an element from the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model. Table 6-9 presents the themes determined through axial coding, arranged by the model's elements.

Table 6-9

Tree Structure of Themes, Arranged by Element

Time
- E-mail
  - Delays in communication
- Face-to-face
  - Managing time (American)
  - Managing time (Bulgarian)

Item
- Professional Knowledge
  - Received by Bulgarians
    - Volunteering
    - Outreach to community
    - Use of physical space
    - Technology
    - Relationship with government
  - Received by Americans
    - Treatment of collection
    - Availability to public
    - Appreciation for resources
    - Role of library to public
- Cultural Knowledge
  - Received by Bulgarians
    - American welcoming attitude
    - False ideas from film
  - Received by Americans
    - Love for literature
    - Political and economic state

Adopting Units
- Personal Characteristics
  - Ambassadors

Channels of Communication
- E-mail
  - Technology Issues
  - Language Issues
- Face-to-face Visits
  - Learning by direct experience
  - Timing of visits

Social Structure
- Within Case
  - Common Profession
  - Recruitment of participating libraries
  - Turnover in partnership
  - Role of coordinators
  - Personal relationships
- Outside Case
  - Library level
  - Profession
  - Community

Culture
- Language
  - Verbal ability
  - Non-verbal cues
  - One-sided
- Cultural Differences
  - Balancing family/work
  - Stimulate interest
- Cultural Similarities
  - Professional culture
  - Part of human race
- Understanding own culture
  - Explaining own culture to outsider
  - Viewpoint of outsider

Acceptance
- Abstract
  - Understanding of world
- Concrete
  - Implementing practice
- Eventual Implementation
  - Awareness

Writing Memos

To make the transition from the immediacy of data to the distance of reflection, I wrote memos to capture my thoughts, extrapolate ideas, and generate suppositions. Glaser (1978) defined memos as "the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding" (p. 83). Strauss and Corbin (1998) described these documents as recording "the progress, thoughts, feelings, and directions of the research and researcher—in fact, the entire gestalt of the research process" (p. 218). NVivo7 includes a text editor, and memos and other analytical notes can be integrated into the dataset as a form of reflexive notes by assigning nodes to the content. In these documents I recorded my thoughts and opinions on the data, noted additional necessary methodological activities, investigated patterns and sketched diagrams. By the end of data analysis, I had compiled a large compendium of memos, helping me develop the analysis as well as maintain trustworthiness by providing analytical distance from the data.

Summary

Analysis of data was a continually iterative action of constant comparison to theory and previous data. The scope of the comparison was given focus, however, through the use of the research questions as well as elements from the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model. I first conducted open coding on documents as they were created, then turned to axial coding to further refine the analysis. Analyzing the enormous dataset created by the methods was greatly facilitated by NVivo7. With this powerful software I was able to process and organize the data; assign multiple nodes during open coding; collapse nodes into larger categories; sort, re-sort, combine and expand categories during axial coding; and manage memos and diagrams.

Chapter Summary

A thick description of the ABLE project was needed to understand the realities of the partnerships constructed by the participants and to conjunct with the needs of the research questions and naturalistic inquiry. Therefore, I chose multiple qualitative methods to create a rich and meaningful dataset that also provided methodological triangulation, giving a measure of credibility and trustworthiness to my study. The bulk of my data came from individual interviews held with 72 purposively selected individuals related to the ABLE project in a professional manner. I supplemented these data with several focus group interviews, documentation regarding the ABLE project, direct observation of several participants, participant journaling and my own reflexive journaling. These methods provided a rich dataset, which was managed and analyzed with the support of NVivo7. Using the constant comparative method, I conducted open and axial coding on the data. The Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model and the research questions provided focus for the development of themes drawn from the data.

CHAPTER 7

CASE DESCRIPTION

In Chapter 5, I discussed the case study strategy; in this chapter I present the ABLE case. I first describe the case from a holistic viewpoint, including the history of the project. Then I break down the case to discuss the three sets of embedded cases that arose from (a) the geographical location of the participants; (b) the role of the participant in the project; (c) and their length of time in the project. Finally, I give abbreviated descriptions of the seven mini-cases—the five Bulgarian visitors to the United States and the two American visitors to Bulgaria with whom I chose to spend a focus period of time observing during their visits. The three embedded and seven mini-cases gave me a deeper understanding of the ABLE case and the participants' experiences.

Holistic Case Description

Early History

In 1995, a librarian from the Bulgarian National Library came to Colorado on an ALA fellowship program to learn more about libraries and government. She was placed with the State Library of Colorado for five months, and a firm friendship was cultivated between her and the Colorado State Librarian. When the State Librarian vacationed in Bulgaria in the summer of 1996, they visited many libraries and had many long conversations about the impact of the political, social and economic transition of Bulgaria on its libraries. In the summers of 1998 and 1999, the State Librarian organized tours of Bulgaria and its libraries, during which Colorado librarians presented short workshops at select Bulgarian libraries. Through these trips, a small group of Colorado librarians came to know Bulgarian libraries and established some professional cooperative relationships.

At the same time, the State Librarian was working on the creation of an official partnership program under the auspices of the Colorado Association of Libraries. By 1999 a joint resolution was approved to acknowledge a formal cooperation between the Colorado and Bulgarian library associations. The goal of this cooperation was to partner these organizations for "the sharing of resources and information between Bulgarian and Colorado libraries and librarians" (Bolt & Ivaneva, 1999). In 2000, five of the Colorado/Bulgarian partnerships were included in the White House Millennium Council Project "Sister Libraries." Recognition by this project reinforced the participation of these partnered libraries in Colorado, and five more partnerships were created, forming the basis of the ABLE project.

Overview of ABLE

The American Bulgarian Library Exchange was officially created in 2003 by a grant awarded by the Office of Citizen Exchanges in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States' State Department. The application for the grant was initiated by the leader of a non-profit in Iowa that organized international exchanges. He contacted the Colorado State Librarian to propose applying for the grant and expanding the library partnerships with Bulgaria beyond Colorado. She conferred with her Bulgarian partner and the three of them wrote a winning grant.

The mission of the grant was to develop professional relationships between libraries in Bulgaria and the states of Colorado and Iowa. The grant identified four goals:

1. Increase capacity of at least five Bulgarian libraries to provide online community information services to local government offices and Bulgarian citizens.

2. Increase understanding and support by Bulgarian government and community leaders for the role of libraries in a democratic society.
3. Create Partner Libraries and use them as a means of sharing cultures and information about our two countries.
4. Develop a continuing network of Bulgarian and U.S. libraries that will seek additional funding through philanthropic sources to upgrade the technological capacity of Bulgarian libraries. (*ABLE Grant*, 2002, p. 8)

Funding from the grant paid for five American librarians to create a handbook on developing a community information center and to travel to Bulgaria to give training sessions. More importantly for the participants, funding also paid for the Bulgarian librarians to visit their partner libraries for five weeks and for the American librarians to visit their partner libraries for two weeks. An extension to the grant was given in 2005 to permit those participants who were not able to visit their partners in 2004 to do so in 2006. The grant ended in December 2006, and the project has been deemed a success, with the foundation of several online community information centers and the continuation of nearly all the partnerships.

Unfortunately, some partnerships have ended. Because the partnerships rely on communication between individuals, staff turnover can have harmful effects. During the data collection period, three partnerships were struggling because the English speakers at the Bulgarian libraries had left the libraries, and one partnership was in a state of flux because the primary participant in the American library had left. Communication in these partnerships has consequently stagnated. After the data collection period, more changes occurred with the American libraries. One of the American participants who lost a

Bulgarian partner due to turnover recently withdrew entirely from the ABLE project. Two American partners have left their libraries and one partner is retiring soon. Currently seven partnerships are in a state of flux, due to uncertainties following the departure of the individuals responsible for communication. These partnerships highlight the fragile nature of partnerships based on one relationship between two people.

Timeline

Dating back to the first visit by the Bulgarian librarian to the Colorado State Library, the ABLE project includes activities spanning over the last decade. Table 7-1 summarizes the timeline of the case.

Table 7-1

Timeline of the ABLE Case

Date	Activity
1995	Bulgarian ALA Fellow at Colorado State Library for five months
1996 summer	Colorado State Librarian visits Bulgaria, initial contacts made
1998 summer	First tour (two weeks) of Colorado librarians to Bulgaria
1999 summer	Second tour (two weeks) of Colorado librarians to Bulgaria
1999	Formal resolution of partnership between CAL and ULISO
1999	First Colorado partners recruited—eight libraries participate
2000	Sister Libraries project recognizes five Colorado/Bulgaria partnerships
2001-2003	Colorado partners increase to 10
2002 summer	Tour of U.S. libraries (two weeks) by eight Bulgarian partners
	Stop in Colorado to meet with State Librarian and partner libraries
	Sponsored by U.S. State Department
2003 spring	ABLE grant application
2003 fall	ABLE grant awarded
	Eight Iowa libraries added
	Total U.S. partners expanded to 18
	Total Bulgarian partners expanded to 18
	Colorado and Iowa coordinators visit Bulgaria
2004 spring	Visit (five weeks) by 12 Bulgarian partners to U.S. partners
	Five visit Iowa, seven visit Colorado

Table 7-1, continued

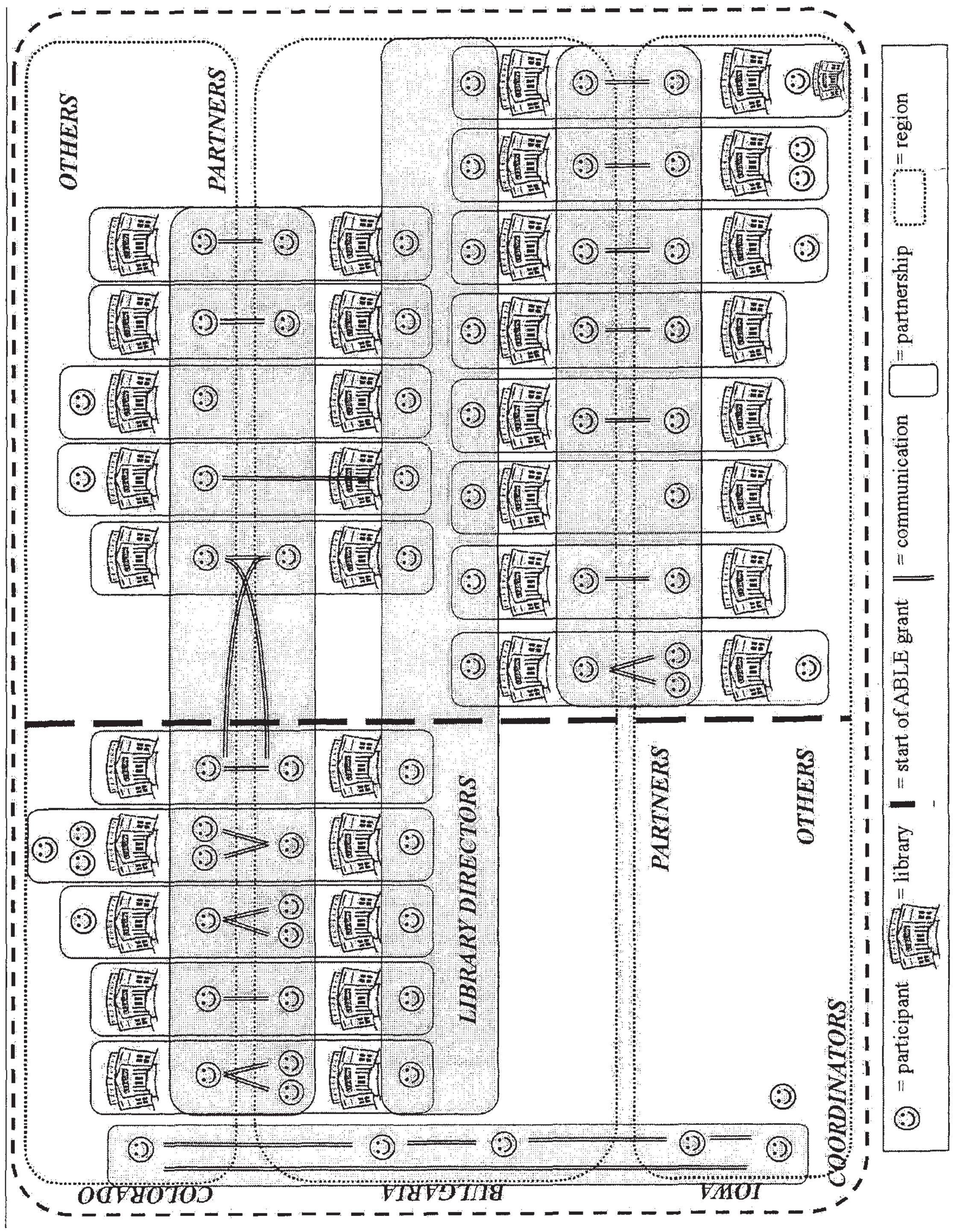
Date	Activity
2004 fall	Visit (five weeks) by three American partners to Bulgaria
	Teach workshops on Community Information Centers
	Train-the-trainer workshops
2005 summer	Visit (two weeks) by 12 American partners to Bulgaria partners
	Seven from Colorado, five from Iowa
	Day-long conference at end of trip
2005 summer	ABLE grant is extended
2006 spring	Visit (five weeks) by five Bulgarian partners to U.S. partners
	Three visit Iowa, two visit Colorado
2006 summer	Visit (two weeks) by five American partners to Bulgaria partners
	Three from Iowa, two from Colorado
	Day-long conference at end of trip
2006 Dec.	ABLE grant ends

Illustration of the ABLE Case

Because the ABLE case is quite complex, a diagram is helpful for visualizing the various components of the case, as illustrated by Figure 7-1. The boundary of the entire ABLE case is indicated by the small dashed line surrounding the figure. The thick dashed vertical line indicates the point at which the ABLE grant began. The horizontal dotted rectangles indicate a geographical region; Colorado is at the top of the figure, Bulgaria in the middle, and Iowa at the bottom. The library icons represent the participating libraries and the smiley faces represent the participants in the ABLE project. If a smiley face is absent from a position, there was nobody in that position at the time I collected data. The smiley faces to the far left represent the coordinators of the project. The vertical solid lined rectangles around a set of libraries and smiley faces indicate a partnership. The double lines between smiley faces indicate a communication link between those participants. The smiley faces within a partnership that are not linked by a set of double lines are participants who are affiliated with that specific partnership and whom I interviewed, but are not the communicating partners, such as the library directors (in the Bulgaria region box) and past partners or other participants (in the Colorado and Iowa region boxes). A unique situation exists in the Colorado region; two partnerships share partners, so that each Colorado partner has two Bulgarian partners and each Bulgarian partner has two Colorado partners. These partnerships are thus connected with an extra set of double lines. Figure 7-1 reflects the ABLE case during the time that I was collecting data.

Figure 7-1

Illustration of the ABLE Case



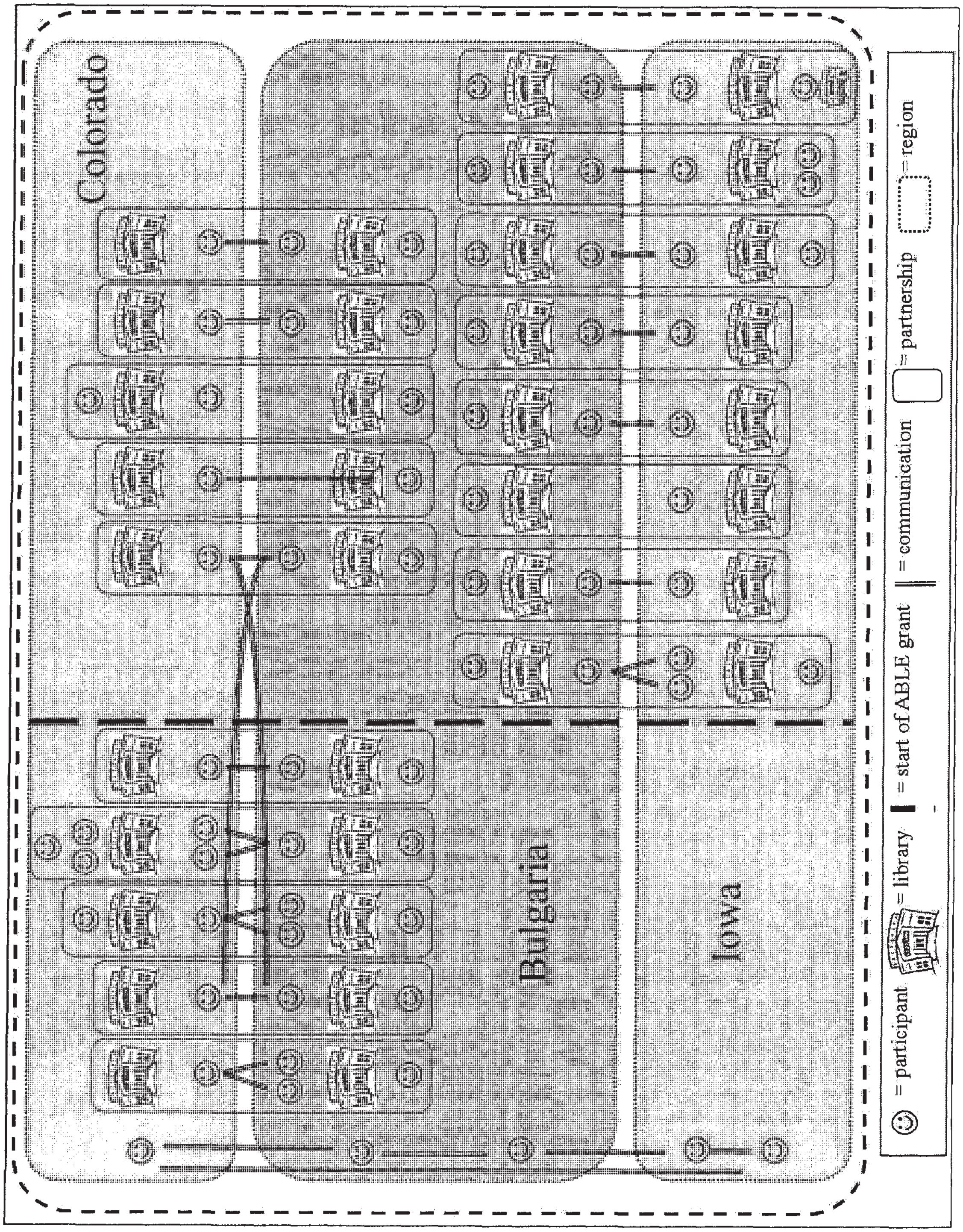
When taken from a top-level unit of analysis, the entire group of individuals involved with the ABLE project makes a cohesive system with identifiable boundaries—a case. However, there also emerged distinctions between groups of individuals at a mid-level analysis, forming "embedded cases" (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). Three sets of embedded cases became evident within the larger case of ABLE based on groupings of the participants by geographical region, role in ABLE, and partnership longevity.

Embedded Cases Based on Geographical Regions

The first set of embedded cases—based on geography—is immediately evident. There obviously are differences between the American and the Bulgarian participants because of the two different cultures. However, as data collection occurred, it became clear that the two groups of American participants were different from each other as well. The types of libraries involved, the positions of the participants, the recruitment of the participants, and the leadership styles of the coordinators differentiated the geographical groups. Therefore, each group could be singled out from the overall collection of individuals that make up the ABLE case for in-depth analysis of their experiences in the project. Figure 7-2 presents a modified version of the ABLE case illustration in Figure 7-1, highlighting the embedded cases based on geographical regions.

Figure 7-2

Embedded Cases by Geographical Region



Types of Libraries

One factor that distinguished the geographical groups was the type of participating libraries. Bulgaria, as discussed in Chapter 1, has "*chitalishte*," a form of libraries not found in the United States. Although a few participating Bulgarian libraries were regional and served a larger population, most of the participating libraries were *chitalishte* that served small communities, staffed by only a few librarians and had small collections. The participating libraries in Iowa were somewhat similar to these Bulgarian libraries, being small municipal libraries. Frequently the Iowa and Bulgarian partner libraries had similar sized collections and populations served.

In contrast, over half of the participating libraries in Colorado represented entire districts, comprised of several libraries spread throughout a county. Because partnerships were on the district-level in Colorado, the actual participating library and librarian would sometimes switch with another in the district for reasons usually related to workload. This occurred in three of the districts throughout the ABLE project, meaning communication responsibilities shifted from a librarian in one library to a different librarian in a different library. This changing of partners in some Colorado partnerships did not seem to adversely affect the relationships. The Bulgarian participants who had encountered these changes viewed them as opportunities to establish relationships with more American librarians, as they frequently stayed in contact with the prior American partner as well as the new partner. However, the Bulgarian participants did note some disruptions in communication during the transitions, as the new Colorado partner picked up the responsibility. Sometimes being partnered as a district was challenging for both the American and the Bulgarian partners.

Recruitment

The recruitment for partnerships also differed in the geographical embedded cases. In Colorado, every library in the state was offered the chance to be a partner library. The coordinator gave several presentations about Bulgarian libraries at state and regional meetings and actively recruited volunteers. Her position as State Librarian at the time was influential, but libraries were not directly selected. In contrast, the Iowa coordinator, in consultation with the Iowa State Librarian, directly selected libraries in Iowa that had specific characteristics, such as successful outreach programs, innovative projects, or exemplary leadership. The libraries were then contacted and persuaded to participate. In Bulgaria, some libraries were selected by the Bulgarian coordinators because of their size or services to particular ethnic groups. Many libraries volunteered to join after hearing of the potential benefits or for political reasons. Regardless of why they joined, all of the Bulgarian libraries were required to have at least one employee who could communicate in English.

Positions of Partners

Another way in which the geographical embedded cases differed was in the positions held by the communicating partners in their libraries. In Colorado, the partners were primarily members of management staff, with only two being library directors. In Iowa, however, the communicating partners were primarily library directors; only one was a management staff member. In Bulgaria, the communicating partners were staff members and usually at the management level. Often an Iowa library director communicated with a Bulgarian staff member. Although this was not perceived as necessarily a bad match, the Iowa library directors expressed the desire to communicate directly with their peers in their partner library. Although the Bulgarian library directors were considered an active part of the partnership, only one was responsible for corresponding with her American partner. Like their Iowa peers, the Bulgarian library directors also expressed the desire to communicate directly. It appeared that sometimes the message was "lost in translation," not only between languages, but between responsibility levels as well.

Leadership Styles of Coordinators

The most important factor contributing to differences between the geographical embedded cases was the different leadership styles of the coordinators for each group. This was particularly evident in the contrasts between the Colorado and Iowa groups. The Colorado coordinator was very active in recruiting libraries and encouraging the partnerships, whereas the Iowa coordinator was less involved. This difference may be attributed to the involvement of the coordinators in the LIS profession. The Colorado coordinator was a founder of the entire project and had a personal vested interest in the success of the partnerships. As the State Librarian of Colorado, she was widely recognized and respected by the library profession in that state. The Iowa coordinator, on the other hand, was not affiliated with the library profession at all and was not widely recognized by the Iowa librarians as someone who would be involved with this type of project. The Colorado coordinator acted as a champion of the project, whereas the Iowa coordinator relied on staff from the Iowa State Library to promote the project. Eventually the Colorado coordinator took on a champion role in Iowa as well, frequently communicating and encouraging the Iowa participants. Midway through the grant period, the Iowa coordinator role was transferred to a staff member in the State Library.

Many of the Iowa participants could not articulate how or when they first became involved in the ABLE project. They did not remember who had contacted them, or why their libraries had been selected. They felt pressure to participate without fully understanding what they were entering. Lack of communication was a frequently stated concern. The Iowa partners were at loose ends, whereas the Colorado partners understood what was expected. The "hands-on" versus "hands-off" leadership styles of the American coordinators was a primary distinguishing factor between these two embedded cases.

In Bulgaria, the leadership style was quite active. The first coordinator was very involved in recruiting partner libraries, organizing workshops, and supporting the Bulgarian participants. At one point demands from her employment caused her to lessen focus on the project, resulting in a short gap without strong leadership. However, a second coordinator was found and took up the active role set by the first coordinator. The two coordinators work concurrently to support the Bulgarian participants.

Summary

Each geographical region can be treated as an embedded case based on its particular mix of library types, positions held by the partners, recruitment styles and leadership styles of the coordinators. The most important factor contributing to the perception of geographical regions as embedded cases was the coordinator's leadership style. Data collected from interviews with the Iowa participants pointed out the effects that less-involved leadership can have on the partnerships. The Iowa participants and their Bulgarian partners had a different experience than the Colorado participants and their Bulgarian partners. Table 7-2 summarizes the geographical embedded case.

Table 7-2

Summary of Embedded Cases by Geographical Region

	Colorado	Iowa	Bulgaria
Library Type	Library District	Public, municipal	*Chitalishte*
	Non-public libraries[a]		Regional
Partner Position	Staff	Directors	Staff
	Directors		Director
Recruitment Style	Volunteer	Selection	Selection
			Volunteer
Leadership Style	Active	Passive	Active

[a]The State Library and a university library.

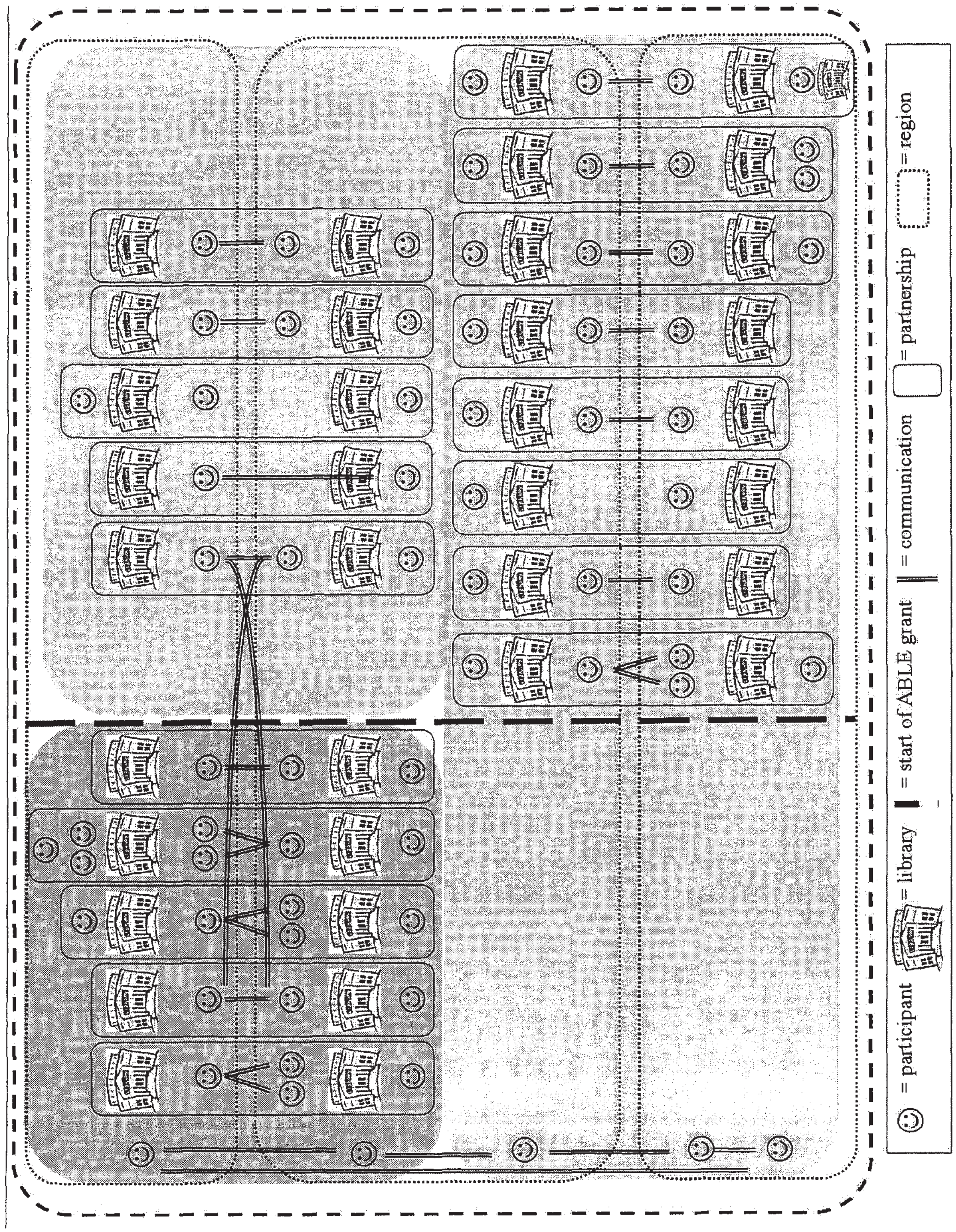
Embedded Cases Based on Length of Time in Project

Another obvious distinction within the entire ABLE case was the length of time the participants had been involved in a partnership. The start of the ABLE grant is a clear demarcation within the overall group of participants, forming two smaller groups. Examining the ABLE case through this lens brought out another set of embedded cases, based on length of time in the project. The ABLE case illustration in Figure 7-3 highlights the different starting points for the two groups.

The bold dashed vertical line indicates the start date of the ABLE project. Although 10 partnerships in Colorado were already in existence prior to the formation of ABLE, only five were considered well established and continued into the ABLE project. These libraries and the corresponding coordinators are in the darker shaded, upper left hand quadrant. Some partnerships in Colorado were beginning to form in 2000-2002, right before the ABLE grant was written and approved, but they really solidified under the ABLE title. These libraries are in the lighter shaded upper right hand quadrant. All of the Iowa libraries and their partner Bulgarian libraries joined after ABLE was established. These libraries and the coordinators for them are in the lighter shaded lower half of the figure.

Figure 7-3

Embedded Cases by Length of Time in Project



Longer running partnerships would naturally have stronger relationships between the partners, which was indeed the case with most of the original five partnerships. The strongest relationships were in two partnerships that had maintained the same participants from 1999. The other three, which were districts that had switched participants at some point, were also solidly established. Of the newer Colorado partnerships, created in 2001-2002, all were quite solid except for one where the Bulgarian participant had left the library. The newest Colorado partnership, created in 2004, was just getting started when I visited for data collection. Five Iowa partnerships were established in 2004, so they obviously had much less time to forge a relationship. However, all were going strong when I conducted data collection in 2005 except for one that had collapsed due to the Bulgarian partner leaving the participating library. Finally, three participating libraries from Iowa had a very late start, only joining the project in late 2005 or early 2006.

Impact of Different Durations

Because of the different starting points, the partnerships that began under ABLE had a different perspective on the project than those that had been a part of the seed project (the Colorado/Bulgarian Library Partnership special interest group in the Colorado Association of Libraries). The older partnerships viewed the project as a reward of having already been partnered that solidified their relationships. Those who joined under the auspices of ABLE viewed it as a special project, with a distinct starting point and specific goals to accomplish in a timely manner. Instead of letting a partnership grow gradually, they felt the need to produce something immediately and were very eager to start projects for tangible results. Although artificial, this perceived pressure placed stress on the participants, which the coordinators needed to alleviate.

The different entry point of the participating librarians was the key factor in my choice of American participants to observe during their visit to partner libraries in May 2006. Of the five American librarians who traveled to Bulgaria, I chose to observe a Colorado partner who is in the longest-running partnership of the entire group and an Iowa partner who had just entered the project a few months prior to the visit. The older partnership had cultivated a strong friendship between the partners that clearly communicated a high level of trust. The new partnership was still in the early stages of relationship building and spent a lot of time in communicative activities to build trust. While the older partnership demonstrated familiarity and confidence that activities would eventually result in tangible benefits, the newer partnership spent more time discussing projects that could be implemented immediately. Contrasting these two pairs illustrated well the differences and similarities in communication between new and old partnerships, the growth of trust, and the different emphasis placed on results.

Summary

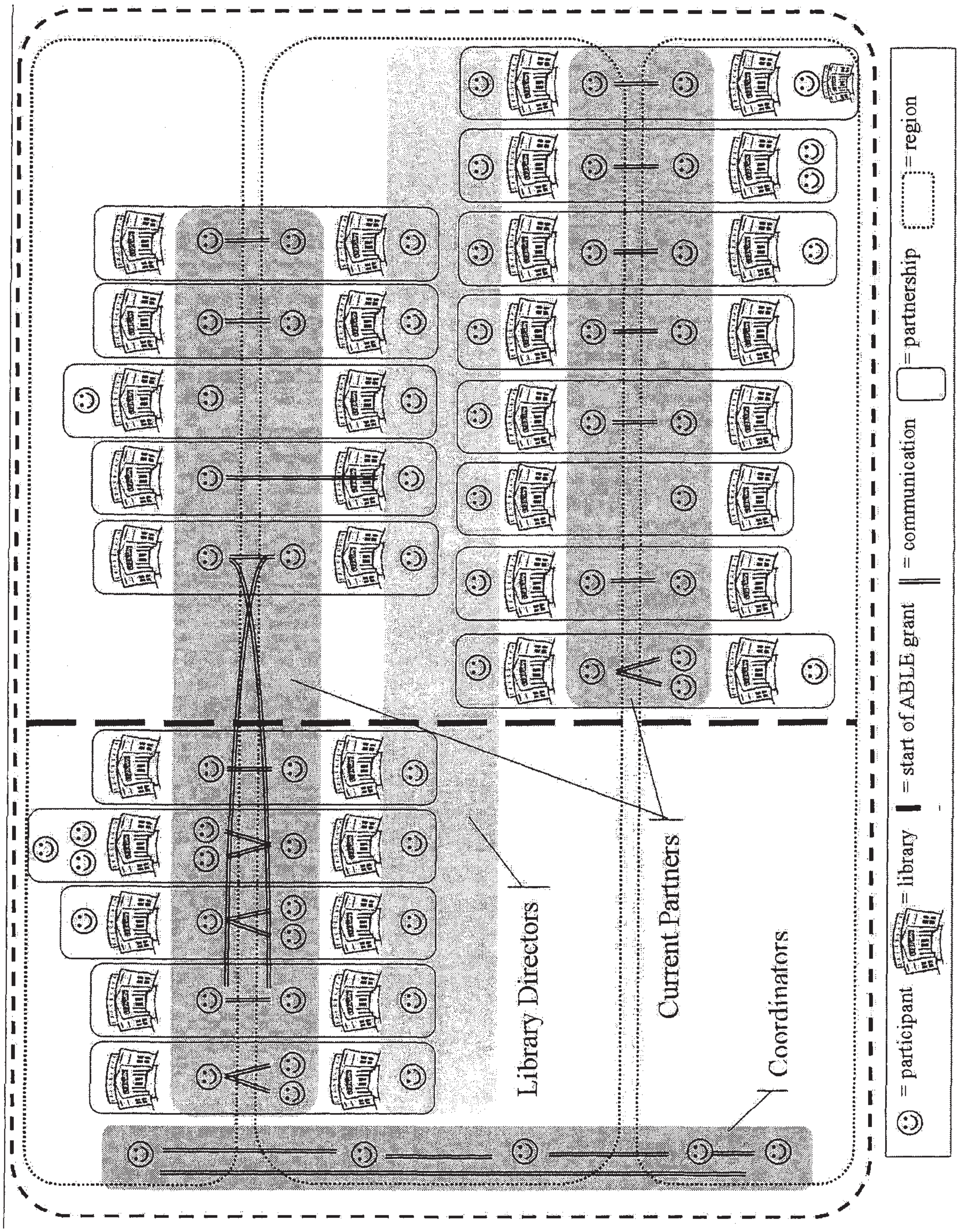
There was a significant range of partnership durations, but they can be grouped into two embedded cases. A few Colorado libraries started their partnerships with Bulgarian counterparts as early as 1999 and have continued to this date. Another set of Colorado libraries started their partnerships slightly later; at around the same time the ABLE grant was being formulated. A group of Iowa libraries joined with Bulgarian partners at the beginning of ABLE, while a few did not become active until a year or later. The point at which the participants entered partnerships had an effect on how they viewed the goals of their partnerships and illustrated the communicative activities that support trust development.

Embedded Cases Based on Role in Project

The final set of embedded cases was formed by the participants' roles in the project. As described in Chapter 6, participants could be assigned to five different roles: coordinators, current partners, past partners, library directors, and other. Figure 7-4 illustrates the different roles in the overall case. The "other" role is not indicated on the figure as a group; this role is held by those librarians *not* in a shaded box. Each group became a separate embedded case and the comparison of their viewpoints illuminated the overall case in various ways.

Figure 7-4

Embedded Cases by Participant Role



Coordinators

The most evident embedded case based on role is the coordinators. The group of coordinators originally comprised three individuals, one from each region. As the project evolved, the coordinating duties in Iowa and Bulgaria were transferred to two other people. At the time of data collection, five people were considered coordinators of the ABLE project. Responsibilities included (a) recruiting, matching and introducing partners; (b) supporting communication by encouraging and trouble shooting; (c) organizing the travel plans and on-site visit agendas; and (d) generally keeping tabs on how the partnerships were faring. Their work was critical to the knowledge transfer activities in the ABLE project. They coordinated the participation of the libraries in a region, so they were aware of the issues at that level. They also had an overall view of the project from their conversations with each other. Their vantage point gave the coordinators interesting perspectives at both macro and micro levels.

Current Partners

The largest embedded case is comprised of the current partners, with 33 individuals. I defined current partners as those people who were actively involved in corresponding and saw themselves as representing the project in their libraries. These partners had also visited each other's libraries. A few of these participants had been partners with each other since 1999 and had developed deep friendships. The majority of the partnerships had only begun in 2003, when the grant was awarded. These individuals were the "frontline" participants of the partnerships and provided the most insight to the actual process of knowledge transfer, as they were the ones responsible for the communicative activities that enabled knowledge transfer.

Bulgarian Library Directors

Another embedded case was formed by the Bulgarian library directors. These 14 individuals were not considered current partners, because they were not responsible for the communication with their American partners. However, because the partnerships were viewed as being *library to library*, the partnership was perceived to be a reflection on the library director. The actual communicating partner (i.e., the current partner) was chosen based primarily on his or her English language abilities. Although the Bulgarian library directors may not have directly contributed to my understanding of knowledge transfer between the partners, they did contribute to my understanding the project and its knowledge transfer outcomes in general. The Bulgarian library directors had overall perspectives of the project, as they could see how it had affected LIS in Bulgaria.

Past Partners

A smaller embedded case related to the current partners was formed by the 10 past partners, who had been actively participating partners at one time. There were more past partners in Colorado than in Iowa or Bulgaria primarily because the participating libraries in Colorado were districts, instead of individual libraries, so there were instances of the partnership switching from one library to another in order to spread the opportunity among the employees. The two past partners in Bulgaria had left the participating library and had not yet started a partnership at their current libraries. For the two past participants in Iowa, one was due to personal requirements and one was due to leaving the participating library. Their previous involvement provided a historical perspective as well as other opinions and experiences about the issue of intercultural knowledge transfer.

Other Participants

The final embedded case was formed by those participants who played roles other than the above. There were 10 Americans involved in the ABLE case in a variety of indirect ways, such as administrative assistants and other library staff who took an active part in visits from partners. While their contributions were not exactly pertinent to the transfer of knowledge between *partners*, they did offer insights to intercultural knowledge transfer in general as they discussed their experiences and interactions with the visiting partners. Their input offered an outside perspective of the partnership activities and the ABLE project overall.

Summary

Both embedded cases of the coordinators and the library directors gave important overviews of the ABLE project. Their positions in the project's structure provided vantage points from which to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the project in enabling knowledge transfer between the partners. They could see the outcomes of that knowledge transfer and gave summarizing perspectives on the process. In contrast to the overviews from the coordinators and the library directors, the partners—both current and past—gave information about the project from an individual, "frontline" perspective. They talked about their activities and gave first-hand accounts of their direct experiences with intercultural knowledge transfer. The participants in the "other" category also contributed to understanding the experiences with the visitors through their firsthand accounts. Amongst the embedded cases by role, each embedded case provided its own perspective on the project, but they could also be combined to examine the overall case from an overview or a firsthand perspective.

Mini-cases: Specific Participants

During the data collection period, five Bulgarian participants spent five weeks with their partners in the United States and five American participants spent one week with their partners in Bulgaria. These 10 participants provided data during their stays in the form of journals and I spent time with seven of them in direct observation. This in-depth focus and micro-level analysis on these seven made each a "mini-case." Here I briefly describe each one's professional background and the time I spent in observation.

Bulgarians

Five of the mini-cases were the Bulgarians who visited their partners in March, 2006. I spent at least two days directly observing each at their hosting library site, as well as a group during the PLA biennial meeting in Boston.

BG1 is a young woman who is part of the management staff at her municipal library. She received her Bachelor's degree in library science and now supervises 10 other librarians. I spent two days observing her as she interacted with the librarians at her partner library in Iowa, where activities included staffing the circulation desk and attending a "brown bag" workshop. I also observed her and her American partner on a Sunday visit to BG2 and her partner, where we lunched and went to a museum together. Her partnership is among the newer ones, having been formed only a few months prior to her visit.

BG2 is a middle-aged woman who is part of the management team at a larger regional library. She has a Master's degree in library science and has worked at her library for several years. I spent two days observing her as she worked with the reference librarians at her partner library in Iowa and one day with BG1 and her partner. I was also able to interact with her informally and observe her informal interactions with her partner, as I was stayed with them at the host partner's home. She also hosted her partner in Bulgaria during my data collection, and I spent two days with them there as a participant observer. This partnership was also formed only a short time before her visit.

BG3 is a young woman who is part of the cataloging team at her municipal library. She earned her Bachelor's degree in library science fairly recently and has worked with the cataloging team since graduating. I observed her for two days in Iowa—one day at the library, learning about copy cataloging and attending a web design meeting, and one day visiting small libraries in the immediate region with a staff person from the Iowa State Library's regional section. She hosted her partner in May 2006, but I did not observe them. As with BG1 and BG2, this partnership was very new.

BG4 is another young woman who is part of the management team at her regional library, supervising reference librarians. She has a Bachelor's degree in library science and has worked at the library for a few years. She visited her partner in Colorado in March, where I observed her for three days, but did not host her partner in May. Activities I observed in Colorado included observing a story time in her partner library and visiting local academic and special libraries. While at PLA, I shared a hotel room with her and BG5, so I got to know them informally as well. She herself had not been an active partner for very long at the time of her visit, but the partnership between the libraries was one of the longer established ones.

BG5 is a middle-aged woman and director of a small *chitalishte* library with a staff of six. She has a Bachelor's degree in library science and has been director for 10 years. She visited Colorado and hosted her partner for a few days in May. I observed her for three days while in Colorado, accompanying her to visit several public libraries in the partner library's district. The partnership between her library and the Colorado library district is one of the longest running. Although she has had to switch partners three times during the course of the partnership duration, she remains optimistic that the relationship will continue to strengthen. I did not observe when she hosted her newest partner in Bulgaria. She joined BG4 and me in sharing a room at PLA.

While the Bulgarians were in the United States, they attended the PLA national biennial conference in Boston. This was an excellent opportunity for the Bulgarian visitors to witness a professional conference of this magnitude. I was able to observe and informally interact with all five Bulgarians, plus an additional Bulgarian ABLE participant who was touring the United States for a different purpose, for five days straight. During this time, I held a focus group interview, several informal and spontaneous interviews, and observed their experiences and interactions with each other as well as other conference attendees. I shared a hotel room with two of them, and followed them to various conference sessions and meals. This experience allowed me to watch how they interacted with each other, as well as coming to understand the conference experience through their eyes.

Americans

Two mini-cases were of American participants. These were the two women I purposively chose to observe during their visit to their partners in Bulgaria, in May 2006, because of the difference in partnership duration.

CO11 has worked in her small library as a reference librarian for five years but does not hold a library degree. She also has the longest running partnership in the ABLE project. She hosted her Bulgarian partner in 2005 but visited her partner in 2006. However, she also visited her partner during a summer tour of Bulgaria, so she knew many of the partner library staff. I spent two days as a participant observer with her at the partner site, where she gave a presentation to the library staff and partook of holiday celebrations during a day-long staff outing to a nearby village. I also stayed in her lodgings, so I conversed with her at the end of the day and got to know her quite well.

IA15 is the director of a public library and holds the Master's degree in library science. Her partnership is among the very newest, as it was formed only a short while before the Bulgarian partner came to visit. She hosted her partner for six weeks, of which I observed two days. I also stayed at her house during this time, allowing me to interact informally with her and her Bulgarian partner. She then visited her partner in Bulgaria for one week, of which I again observed 2 days. I participated in all the activities, such as touring the partner library, visiting a local *chitalishte* and museum, and meeting with local government officials. I also stayed in the same hotel as she did, so we were able to converse informally at the end of the day.

Summary

The seven mini-cases described above gave me detailed insight to the ABLE case and its effect on the participating individuals. Unfortunately, I was not able to spend time with all five American participants during their visits to Bulgaria, but through careful selection of two individuals, I got a good sampling of their experiences during their visits. These participants also kept journals, which were very helpful in understanding their experiences. Through these mini-cases, I was able to collect specific and in-depth data that better allowed me to understand knowledge transfer within the ABLE project.

Chapter Summary

The ABLE case is a complex entity comprised of multiple individuals, holding different roles, in three different geographical regions, as the figures throughout this chapter illustrated. While the case is overall a cohesive entity, the identification of three sets of embedded cases helped me to understand the complex workings of the case. Each embedded case was built on a set of particular distinctions between the participants, based on: (a) geography (Colorado, Iowa, Bulgaria); (b) length in project (pre-ABLE grant, post-ABLE grant); and (c) role of participant (current partner, past partner, coordinator, library director, other). I was also able to drill deeper into the case by examining seven mini-cases—individual participants from whom I collected much in-depth data while spending a significant length of time with them as they visited their partners. Through the embedded and mini-cases, I was able to gather impressions of the full experience of being a participant in the ABLE case.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine one international partnership so as to understand how a communicative environment is established and sustained, enabling the transfer of professional knowledge. The research question guiding the study was "what factors affect—whether facilitate or inhibit—the intercultural transfer of professional knowledge in international partnerships?" This chapter presents the findings from the research conducted to answer this question, using the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model as the organizing framework for the factors that facilitate or inhibited knowledge transfer in the partnership. First to be discussed is the element of *acceptance*. As I argued in Chapter 4, this element is the indicator of the outcome of knowledge transfer and does not contribute to facilitating or inhibiting transfer like the other elements. It is presented first to provide an explanation of what the participants considered successful knowledge transfer.

The remaining six elements of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model were all found to be general factors that affected the intercultural transfer of knowledge between the partners. Therefore, the factors that can be said to affect intercultural knowledge transfer in international partnerships are time, items, channels of communication, adopting units, social structure, and culture. These were the umbrella themes that guided the consideration of the findings from the research. Each one will be discussed in turn by examining more specific components that facilitate or inhibit knowledge transfer. The findings are summarized at the end of this chapter; Chapter 9 will then discuss and interpret them.

Acceptance

The first element listed by Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) is *acceptance*, the outcome or demonstrable result of knowledge transfer. Because this research was not a traditional diffusion study and there was not one particular item to track, acceptance was operationally defined for this study as understanding new knowledge, whether or not it was actually ever implemented by the participants. Knowledge cannot always be applied, whether due to practical limitations or because the knowledge has no immediate concrete application. Therefore, the element of acceptance was identified in two ways: (a) when the participants indicated they had become aware of new knowledge and incorporated it into their own knowledge stores (acceptance of an abstract nature); or, (b) they had implemented the knowledge and applied it to their own situations (acceptance of a concrete nature).

Abstract Acceptance

Sometimes knowledge does not have any corresponding physical demonstration of application and simply contributes to one's understanding of the world in general and how life is lived beyond one's own culture. I designated this form of knowledge transfer "abstract acceptance." Participants demonstrated abstract acceptance by identifying how the ABLE project and their partnerships have had an impact on their understanding of libraries overall.

Bulgarian Participants

The Bulgarian participants spoke clearly about accepting new knowledge from their American partners that gave more insight to the profession and motivation for work.

> *BG1: At this moment the director of library, she is open to contact with many groups. She knows many people. And the last years we work in this way, but we*

were not sure that is right. Because I remind you, that stereotype is that library is conservative and closed and quiet place…now we are sure to continue, to increase patrons of library and users of library, and make in the future library place in which come more and more people. This is most important thing.

The above statement illustrates the abstract acceptance of knowledge; for BG1 and her director, the knowledge was simply the reinforcement that they had been doing "the right thing" all along.

BG7: I think it is better than what I had in the beginning, because it's a positive way of thinking, it's a good time to make us to be more active and to believe that our work is important. And that we are important also, because now I think I believe that I can change something, something very small, but something very small depends on me. This is a very exciting feeling, I hadn't had this before. (…) Yes, I'm absolutely sure that the project has had an effect—especially on our way of thinking and our attitude towards our profession.

BG10: This project, I don't know how it gave gifts to the American participants, but for us, it opened my eyes to many, many things, how to do, how to promote our job, our library, so… For me it was very useful, it will be very useful in the future, because I'm aware of things happening in United States in the library.

For the above two Bulgarian participants, as for many of them, the most meaningful knowledge gained from the partnerships was the belief that their work mattered—a clear example of abstract acceptance.

American Participants

While the Bulgarian participants identified abstract acceptance primarily about understanding a new role for librarianship within Bulgaria, the Americans spoke of gaining a wider perspective of librarianship outside of the United States:

CO3: It gave us an insight of what libraries are in other countries and made us realize that we are not the only one struggling.

IA6: Well, I think that for all of us, it opened our eyes to thinking beyond libraries in the United States. (…) And to recognize that…librarians everywhere are struggling with some of the same issues, certainly in different ways, but we struggle with funding, they struggle with funding. We struggle with how to get people in the library and they're struggling with the same thing. On different *levels, certainly, and even though they have different emphases in their libraries than we do, it's the same issues, just played out in different ways.*

This is not knowledge that is necessarily actionable, yet the American participants readily identified it as new knowledge that they believed was transferred during the partnership—an example of abstract acceptance.

In some cases, participants were able to identify knowledge of an abstract nature that they believed could potentially have an impact on their work. Two Colorado participants expressed how learning about another culture made them more understanding and tolerant:

CO2: I think what I have learned as much as anything, more than maybe about their library, is I've learned about Bulgaria, I've learned about the important holidays to them, the Cyrillic alphabet, the day that they celebrate Bulgarian culture and that kind of thing, I didn't know anything about that. Learning about the country, being so close to the Black Sea, where they went for vacations, what the country was like, that's probably been what I've learned most. About the people and about the country and about the culture. Other than knowing that their library systems were developing. Appreciating the fact that they are quite a democratic country given their location.
Interviewer: How has any of that translated into your professional work, do you think?
CO2: I think it just continues to build on an appreciation for people of different backgrounds.

CO12: [Learning about another culture] helps me deal with people, professionally, who are different than I am. To understand or... it makes me more willing to step back and say that this... this person doesn't have the same goals... maybe not the same values... that I might have. Even though we may want the same things in the end. And so, it makes me a little more tolerant of listening to them.

While the knowledge identified here—greater tolerance and appreciation of differences—may not result in immediate application, it does supplement the participants' overall knowledge of how to interact with others. Ultimately this awareness may subtly manifest itself in more satisfying interactions between librarians and patrons.

These examples illustrate the acceptance of abstract knowledge that cannot be immediately implemented in a concrete manner but has been integrated into one's individual knowledge structure. Although this knowledge is abstract, it may eventually affect the librarians' future actions by giving them a deeper understanding of their worlds. There was some transferred knowledge, however, that could be immediately acted upon and applied in a more concrete manner.

Concrete Acceptance

As in other diffusion programs, the most evident proof of transfer is the physical demonstration of applying new knowledge. Although there was not a physical item to be diffused and adopted, many participants actively sought tangible evidence of the knowledge transferred during their partnership activities. Besides the general knowledge awareness exemplified in abstract acceptance, the participants demonstrated successful knowledge transfer by implementing and applying more practical or actionable knowledge to their particular circumstances. This type of acceptance I designated "concrete acceptance." Most of the implementation activity took place in the Bulgarian partner libraries, but the Americans also experienced concrete acceptance.

Bulgarian Participants

Many Bulgarian participants were quite proactive in applying the knowledge they had gained from their partners and many examples were identified by them. For instance, a few Bulgarian participants had taken the initiative to start free classes in their libraries—evidence of their understanding of a proactive role the library must take in their communities. For example, BG7 stated:

> *BG7: I was impressed that they provide free language and computer classes and I wanted to implement this experience here. Bulgarians still don't see library as a*

potential place where they could be educated, despite our traditions with chitalishte. So far I have organized more than 40 meetings here, at the library, so I consider it as a success.

The knowledge and example provided by her partner resulted in the practical application of class offerings in her library, which were readily accepted by the community.

Another example of concrete acceptance by the Bulgarians was the many websites that the participating libraries created. This was part of the training to become a Community Information Center, for which six libraries were selected as pilot centers. As I viewed the libraries' websites with the help of the Bulgarian participants, it became clear that their creators had taken the advice and suggestions of the trainers very seriously and had developed very helpful websites. Furthermore, not just the pilot center libraries developed webpages; by the end of the data collection period nearly all the Bulgarian libraries in the ABLE case had substantial websites.

A final example of concrete acceptance by the Bulgarian participants is their willingness to contact their partners for assistance in obtaining access to materials. The knowledge that the partner would provide help underpinned the librarian's willingness to request assistance. For example, a Bulgarian partner recounted a story that illustrated the service she could provide to a patron because she had an American partner:

BG14: It was good really, because one day the director of the school came here and said I need the full article from a magazine, but somebody had told him that this article was only in the magazine in USA, and not in Bulgaria, so I sent to[partner] an e-mail and I ask her to help me, and she made me a copy and sent in the post, so it's good, because you can exchange... when you have difficulties and need help, you can call somebody. So I think we have a good partnership.
Interviewer: Good, good. And was the teacher happy?
BG14: He was. [Laughter]
Interviewer: [Laughter] And did you tell him that it came from the partnership?
BG14: Oh yes. Because the mail was coming I think two weeks and he was here every day, do you have something for me? [Laughter]

Most Bulgarian partners who visited their American partners went home with a library card from their partner's library, enabling them to access the online databases to which the library subscribes. Turning to the partner for help in obtaining materials was an example of concrete acceptance of the assistance available from the partner.

American Participants

Although the American partners did not believe they had as much immediately applicable knowledge to learn from the Bulgarians, they were open to applying abstract knowledge as much as they could. When asked about concrete applications of knowledge gained from their Bulgarian partners, the American participants discussed the opportunities provided by the partnership to develop new programming for children, such as celebrating holidays, making *martenitsas* (the red and white yarn bracelets worn in March), and creating pen pal groups. One Colorado participant showed me pictures from a programming event:

> *CO8: Then we had children write letters to the Bulgarian children. These are the kids. We put out a little description of our sister library and we had little papers where they could write the letters. And then I brought them over there and the kids over there gave me artwork and letters to bring back here. Here's a letter to Bulgaria. And then we had... Last year we did international week and each day we celebrated a different culture, so this particular day we celebrated Bulgaria and we had the kids, or anyone actually, could make a martenitsa. We also promoted our partnership. And these are some children making martenitsas. Of course the Bulgarians thought this was great.*

Many American participants also mentioned cultural programs for adults that the libraries could offer because of the knowledge about Bulgaria gained from the partnership. The programming opportunities for children and adults were the most mentioned examples of concrete implementation by American participants of knowledge gleaned from their Bulgarian partners.

Eventual Implementation

Acceptance of knowledge is best demonstrated through its implementation. Some knowledge is more actionable than other, but even the immediately applicable knowledge is rooted in more abstract knowledge. For example, creating a webpage is a physical demonstration of knowledge gained about technology (practical knowledge of how to do it), couched in the knowledge about customer service and outreach (abstract knowledge of why to do it). Some knowledge is difficult to implement, due to practical restraints. A Bulgarian participant described the difference:

> *BG5: I have a lot, a lot of ideas, I see a lot of methods, but I know this idea in the moment is in my library, but I decide, this idea I make this moment in my library, this idea I make maybe next year, next month. For example, I have a lot of ideas for book for donation. I think in the first, I make book for donation, it's a good idea to make for this moment, it's very quickly this idea. But I have idea, if I have place, a very good idea is a teen zone at the library. Maybe I make teen zone at my library, maybe next year, maybe next month, I don't know. But I make that.*

One idea is simple to implement: a book that acknowledges donations. Another idea is more difficult: the creation of a teen zone in the library. Both these ideas stem from the abstract knowledge that community outreach is vital to the library. The Bulgarian participant gained all of this knowledge from the activities in the partnership.

Participants throughout the ABLE case acknowledged that change in an organization or a system is difficult to carry out rapidly, especially when dealing with an entrenched bureaucracy. As one Colorado participant stated:

> *CO13: You know, it's stuff that they'll all have in the back of their minds and they'll probably think of ways to apply some of it. But I don't think it's directly... it's not like they could run home and suddenly start a program of any of this stuff that we were offering, right then.*

> *BG26: I think we can change everything in one month, but of course you work with people. It takes a long time.*

Other participants noted that even if some knowledge cannot be immediately applied, the participant still has that knowledge awareness and can wait until the appropriate time for implementation. A Colorado participant spoke about the "spark" that is ignited when knowledge is transferred, even if it cannot be immediately acted upon:

> *CO9: They are very committed to their patrons and they work very, very hard to implement some of the things they've seen that they think would benefit their patrons. So yeah, I think there's something. If not, you've put a spark, you know! There's always… you go, you learn something, there's a spark within you that is there, alive, and it might just sit there for a while until its time comes, until it bursts into flames and moves forward. But whenever you share a piece of information with one another, that piece of information can change a person's life, and you change a person's life and that can change the world.*

Comments like this one illustrate the awareness by the participants that implementing transferred knowledge is not always quickly possible and results of knowledge transfer may take a long time to manifest.

An example of how knowledge can be incubated for a long duration before a possible implementation is the National Library Week that was held for the first time by Bulgarian libraries in May, 2006. Libraries throughout the country celebrated this week and the culmination of effort was the presentation of displays in the National Assembly about libraries in the country. This week brought a great deal of attention to librarians and was tangible proof of the development of the national library association there. A coordinator remarked on the progress of the profession in Bulgaria over the past 10 years:

> *BG34: But I can say is the most important, this is the logic of what happened during the years, but what happened in the librarians' self-respect, what happened in the librarian community, for me is most interesting part of the project. Because 10 years ago, 11 already when I came from the United States back, it was impossible to think that we can organize in Bulgaria a library week.*

The National Library Week demonstrated the length of time that is sometimes necessary before physical evidence of acceptance is demonstrated.

Summary

The element of acceptance was operationally defined as knowledge that is understood whether or not it is or can ever be applied and implemented. For many of the participants, the acceptance element was present in simply acknowledging the knowledge and integrating it into one's own personal knowledge store, whether or not they would or could ever act on it. However, there were also several concrete examples of application of knowledge. The library websites created by librarians and classes led by volunteers in the Bulgarian libraries demonstrated the implementation of professional knowledge gained from the partnership. Concrete examples of cultural knowledge that was transferred between the partners were manifested in programs for children and adults in both Bulgaria and the United States. The Bulgarian participants would often talk about practical knowledge when asked what they had learned from their partner, whereas the American participants would talk about abstract knowledge.

Acceptance, the first element of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model, addressed the outcome of knowledge transfer, but did not contribute to identifying the factors that affect knowledge transfer. Whether or not the knowledge was concrete or abstract, or could be immediately or eventually applied, did not seem to affect how it was transferred; simply gaining the knowledge was enough to be considered a successful transfer. This finding supports my argument in Chapter 4 that the *acceptance* element is the demonstration or outcome of knowledge transfer. However, the remaining six elements of the model were shown to be overall factors that affected the intercultural transfer of knowledge between the participants. Each major factor had components that could facilitate or inhibit knowledge transfer, and I present the findings in that manner.

Time

The second element in the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model is *time*. In traditional diffusion studies, the element of time measures how fast an innovation spreads throughout a population. This approach to time is one of the fundamental elements of typical diffusion studies. However, because my study was not typical, I had to take a different approach to time. I originally defined time in terms of the duration of a partnership, which was useful in the creation of a set of embedded cases. The participants though made it clear that they considered time to be an integral factor in the development of their partnerships. The most obvious issue regarding time was the different time zones, which varied from eight to nine hours, but for the participants, this was simply a fact of life that superficially inconvenienced their communication and was not widely mentioned as a critical element of their interactions. Instead, the participants discussed more substantial issues concerning the management of time.

Time as a Facilitating Factor

The role that time played in facilitating knowledge transfer was not mentioned by the participants during interviews. However, the set of embedded cases based on time illustrated that the duration of the partnerships proved to be a facilitating factor in transferring knowledge. The American participants whom I observed in Bulgaria illustrated the difference in the quality of relationships between older and newer partnerships. The older partnership demonstrated a confidence and trust between the partners that was beginning to blossom in the newer partnership. Comparing partnerships based on time demonstrated the duration of a partnership contributed to trust, a key component of successful knowledge transfer.

Time as an Inhibiting Factor

While the participants did not overtly identify time as a facilitating factor, some did consider time as an inhibiting factor. The majority of comments in the individual and focus group interviews regarding time was made by the American participants and concerned managing time with both e-mail and the face-to-face visits.

The need to find time to communicate with their partner by e-mail was a frequent lament by the American participants. Many expressed their desire for more time in the day so they could accomplish all they needed or wanted to do, including communicating with their partners. A comment by an Iowa participant illustrates this frustration:

> ***Interviewer: What sort of drawbacks have you seen?***
> *IA3: I'm not very good at keeping up! [Laughter] All those e-mails are few and far between. ... And we write a lot when we write... it's just... and we've become friends, so that's not a problem at all. But it's the frequency, it's just abominable. It's just bad.*
> ***Interviewer: And that's because...?***
> *IA3: Because I'm going to do it, going to do it, going to do it, going to do it... you know. And as my mother used to say, "tomorrow never comes!" [Laughter]*

Other participants from Iowa and Colorado echoed the challenge of finding time to write:

> ***Interviewer: Initially were there any drawbacks that you thought about, as you considered this?***
> *CO16: Time. Time. That's the main thing, and whether we would have enough time to divert to the program to develop it fully. As it turns out, we didn't, at first. (...) We are extremely busy and we're always short-staffed, we don't have the time to fully cultivate this friendship.*
>
> *IA2: I know that I have not sent more e-mails, so for me it's been a time factor and part of it has to do with some staff vacancies, part of it has to do with summer reading program, you know, all those kinds of things that filter into it. Not for a lack of wanting, it's just not high on my priority list.*

The need to find time to reply had an effect on the rapidity and regularity of responses, a result that the participants regretted. Several American participants did the majority of their communicative activities with their partners outside of work.

Managing time was also an inhibiting factor for the American participants during the face-to-face visits by the Bulgarian participants. Coordinating activities, juggling schedules and reorganizing priorities were challenges faced during the intensive five-week visit. One Iowa participant commented on the amount of time out of her already busy schedule required by the visit:

> *IA15: Oh, very concerned about time. Because I strongly believe that we must... if we're going to participate, we have to make this the best possible experience for our guest. And can I pull that off? When I'm already working 50, 60 hours a week and I feel like I'm not coming up for air? And then can I expect my staff to?*

Another Iowa participant discussed the amount of time it took to transport the visiting partner from place to place during the stay:

> *IA6: So it did end up being me... trying to line up activities and hauling him around and trying to just make arrangements to get him here and get him back to the house where he was staying and things like that. It did turn out to be more of a time commitment than I wanted it to be.*

Finally, the length of the visit put pressure on the staff of the hosting library to accommodate the different schedules and priorities during the partner's visit. One participant discussed encountering the frustration faced by the rest of the library staff during the partner's visit, due to the rearrangement of workload:

> *CO8: I was going to say, another drawback I'd have to say with the project in general, was when [partner] came, it took so much of my time that week that I was with her, I wasn't able to do any of my other work. I was with her most of the time, and some people who worked for me, questioned the project and said, you know, is this really worth it? We've got lots of important things to do here at the library and you're spending so much time with this Bulgarian visitor and there are things that need to be done here. Really, is Bulgaria more important than what we do?*
> ***Interviewer: How did you find yourself responding to those issues?***
> *CO8: I said, well, you know, it is just one week. And we are very busy, but I felt it was important. But I still think, for the staff, I'm not sure... for some staff members, how they view the project. Not in a very positive way.*

The significant amount of time needed to devote to the visiting partner and the consequent changes in staff scheduling and prioritizing appeared to be a cause of frustration in some libraries. Overall, the demands on time put on the American partners and their libraries during the Bulgarian visits were considered an inhibiting factor.

One last consideration of time as an inhibiting factor concerned the visits by the American participants to their partners in Bulgaria. Although the American participants visited during a holiday period and schedules for the Bulgarians were slightly relaxed, time was heavily compressed due to the short length of the visits. American visitors were in Bulgaria for two weeks, of which only one week was spent at the partner's library. This brief visit during a holiday period in Bulgaria could not allow for many opportunities of extensive transfer of professional knowledge to the visitor.

Summary

The Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model addresses time in terms of measuring the spread of an innovation throughout a population, which was not pertinent to this study. I initially defined time in terms of how long partnerships had been together. Comparing the embedded cases created by this demographic characteristic showed that time in terms of the duration of the partnership acted as a facilitating factor by supporting relationship development. Time as an inhibiting factor was identified by the American participants, who spoke of the need to prioritize time to devote to e-mailing their partner, even though they sincerely wanted to contribute the most they possibly could. Another inhibiting factor was the visit length; the longer visits to the United States required careful time management and the shorter visits to Bulgaria limited the possibility of acquiring professional knowledge. Overall, the Americans found the need to manage time had an inhibiting effect on the quality of knowledge transfer.

Item

The element of *item* also did not have a traditional diffusion aspect in this study. There was not one particular item—be it product, practice or idea—that was to be accepted throughout the population of the ABLE case. The ABLE project grant clearly stated that the purpose of the partnerships was to enable the partners to learn about each other's professional practices and national cultures: knowledge was the primary item transferred between the partners. Furthermore, the partners within a given partnership were to determine between themselves the knowledge—represented as concepts, practices, products or technologies—that would be of most benefit to transfer, based on their unique situations.

However, the participants did agree that the American and Bulgarian partners would emphasize different knowledge content. In the original planning documentation for the ABLE project, the coordinators surmised that receiving cultural knowledge would be highlighted for the Americans and librarianship knowledge for the Bulgarians, based on the discrepancy between the two countries in the development of professional practice. Although both groups would receive both cultural and professional knowledge through their partnerships, one content area would be emphasized over another within the different partner groups.

The Bulgarians acknowledged that they would probably transfer mostly cultural knowledge to the Americans:

> ***Interviewer: Do you feel like there is any area where you can teach the Americans?***
> *BG1: We can teach them of cultural traditions, because we have rich and many centuries of culture. Maybe how to collect this culture.*
>
> ***Interviewer: What do you want [the Americans] to have learned?***

BG12: Yes, mostly about Bulgaria, because it is a small country, it is far away from the States. People don't know much about Bulgaria, so they were interested about our history, our traditions.

The Bulgarian participants felt that they did not have much in the way of professional knowledge—represented by practical technique—to offer to their American partners. The Americans concurred, but noted that they received much in terms of cultural knowledge:

IA6: Well, you know, you always learn when you visit another country. It was a wonderful experience in that regard. But I can't say that I really learned much about libraries, anything really new, other than... the state of libraries in Bulgaria. ... And that is what I expected, I didn't go into it expecting that there was some great new innovative library service in Bulgaria that we were going to learn all about and come back and implement in our library. That was not the way it was presented to us and that's not what I expected.

CO8: So some of the ways they're doing things are the old ways and I think we're trying to show them some new ways of doing things in the library field. And for us, I think it's to learn about another culture. And help our patrons even learn about Bulgaria.

Each group felt that they had knowledge to offer and knowledge to gain from the partnerships. The partnerships were truly reciprocal, even though each group sent and received different knowledge content.

Overview of Items

Before addressing how the item element facilitated or inhibited knowledge transfer, it would be helpful to discuss the items that were transferred between partners. As I mentioned in the section on *acceptance*, the Bulgarian participants emphasized professional knowledge that could be concretely applied in their libraries, while the American participants emphasized cultural knowledge that was of a more abstract nature. This section presents some specific items of knowledge content identified by the participants. I then discuss how these items contributed to facilitating or inhibiting knowledge transfer, based on the items' attributes.

Bulgarian Participants Gained Professional Knowledge

The Bulgarian participants spoke of learning about the American style of library service and specific professional activities, including: volunteering, community outreach, marketing, funding, and using computers and technology. Figure 8-1 at the end of this section summarizes all the items identified by the Bulgarian participants.

One item many Bulgarian participants found very intriguing was volunteering. This concept is foreign in Bulgaria, but one that the Bulgarian partners wanted to incorporate into their practice of librarianship:

> *BG6: I learn about using volunteers in the library. It's not popular in Bulgaria. And we try to apply this experience here, but they are not familiar about what [Bulgarian participant] does.*
> ***Interviewer: She's in charge of the volunteers?***
> *BG6: She works with volunteers for the English language course. But the volunteers are especially from United States. [Laughter] In Bulgaria this is not very popular.*
> ***Interviewer: Why do you think that is, why is it not popular?***
> *BG6: I think that it is because they haven't motive to be volunteer. They don't want to work after the work. [Laughter]*

This participant spoke of the importance of volunteering in the community to raise the public's awareness of the library:

> *BG36: If we are accepting something from the community, we have to give much to this community by volunteering in other activities in the community and I saw that [American participant] volunteers for the local historical museum and for some other activity. She's volunteering in two other disciplines in this city. Making her presence known. She contributes to the community and then when you contribute to the community, you can expect this community to help the library.*

Volunteering was frequently mentioned in interviews and the Bulgarian visitors were interested in observing volunteers and discussing it with their hosts. Although the participants saw the usefulness of this concept, they realized that convincing their fellow LIS professionals and citizens to "work after the work" would be difficult.

Another typical component of an American public library, but not widely evident in Bulgarian libraries, is the notion of outreach to the community. The Bulgarian participants spoke frequently about making proactive connections with their communities and not remaining as "museums of books"—how many participants referred to the traditional format of Bulgarian libraries. Many concepts and practices fall under this umbrella concept. For example, reaching out to other local government agencies:

> ***Interviewer: What have you learned since participating in the project?***
> *BG14: Maybe how to organize the partnerships, I mean, the work of partner, partnerships with other organizations. How to make partners.*
> ***Interviewer: How to make partners. That's a good lesson, very good. Is that the most important one?***
> *BG14: Yes. It is most important because here in Bulgaria it is difficult to have partners, for one organization to join another one. Everybody thinks that it's one organization, it is work. Nobody thinks of partners.*

The above comment was from a participant who was partnering with local safety officials to organize a children's festival about traffic safety and exposing them to the library.

An important part of outreach is the notion of marketing the library to the community. Bulgarian libraries, like American libraries, are discovering that they need to find new ways to attract patrons to come to the library. Marketing knowledge and practices was one of the chief areas of discussion between partners, and the Bulgarian participants identified it as readily applicable:

> *BG4: Maybe not too much how to make money, but I think we will apply marketing, strategy to sell to public, to advertise books, to advertise our library, to advertise our services and to be attractive to patrons with different events, like book events, like this kind of project.*

The National Library Week is an example of marketing on a grand scale, bringing attention to the libraries' contributions as well as their needs. This week evidenced the knowledge the Bulgarian librarians have gained in marketing on a national level.

One more example of community outreach that many Bulgarian participants planned on implementing is story time. This Bulgarian participant discussed the use of story time to improve patrons' perspectives of the library:

> *BG3: Maybe... I could give an example, maybe not the best, but the children's librarians they make story times. They make these story times three times a week. Well, we don't have so much in Bulgaria, we don't have your opportunities. We just have other opportunities. But we could make once a month, to make our library popular and to improve our status of the library.*

While I was with the Bulgarian visitors, I accompanied two of them individually to observe story times. Both visitors told me afterwards how interesting the activities were and discussed the feasibility of implementing them in Bulgaria. Both expressed a strong belief that such events at their home libraries would attract more patrons.

The Bulgarian participants also accepted the notion that outreach to patrons may eventually cause a change in the means by which the library obtains funding. Currently, Bulgarian libraries charge a nominal annual fee to supplement the funding they receive from the national government. The Bulgarian participants understand that this small fee may be preventing some potential users from coming to the library. The concept of funding through local taxation was interesting, as this Bulgarian participant stated:

> *BG36: We have learned much about the funding of libraries here in the United States and especially what impressed me most is the practice of public library districts, where local populations vote how much of their taxes should be allocated, what percent of their taxes should be allocated to support the local library. This impressed me most.*

Such a change in funding requires the consideration of lobbying, which many of the Bulgarian participants described to me as a very important lesson for them. They learned about lobbying not only in the Handbook prepared for the partners, but during their visits to the United States, where they all had opportunities to visit with lobbyists.

The final item highlighted by the Bulgarian participants was the usage of computers and technology in their work. Through the ABLE project several Bulgarian libraries received computers for use by the staff to support their work. When I visited the libraries, they proudly showed me their computers and the work they do with them to update cataloging and circulation practices in their libraries. However, there is still the challenge of connecting the computers within one library as well as with other Bulgarian libraries through the Internet. This Bulgarian participant explained:

> *BG10: I waste my time here with trying to find information for books, for videos, for DVDs, we don't... we have computers, yes, but not all information comes electronically for me, so I have to do much more work than Americans.*

The Bulgarian participants welcomed the additional computers and quickly acclimated to their usage, but challenges remained with integrating the computers entirely into the library systems.

Another usage of the computers was the creation of websites, a concrete application of the knowledge gained in the areas of marketing and outreach. Nearly every participating library had its own website by the time I finished with data collection, whereas only a few years before they did not. However, difficulties remain, as this participant explained:

> *BG12: And we have learned what libraries can do with their websites, their websites were fantastic, and we still have this old website and it's not updated. We actually haven't got a proper webmaster and we rely on somebody else and it takes time.*

While there are struggles with building and maintaining a website, many participants are taking on the extra burden of learning how to create and run a website. They are embracing the technology that can help them reach out to their communities.

Table 8-1

Professional Knowledge Identified as Received by Bulgarian Participants

Concept	Practice
Distinct departmental work	Separate circulation/reference areas
Volunteers in library	Volunteers teaching classes
Focus on community	Providing community-topic information
	Organize library for easy use by patrons
	Open lay-out of building
	Volunteer for community
	Story-time, children's activities
Outreach	Service to patrons outside building
Community analysis	Know what citizens need
Marketing	Invite press to everything
	Webpages
	National Library Week
	Bookmarks, other give-aways
Civic partnership	Participate in partnerships with other institutions
Lobbying	Library has to search for sponsors
	Librarians have to seek advocacy from government
	Encourage populace to vote
Teamwork	Librarians have to work together
Computers are useful	Replace paper circulation, cataloging records
	Interconnected (networked) library systems

American Participants Gained Cultural Knowledge

While the Bulgarian participants focused on professional knowledge, the American participants identified cultural awareness as the knowledge they received. Figure 8-2 at the end of this section summarizes all the items identified by the American participants. The following details some of the cultural items discussed by the American participants: the way of life in Bulgaria, their love of literature, and cultural influences on Bulgarian libraries.

When asked what they had learned, the American participants immediately identified several cultural items related to the way of life in Bulgaria. For example, they discussed the food, the drink and traditions such as the *martenitsa.* I ate many meals with the American visitors while in Bulgaria, and they always commented about the freshness of the food and the excellent wines. They also enjoyed the tradition of *martenitsa*, which was widely incorporated into programs for both children and adults at their libraries.

One very important Bulgarian tradition was also identified amongst all the American participants: May 24th, or the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius. These two saints are credited with creating the Cyrillic alphabet and their celebration throughout the country is evidence of the value placed upon literacy and the literate arts by Bulgarians. The American participants visited their Bulgarian partners during this festival time and were impressed by the celebration of an alphabet:

> *CO8: It was so funny because one of the articles about me in the paper, the mayor had a big party, it was a VIP party for May 24th, which is a huge holiday over there. That was even enlightening for me, to see people celebrate their alphabet, that's so unusual! I've told people about that here and they just can hardly believe it. I say oh yeah, people march down the street with letters of the alphabet!*

Celebration of one's alphabet is an unknown tradition in the United States and the festivals witnessed by the American participants made an impression. The Bulgarian emphasis on literacy and literature as evidenced by the celebration of the saints' day was identified by the American participants as a significant bit of cultural knowledge.

Going deeper than the surface cultural representations found in food, drink and traditional celebrations, some Americans highlighted an understanding of the different political and economic conditions of the two countries.

> ***Interviewer: Have you grown, have you learned anything?***
> *IA12: Um, yes. They're hard things to communicate, to see the difference in philosophies and... even though it's a democracy now, to see the influence of communism and to see the way they would think about things, they weren't completely past those communist ideas. It was just a different way of looking at things and as we had discussions about money and benefits and things, realizing that not everybody has it as good as we do. Even on our worst day we have it so much better.*
>
> *CO16: I've learned a lot of respect for the trials and tribulations of being a former communist country and how hard it is to create democracy and capitalism. A deeper understanding of that and a lot of respect for other cultures.*
>
> *CO15: Because I think we too often forget that there are other people in this world that don't have our advantages and there are other people in this world that are not as monetarily fixated on consumerism as we are, and that have a very rich history and a very rich culture. So I think we benefit from those.*

Experiencing first-hand—even briefly—life for their Bulgarian partners gave the American participants insight to living in a different socio-economic structure and the effects these differences have on how one perceives the world.

Finally, the American participants identified representations and effects of elements of Bulgarian socio-economic structure and culture in the professional activities of the Bulgarian libraries. For example, this Colorado participant spoke animatedly about the disparity regarding the approach taken to archival collections and the differences in circulation policies due to socio-economic pressures:

CO11: It was just amazing to see their ancient collections, you know, their books. They handled them with their bare hands! And we were just like [noise of horror]! But they're so tactile with their antiquities. Here you know we'd have gloves on and a mask. But it was just wonderful seeing their ancient collections. (...) And how they keep their collections... it's understandable why they're so protective of their collections, because they can't replace them. They can't just go out and... We had been told that it's very hard for them to release some books, like some of the libraries you'd go in and ask for help and ask if you could have a book and they'd be very unhelpful! Because they wouldn't want to turn loose of those and they wouldn't want to check them out to you and it's very understandable why. We can go out and just replace it, it wouldn't be any big deal. But for them, it's all they have.

The hours the library is open is also influenced by a combination of socio-economic pressures and cultural values. An Iowa participant noted that the library's schedule reflects the emphasis on family:

IA3: I think the concept of bringing people in, with programming... if they have an author come in, it can only be at lunchtime when people come from work to come in. They don't do anything at nights or on weekends. So you don't have family events because you can't have family events, because kids have school. And if the schools are closed, then the library might be closed. Because, that's the time for families to be together.

The ability of the Bulgarian participants to run a library on a shoe-string budget gave the American participants an appreciation for the tenacity and commitment of the librarians. A Colorado participant shared:

CO11: I think it's probably given, I know it has for me, given a lot of us a respect and gratitude for how easy it is for us. How spoiled we are, how accessible things are to us. Financially, being able to come in and, well, even with budget cuts, being able to just fill whatever we need. I think it's been a reality check for me on just how lucky we really are. And also how hard it is, but how they work so hard to make everything keep working, the service that they provide their community. And how hard that is without the funds that we have available. So I think we've learned a lot about work ethic.

The cultural and socio-economic effects on Bulgarian librarianship were apparent to the American participants, which also caused them to consider their own practice of librarianship in terms of their culture.

Some American participants also identified cultural items represented in the Bulgarian libraries that they considered superior to their own practices. For example, the Bulgarian culture emphasizes relationships, influencing the practice of customer service:

> *IA3: They are interested in their public and they are interested in doing well for their public. They're interested in the customer service of their public. And they take the time with their public. So, that, I wish we did more of here, that we were really interested in what kind of question they have and take the time to show them instead of walking with your fingers... go there, go there, go there. They're not interested in doing that. I wish we hadn't given that piece up in our library.*

Another example is the local history centers that are present in even the smallest Bulgarian library and represent the Bulgarian pride in their local and national histories. These centers were noted by many American participants during interviews and they were commented upon in almost all of the journals that I collected from the visiting American partners. The notion of libraries as preservers of history rang home with this American participant:

> *CO11: Sharing library skills and seeing how Bulgaria does theirs and respecting their... the way that they run their libraries and how over the centuries they have been the protector of knowledge, like the monasteries were, you know, during the how many hundreds of times they've been invaded. And so their focus is different. I think sharing that... it has maybe made us feel that we should realize how important it is that we are the protector of knowledge too. Because I don't think we look at it in quite the same way they do.*

The American participants did not feel that there were any items of professional knowledge from their Bulgarian partners that they wanted to accept for immediate implementation in their libraries. However, there were some activities in the Bulgarian libraries representing cultural aspects that the American participants wanted to emulate.

Table 8-2

Cultural Knowledge Identified as Received by American Participants

Concept	Practice
Holidays	*Baba Marta*, May 24th
Traditions	Food, drink, *martenitsas*
Love of literacy, books, literature	May 24th holiday
	Space reserved in bookstore for library display
Pride in national and local histories	Community History departments
Slower pace	Taking time with patron
Emphasis on family	Shorter hours for library
Response to financial, social struggles	Leaving overhead light turned off
	Not circulating books
	Not weeding the collection

Summary

Tables 8-1 and 8-2 summarize what the participants identified as having learned from their partner, i.e., what knowledge they received. As expected, the Bulgarian participants cited knowledge about librarianship, which could be concretely applicable. The American participants highlighted knowledge about Bulgarian culture, which is not typically concretely applicable. Each table presents all the practices and corresponding concepts that the participants identified.

Attributes of Items

Rogers (2003) identified five attributes of innovations that can have an effect upon transfer: (a) the relative advantage of the new innovation; (b) its observability (ability to witness it in action prior to adoption); (c) its trialability (ability to try it before adopting); (d) its complexity; and (e) its compatibility with the receiving social system. Items stand a better chance of being accepted if they have more positive attributes, such as a higher relative advantage, easily observable, easily tried, not complex, and compatible (p. 16). On the other hand, items that have negative attributes like lower relative advantage, not observable, not testable, very complex and not compatible will probably not be widely accepted (p. 16).

In this study, the item transferred between the partners was knowledge, itself intangible. However, the practices that physically represent the knowledge can be analyzed with these attributes to determine whether they themselves facilitate or inhibit successful knowledge transfer. Table 8-3 presents an analysis of a sample of the items from Tables 8-1 and 8-2 identified by the participants; Appendixes Y and Z present the attributes of all the items from Tables 8-1 and 8-2, respectively.

Table 8-3

Sample of Items and Their Attributes

Bulgarian Participants

Practice	RA	O	T	NC	C	Acceptable?	Implemented?
Providing community-topic info	+	+	+	+	+	Yes	Yes
Story-time, children's activities	+	+	+	+	+	Yes	Yes
National Library Week	+	+	-	-	+	Yes	Yes
Organize library for patron use	+	+	-	-	+	No	Yes
Separate circulation/reference	+	+	-	-	+	No	No
Open lay-out of building	+	+	-	-	-	No	No

American Participants

Practice	RA	O	T	NC	C	Acceptable?	Implemented?
Taking time with patron	+	+	+	+	+	Yes	Yes
Community History departments	+	+	-	-	-	No	No
Shorter hours for library	-	+	-	-	-	No	No

Note: RA = Relative Advantage; O = Observable; T = Testable; NC = Not Complex; C = Compatible

Item as a Facilitating Factor

The findings from the study demonstrated the importance of positive attributes as facilitators of transfer. Some items identified by the Bulgarian participants included all of the positive attributes, such as providing community-topic information, offering story times, and giving away promotional material. The Bulgarian partners observed these items of knowledge while visiting their partners, perceived them as being more advantageous and not complex, could test them upon their return home, and found them to be compatible. Other items included most of the positive attributes, such as building webpages and establishing the National Library Week; while not necessarily testable or simple to do, they were observable, compatible, and considered more advantageous by the Bulgarian partners, therefore worth accepting and implementing.

Some items only had a few positive attributes but were accepted and implemented by some participating libraries, for example, using volunteers in the library to offer classes to the public, partnering with other civic organizations, and seeking political advocacy and sponsors. These items were not easily observable, not easily tested, not simple and not very compatible with the Bulgarian culture. Nonetheless, the Bulgarian partners saw the significant relative advantage of these items.

As for the items identified by the American participants, the two deemed acceptable and potentially implementable were more time with the patrons and superficial cultural representations, such as the food, drink and *martenitsas* that were discussed in programs for American patrons. While not necessarily relatively advantageous, these items were observable, testable, not complex to implement, and compatible with American culture, contributing to their acceptability.

Item as an Inhibiting Factor

Items that inhibit transfer have negative attributes: no relative advantage, not easily observable or testable, and are complex and not compatible. Items with these attributes will be very difficult to transfer. Appendixes Y and Z show some items were identified by the participants as being accepted, but not implemented. These items may have been relatively advantageous, observable and even testable, but were too complex and incompatible for easy implementation.

For example, the Bulgarians admired the open physical lay-out of American libraries and expressed the desire to implement this design in their own libraries. They realized the relative advantage of this architectural design but were impeded from implementing it due to the inability to test it, the complexity involved in designing and building, and the incompatibility with the current socio-economic structure. Many American participants discussed being impressed by the May 24th celebration of literacy, an item that was observable and could arguably hold relative advantage over the current lack of any celebration in the United States. However, such an item is not testable, not simple, and not entirely compatible with American culture. Therefore, the negative attributes of these items inhibited the complete transfer of this knowledge demonstrated by implementation.

The attributes of the items relate to the type of acceptance I addressed in that section. As the examples here show, attributes that facilitate knowledge transfer also facilitate application of that knowledge—concrete acceptance. Attributes that inhibit knowledge transfer also inhibit concrete acceptance, but not necessarily abstract acceptance; the knowledge can be accepted without being implemented.

Summary

The item transferred in the partnerships was knowledge. The Bulgarian participants highlighted professional knowledge and the American participants highlighted cultural knowledge, reflecting the content anticipated by the ABLE grant proposal. Representations of the knowledge can be analyzed as facilitating or inhibiting transfer by using the innovation attributes presented by Rogers (2002). Those representations that had primarily positive attributes were considered a facilitating factor and were also likely to be concretely accepted. Those representations that had primarily negative attributes were considered an inhibiting factor, but were still accepted even if only abstractly.

Adopting Units

According to Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963), *adopting units* can be either individuals or groups; for my study I focused on the individuals involved in the partnerships. It turned out, however, that the Bulgarians and Americans had different perspectives on what constituted a partner. The American participants saw the ABLE project as an individual-level special activity that did not involve the entire library except occasionally, such as during the visits. The Bulgarian participants, however, saw participation in the ABLE project as a library-level activity, with an individual acting as a spokesperson for the entire library. The American partners were typically middle management and operated independently, with the blessing or permission of upper management. In Bulgaria, it did not matter at what level the partner was, only that he or she spoke English. The Bulgarian library directors played a more active role than the American library directors, except in Iowa, where the majority of partners were directors.

Rogers (2003) presented five "ideal types" of adopter categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. These categories can be distinguished by certain socio-economic, personal, and communicative characteristics (pp. 288-292). Rogers used these characteristics as predictors for when an adopting unit would accept the innovation in question; mapping these categories over time determines the formation of the S-curve that measures diffusion in traditional researches. As I have already stated, the adopting units was another element in which my study differed from traditional studies. Given the lack of one item to track as it spread throughout a population, I could not categorize the participants into any particular category. However, in talking with the participants, I did find that they were able to identify certain personal characteristics that they felt facilitated or inhibited knowledge transfer. In this section I discuss these characteristics.

Adopting Units as a Facilitating Factor

The participants identified several characteristics of themselves and their partners that they perceived as having facilitated knowledge transfer. These characteristics were not related to just one culture; they were mentioned by both American and Bulgarian participants as important assets for successful partnerships. Table 8-4 presents the characteristics mentioned by the participants during the individual and focus group interviews.

Table 8-4

Characteristics of Adopting Units

Characteristic		Participants Mentioning
Curiosity		14
Willingness to learn new things	6	
Inquisitive	3	
Interested in new things	4	
Willingness to communicate	1	
Commitment		12
Dedication	6	
Devotion	3	
Determination	1	
Drive to make successful libraries	1	
Activist	1	
Common ground		9
Sharing a profession	6	
Sharing personal interests	3	
Ambassadors		4
Excited		3
Energetic	1	
Enthusiastic	1	
Excited about being a librarian	1	
Flexible		3
Courage, bravery, sense of adventure		2
Friendliness		2
Sharp, savvy		2
Entrepreneurial spirit, creative		2
Respect for different ideas and culture		1
Extrovert, ability to connect to a lot of people		1
Patience		1

As Table 8-4 shows, the characteristic mentioned by most participants was curiosity. The participants stated this in several ways, including willingness to learn new things, willingness to communicate, and being inquisitive. Nearly as important to the participants was commitment, described as dedication, devotion, determination, drive and being an activist. One Bulgarian participant described it as "working with heart":

> *BG14: Because if you don't work with your heart, there won't be a real library. And if you don't work with heart, you will not be a good person that makes different things for people who use the library.*

The next most frequently mentioned characteristic was sharing common ground, whether professionally or personally. The participants emphasized sharing a profession:

> *CO12: Sharing a profession gave the participants on both sides some common language and goals. It gave us a something common to work with, information and the information needs of our clients.*

> *IA1: Sharing a profession is important; it is the one common denominator.*

Sharing personal interests was considered quite important and the participants who mentioned this characteristic believed that sharing on a personal level led to better sharing on a professional level:

> *IA7: We had some personal interests that then we were able to find a common ground on a personal level, and that I think helped in a feeling of comfort level with us.*

> *IA15: I think it's because we have a very common denominator of family and work and libraries that tend to be very... be that equalizer. But the more I talk, the more we're similar and not different.*

Relationships were buttressed through these personal and professional commonalities.

Enthusiasm was mentioned by three different participants, as was being flexible. For some participants, being open to new situations and possibilities was the most important characteristic a partner could have. Being flexible was certainly necessary with the visits to partners, when many factors are uncontrollable, including the places in which the partners stayed, the loss of luggage while traveling, daily itineraries that changed frequently, and dealing with language difficulties, jet lag and culture shock. Flexibility was also needed for sorting out technical issues, such as e-mail lost to firewalls and other miscommunications caused by technology. A Colorado participant shared these comments about the need for flexibility during the visits:

> *CO7: The most important personal characteristic on both sides was curiosity and flexibility. Each person had some preconceived ideas of what things would be like in the other libraries, but needed to be open to new ideas to be able to learn. (...) When I was there I opened myself to the whole experience, tried whatever they suggested, and tried to be a cheerleader for them with their local governments and officials. Flexibility and curiosity really helped with the long days and the full agendas.*

As the above quote illustrates, having a flexible nature helped the participants make the most of their experiences in the partnerships.

Ambassador

An interesting characteristic that deserves closer attention was mentioned by four American participants: being an "ambassador." For example, these participants expressed their amazement at their treatment while in Bulgaria, causing them to understand the importance of their visit and the message they were carrying:

> *CO7: I had guessed that this mattered there, more than we could guess here. And when I got there, I could see that that was really true, and that librarian ambassadors, which we were, were a huge thing there. ... I found it to be a privilege and an honor to be able to play that role. Be the ambassador from the US. I loved it!*

> *CO17: Goodness! They, and you'll hear this from others too, they just rolled out the red carpet. And when they introduced you, they made a point of saying "representing libraries and the United States" when they introduced you, so there's no doubt in my mind, at least when I was in [partner library's city], that this wasn't the time to inadvertently be the ugly American. I was treated like some sort of good will ambassador...It was fantastic. ... Well, they also trot you around*

so that you meet all of the dignitaries. ... "oh yes, we want you to meet, you're going to this meeting." And why am I going? "Well, because you need to meet thus and such, we want them to meet you." OK, I'll get my tiara out right away. [Laughter]

Although the notion of taking on an ambassador role while in the United States was not mentioned by the Bulgarian participants in the interviews, the visitors that I observed spoke about seeing their visits as a way to promote knowledge about their country as well as their way of librarianship. They exhibited their awareness of the importance of their visit in terms of creating cultural goodwill.

BG34: And also the ABLE project has the dimension of people to people influence. Because Bulgarian librarians spend time in housing with American employees and they, I'm sure, they carried presents from Bulgaria there. They say stories about B. So, I don't know in how many, but at least in 20 American houses, there is at least one souvenir from Bulgaria, and some story, and it's not only for the librarian, but for the whole family. This is a chance for the kids, for the husband, for everybody. To learn about a small country somewhere on the other side of the world.

The American partners also recognized this connection. One Iowa participant spoke of it regarding her Bulgarian partner's visit:

IA7: We were ambassadors and we had that role to play and I think all of us were very aware of that. I think when [partner] was here, she felt that same way and she got to where she felt more comfortable and more of a part of the group at the end of the visit, but still she was aware that she was an ambassador.

All of the participants were aware that they were representing their countries and influencing the perceptions formed by someone else regarding that country.

The ambassador role did not end upon leaving the partners' countries. The participants also spoke of becoming ambassadors for the other country at home:

CO8: I've been like an ambassador since I've come back. I tell everybody what a wonderful culture they have, what friendly people they are, what a great country it is. I encourage people to visit the country. So I'm very enthusiastic about Bulgaria.

> *BG10: I mean, I have a good, very good feelings about the people, about the movies, about everything. I'm your first friend! I'll be your publicity every where.*

The notion of taking on an ambassadorial role, in both directions, demonstrates the seriousness of the project and the participants' commitment to their partnerships.

Several of the characteristics mentioned by the participants can be collected under the umbrella term of "ambassador." These characteristics might include curiosity, respect for different cultures, relationship acumen, ability to connect with people, patience, and a commitment to building relationships for a common good. Although only a few of the participants explicitly mentioned "being an ambassador" as a facilitating characteristic, it could be argued that almost all of the characteristics collected in Table 8-4 also describe successful ambassadors.

Adopting Units as an Inhibiting Factor

The experience had by one American participant stands in stark contrast to the other participants and illustrates how the characteristics of an adopting unit can inhibit knowledge transfer. The Bulgarian partner who came to visit did not participate in any professional and cultural opportunities that the hosting partner arranged. Initially the hosting partner attributed the reluctance to the different professional background of the visitor—he was the technology expert for his library, not a librarian. The visiting partner demonstrated apathy for the overall experience and did not try to take advantage of the many opportunities presented. The American participant expressed frustration and disillusionment with the ABLE project overall until she realized that this experience was due to the Bulgarian partner's lack of personal characteristics that would lead to involvement. He was introverted and shy, perhaps very homesick, and did not exhibit the flexibility and other characteristics identified as needed to make the visit a success.

Thankfully, no other participant had this kind of experience with a partner. However, it exemplifies the importance of personal characteristics to the knowledge transfer process. In this case, simply knowing English was not enough. Even though the Bulgarian participant had a different professional background, that may have been overcome if the participant was curious, engaged, and willing to learn. Instead, the lack of the personal characteristics discussed above significantly inhibited the partnership and knowledge transfer experiences.

Summary

For this study, the adopting units were individuals, although the participants had different considerations of the level of involvement, resulting in directors sometimes partnered with staff. They found that common ground in their professional and personal lives facilitated knowledge transfer. The participants also identified several personal characteristics that contributed to forming strong relationships through which knowledge could be transferred, including being curious, committed, and enthusiastic. Many of these characteristics were summed up by the term "ambassador." An exceptional unfortunate experience illustrated how knowledge transfer is inhibited when the adopting unit does not have these characteristics.

Channels of Communication

For Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963), there were two *channels of communication*: mass media and interpersonal. The ABLE project did not use mass media and focused on interpersonal communication. Within the interpersonal communication channel, the participants employed two modes: e-mail and occasional face-to-face visits. Each of these modes contributed to the channels of communication as facilitating or inhibiting factors.

E-mail is the primary communication channel for the partners. The coordinators matched the libraries and then introduced the partners "virtually" through e-mail, leaving them to establish communication. Although I was only able to collect a small sample of the e-mails that had been exchanged between partners, from this sample it appeared that early e-mail topics were general pleasantries and the partners gradually moved into deeper discussions of their libraries and activities within them. A Colorado participant outlined the topics of discussion with her partner:

> *CO2: I tried to at least every two weeks or at least once a month, just communicate. And it may have been "well, it's snowing out today" and talk about the snow... my goal was to keep contact, to just establish some kind of regular communication, whether it was what was going on or how hot it was. Sending electronic cards, we did a lot of that. She would send us electronic Christmas cards, and we also got them in the mail. And then the martinitsa, in March, we always communicated about that. So in a lot of respects, it was more of a friendship kind of communication as well as what we're doing in the library. What the library week theme was and I'd talk about that and send her the websites and then Banned Book week was another. (...) Besides just the friendship thing too, we shared a lot of what we were doing. And I would try to take pictures and send them electronically, and she did that too.*

The combination of personal and professional topics was typical in the e-mail exchanges. The participants viewed the partnership as a personal relationship and worked to establish personal connections as well as gain professional knowledge.

The ABLE project had one significant difference from most international partnerships between libraries: the partners were able to visit each others' libraries for periods of five or two weeks. The face-to-face visits made the relationships feel real for all the participants. Being able to talk and receive immediate feedback was mentioned as being a critical component of building relationships and trust between the partners. The participants also got a better feel for the environment of their partners during these visits, which led to a better understanding of what each other needed and could give.

The presence of two types of communication channels naturally leads to a comparison of those channels. Overall, the participants far preferred the face-to-face visits to communicate with their partners than e-mail. They felt that it was easier to transfer knowledge face-to-face, as one Bulgarian participant pointed out:

BG36: Being in a relationship requires the inclusion of all senses.

While face-to-face is the most natural and richest way to communicate, e-mail is the main mode of communication between the partners due to its ability to bridge time and space.

Communication Channels as a Facilitating Factor

Each of the two modes of communication acted as facilitating factors to the transfer of knowledge between partners. Even though e-mail keeps the participants in contact, the face-to-face mode provides the most opportunity for knowledge transfer.

E-mail

Given the widespread availability of Internet technology, e-mail is the standard mode of communication and knowledge transfer in international partnerships today. Offering relatively convenient and instantaneous connection in both synchronous and asynchronous modes, and being available nearly everywhere around the world, the Internet is the communication mainstay between partners. As one participant stated:

> *CO5: The biggest technology benefit for the partnership is e-mail. We can keep in touch, talk real-time via IM, thanks to technology. It brings us closer. We can share pictures across e-mail. Communications that would take weeks without e-mail can happen in hours.*

A Bulgarian participant voiced her desire to take the partnerships to the next level of technological availability:

> *BG7: Without Internet this project would have been impossible. I hope that some day we could use other technological devices in our mutual programs (video English lesson, lectures, discussions, etc.).*

The participants recognized the importance of e-mail as their primary communication tool and maintained optimism that their correspondence will improve over time, as their relationships develop. Furthermore, they anticipated using future technological improvements in Internet-based communication, such as voice over IP, to continue to deepen and sustain their connections. They are fully aware of their reliance upon technology for the existence of their partnerships.

Not only is e-mail the primary communication mode, it can support the formation of positive initial contacts that then lead to successful face-to-face meetings. During a focus group, Bulgarian participants discussed the value of the initial contact by e-mail for establishing personal connections before arriving in the United States:

> *BG2: I want to say that we didn't... in our e-mails we talk not only for cities, our cities, our libraries, but we become friends before we meet each other.*
> ***Interviewer: Was that helpful? Do you think your relationship with your partner library would be different... would it be better or worse if you didn't have that personal relationship before you came over here?***
> *BG3: I think it would be worse. More worse.*
> *BG4: I think so.*
> *BG2: I'm sure.*
> ***Interviewer: Why? Just because you wouldn't know each other?***
> *BG4: There is distance first meeting. After that we can meet. This is normal. Maybe culture shock is not too big, if our contact starts in the distance...*
> *BG1: My colleague, when I write to her e-mail, during a long time I feel to her close, and when I see her here, it's not different like my... image about her.*

The initial contact through e-mail allowed the partners to get to know each other at least superficially, so the face-to-face visits could launch from an already established level of comfort. Even if they had begun corresponding only recently before their visits, they had some idea of what to expect from their partners during the visit and felt more confident during their stay. In turn, this contributed to the development of their relationships with their hosts and ultimately of knowledge transfer.

Face-to-face Visits

Forming and developing a relationship needs "face-time." While e-mail correspondence can support early relationship building, spending time face-to-face cements a relationship. Interacting in "real-time" with the full complement of verbal and non-verbal communication tools greatly eases the strain on intercultural communication (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999). While there will probably remain challenges in completely understanding the other person, the partners are able to interact and negotiate understanding on the fly. Face-to-face communication is inherently a richer and more communicative mode than e-mail, and thus more conducive to knowledge transfer.

This Bulgarian participant described the development of the relationship between the two libraries:

> *BG1: At first our partnership started like Internet friendship. Some of us, and director, were in contact with colleagues in [American partner] public library and maybe during the first five or six months, we talked about our families, our lifestyle and so on. And after that, we started to send e-mails about professional topics and when the director of my library met with director of [American partner] public library, I think that the contact became deeper.*

The "contact"—the relationship—certainly became deeper while the Bulgarian partner spent five weeks at the American library. Other Bulgarian participants commented on the opportunity to spend time physically with their partners:

> *BG4: But I think this project is very important because this is very big and very difficult to keep contact by e-mail, so many years and don't see who you're talking to. It's very difficult. I think this is very... this is another level of communication, to see person who you're talking to.*

> *BG24: The best part of this was when I have the chance to work with people in America. This was the best. When people from different countries and cultures work together, this is the most important, because when they only talk or go to the restaurants, this is like tourism. But when they work together, they become friends.*

The American participants also appreciated the more intense relationship development during the visits:

> *CO5: I think we attained [a connection] quicker and deeper because of the compressed time [of the visit]. I think if you're doing it long distance, it's a... for instance, if I was just conversing with him through e-mail because of the partnership, it would have taken a longer space of time probably for us to come to that kind of comfort. The advantage to the written word is that you can look at it a little more deeply and critically and make sure you're being clear and defined makes it a little easier. And he would have the advantage of seeing it, rather than just hearing it. So in that respect, it might actually be easier, but I think it would take longer.*

More than one participant commented on the quicker establishment of a connection between the partners during the face-to-face visits than by e-mail. While the e-mail communication may have certain positive aspects, the amount of time it takes to develop a trusting relationship only through this medium is quite long. The conversation in e-mail tended to be superficial and often it took several exchanges to get through the pleasantries needed to establish an understanding of each other and a pattern of responding. Interacting in the "real-time" of face-to-face visits allowed the partners to experience a more rapid development of their relationship, facilitating knowledge transfer.

Knowledge is not always verbally communicable, and actually experiencing something firsthand is often the best way to transfer knowledge—especially tacit knowledge. A Colorado participant spoke at length about witnessing the experience of some Bulgarian partners who attended the national library lobby day in Washington, DC:

> *CO7: I think one of the most inspirational parts of the visitors being here, was going to Washington DC with them. They had no idea that librarians, or just people, people in general, could go and lobby at a national level. They thought we had set this up as a special thing ... but when they got to Washington DC, not only did they see that the ALA thing was every year and people came from every state and it was organized and happening all the time, not only did they see that for the library world, but when they were actually on the hill, they saw all these Americans from everywhere ...So it was like, well, this is really real, Americans*

really do this, wow! (...) The whole group, and that was both the people who came to Colorado and the people who went to Iowa, talked to me about that that impressed them a lot. They could see why a national presence was important. And what a national organization could do, they could also see that ALA really meant something here. Maybe eventually their own organization could mean something important politically.

Seeing firsthand the actions taken by the American librarians to lobby for their profession allowed the Bulgarian participants to create their own knowledge concerning lobbying. During my observations of the five Bulgarian partners who came to the United States and the two American partners who went to Bulgaria, I witnessed many instances of knowledge transfer by tacit means. For example, the Bulgarian visitors often had occasions to assist their American library colleagues at the circulation desk, at the reference desk, and in technical services. While they also toured several libraries, it was these hands-on experiences that let them truly understand the American library experience, which they shared with me in conversations and in their journals. Being on-site at one's partner library was a significant means for transferring knowledge through direct experience. Clearly the face-to-face communication facilitated knowledge transfer.

While the e-mail correspondence allowed participants to establish a superficial familiarity with one another, the face-to-face visits significantly affected their relationships. Both Bulgarian and American participants cited the in-person visits as crucial to their professional and personal relationships. From a personal standpoint, having seen and communicated with the partner in person made the partnership feel more "real"; this was reflected in the e-mails after the visit:

BG4: Face-to-face is better. Now that I have met [partner], e-mail is daily.

IA1: Before I visited them in person, our relationship really wasn't a relationship. Emails were seldom and with a stranger. Now it is like keeping in touch with a friend.

CO2: You know, they had been here, so we could communicate about what was happening in Denver. They had been in our library, so one of the things I tried to do was take pictures of the displays and the changes we were making in the library. One year we took on a family, some families for Christmas, so we took pictures and shared that with them. But I think the fact that they had been in our library and had met a lot of people, it was just more real. You want to share things that you know they are going to understand and be able to have a picture in their mind of where it is and who it is and that kind of thing.

CO4: The quality of the e-mail relationship sharply increased after we met. ... Because you can ask about their children and you can ask about comments that they made.

CO8: After visiting our sister libraries and after the visits by [Bulgarian partner 1] and [Bulgarian partner 2] to [American library], I had a much closer relationship with our sister libraries. We now communicate frequently via email and discuss cooperative projects.

CO16: And I think having [Bulgarian partner] here and us going to Bulgaria really helped us to spark that communication as well. ... it's easier to write to somebody when you've met them and you've put a face as well as a personality with the name ... connecting the face with the name makes it a lot more interesting and you have a greater dedication to it.

Sharing the experiences during the partner's stay contributed to creating a stronger relationship with a common history, which in turn helped the e-mail communication after the partner had returned home. Even though face-to-face was the preferred mode of knowledge transfer, the e-mail exchanges after the visit could draw upon that relationship and increase the facilitation of further knowledge transfer. Thus the two communication modes could play off of each other for on-going relationship development.

Communication Channels as an Inhibiting Factor

The participants also identified certain aspects of e-mail and face-to-face communication that inhibited relationship building and knowledge transfer. In this regard, e-mail was the most inhibiting, primarily due to technological challenges, but face-to-face communication was not exempt from its own forms of difficulties.

E-mail

E-mail poses many challenges to communication, especially intercultural communication. The technological platform of e-mail was a particularly strong factor that inhibited knowledge transfer. "Spam" has become a significant hazard when using e-mail, and every library had firewalls in place to help control it. However, these firewalls also prevented the partners from contacting each other, especially during the initial correspondence. These participants noted the difficulties:

> *BG1: No, only we had problem at first with e-mails because in [partner] public library there is spam and our e-mails didn't go through, but we only receive them. Their e-mails.*
> ***Interviewer: Oh, you could get it from [partner library], but not back.***
> *BG1: Yes.*
> ***Interviewer: Did that get worked out quickly?***
> *BG1: Yes, our Internet provider called to [partner library] Internet provider and understood what was problem. ...They gave ID to us and everything is all right after that.*
>
> *CO8: I think e-mail is a problem. Sometimes I wonder if my e-mails are even getting over there! Just getting a response to e-mails. I wish I could talk to them by phone. [Partner] sent me an e-mail and I e-mailed her back and I had a whole bunch of questions, but I haven't heard from her. It's been like a month, so I don't know what happened. I don't know how stable their Internet connection is.*
>
> *IA1: Well, except that for maybe almost the first nine or ten or eleven months, we couldn't get e-mail to them and they couldn't get e-mail to us.*
> ***Interviewer: Really? What happened?***
> *IA1: We're not really sure exactly what... We had some technical people in so that a foreign e-mail address would be accepted by our city network. And then we didn't have their right e-mail. Until we could get one from them, we couldn't send them, because we didn't have the proper information. Sort of a comedy of errors, but we kept trying and it finally worked.*

After the first instances of this type of glitch, the coordinators quickly learned to suggest to the partners to check for technological barriers before assuming their partner did not want to speak with them. As discussed in the section on adopting units, being flexible was an important characteristic for the participants to have while the initial contacts of a partnership were arranged. So was a sense of humor, as this Iowa participant related:

> *IA12: We laughed at... the first couple of messages we had from them, e-mails, we also got viruses with them, so we were real hesitant with... but then that cleared up. While I was there, their computer person said something to me about... that viruses were a problem or something, and I said yeah, even the first few times we got them from you. And he seemed very embarrassed at that, that he'd let one get through. But then he goes oh well, [Laughter] we can't afford to give you anything else, so we'll share our viruses with you! [Laughter]*

More than one partnership started off with difficulty due to e-mails being blocked by Internet security features. Early messages would be lost and both sides would wonder if the other was ever going to write, when in reality both sides had been trying. Fortunately, resolving the technological barriers was usually quite easy once they were found.

Another challenge facing the partners in their e-mail correspondence was language. Although the Bulgarian partners had to be of a certain proficiency level in English, many participants recognized the issues that are inherent in communicating via e-mail even if both people are fluent in the language. The fact that the Bulgarian participants had to write in another language only compounded the challenges. Several American participants recognized the difficulty faced by the Bulgarians:

> *CO4: There can be a tremendous intimacy that grows up very, very rapidly in this kind of communication. You haven't seen each other, you don't have any of the prejudices that often come from first impressions and all that kind of stuff and it can be very intimate. But because of the difference in language, when that first started, that immediate intimacy wasn't there. So I didn't sense, in our case, that spark. Because you could see the translation process and that immediately sets up this barrier in your own mind as you start to write: am I being clear, you know, and not really knowing.*

> ***Interviewer: So much of the program is conducted electronically, through these e-mails. How do you think that affects that exchange of information?***
> *CO9: I think it makes it more difficult of course. You've got e-mail which is an environment where you can classically, and we ALL misinterpret. There's nothing in there to soften anything or to get clarification. And you have a language barrier on top of that. I think it's very difficult. I saw [Bulgarian partner] just working and struggling to respond to e-mails in English with English, and they*

> *had to have the time and effort to do it. When I'll send e-mails over, I'm obviously not as clear as I could be, or working on assumptions, so you're seeing the response back is not really to the question and then having to figure out how I need to rephrase the question to get that information. So it's very difficult ... communication is always the most difficult, and whenever you take out every cue that you can have in communication, it becomes harder, that's all.*
>
> ***Interviewer: What kinds of things do you feel stood in the way?***
> *CO16: Language. I don't speak any Bulgarian. And they, in general, are a little bit shy about trying out their English, especially in writing, because that's more permanent and you can look at it over and over. If you're doing oral communication, you can edit what you're saying and explain what you mean if the person receiving the communication doesn't understand your meaning. So the written is harder. I think that's the main barrier. (...)It was hard for me to write to them, too, because... I would read and re-read what I'd written to make sure it was clear and that the words weren't too big. So it was a little more difficult for me to write to them as well.*

As the last quote pointed out, the American partners also needed to monitor their language use to make understanding as easy as possible for their Bulgarian partners. Several participants noted the reduction in depth of discussion when the language had to be simple. Obviously a simplification of language would inhibit the transfer of complex concepts and knowledge statements.

Face-to Face Visits

Even though the preferred mode of communication was face-to-face, it was not without its own challenges that inhibited knowledge transfer. The main issue raised by the participants was the timing of the visits: the ABLE project coordinators scheduled the Bulgarians' visits to occur before the Americans' visits. In part this was due to the desire to have the Americans' visits coincide with the May 24th holiday. A more important rationale was the Bulgarians would have time following their visits to the United States to begin to implement any knowledge they had gained, to show their partners during their visits to Bulgaria. However, some American participants expressed the wish to reverse the trip order. For one Colorado participant, her partner's visit was an opportunity to develop trust, but she felt that it would have happened sooner into the visit if she had been to Bulgaria first and could subsequently have better tailored her partner's visit:

> *CO7: ... like I said, we weren't really getting real until the very end in a way. And I think if we had been there first, they would have opened...they would have known that it was OK to open up to us. We would have already built that. We've seen it, we know what's happening here, we understand it, you've shown it to us, now you're here with us. (...)I think we might have gotten more realistic about, OK what's practical in your situation, because we would have seen their particular situation*

Another Colorado participant echoed these comments about knowing what their partner would need after having seen their library firsthand:

> *CO17: Since I've been there and seen it, one, I can see it in my mind's eye, so I know that this or that would be of help, whereas I didn't know that before. I didn't know that they didn't even have a CD player with headphones. They don't have a DVD player, so guess what? They don't have a collection there. They have vinyl records. Well that was interesting. Being there and seeing how they operate, makes a difference in how you interact with them. Suddenly you know many of their needs.*

Prior understanding of what would best help could have had an effect on how the American participants tailored their guests' visits in order to maximize the knowledge transfer opportunities to help them the most. Without this tailoring, knowledge transfer was limited to some degree during the face-to-face visits.

Summary

The communication channel used in the ABLE project was interpersonal, through two modes. Although e-mail was readily available and acted as the primary mode of communication, facilitating knowledge transfer, it posed many challenges with technology and language barriers, making it more of an inhibiting factor. Communicating face-to-face was preferred by far, and offered many more opportunities for transferring knowledge—especially tacit knowledge—between the hosts and visitors. Nearly all the participants felt that they needed the face-to-face meetings to really cement the relationship and build trust and friendship, which was carried over to their e-mail correspondence. Without the possibility of meeting in person, many doubted their partnerships would have evolved quickly, having an adverse effect on knowledge transfer. However, the timing of the visits caused some participants to consider reversing the visits to provide a richer experience for the Bulgarian participants. Regardless, the time spent face-to-face had a positive impact on knowledge transfer.

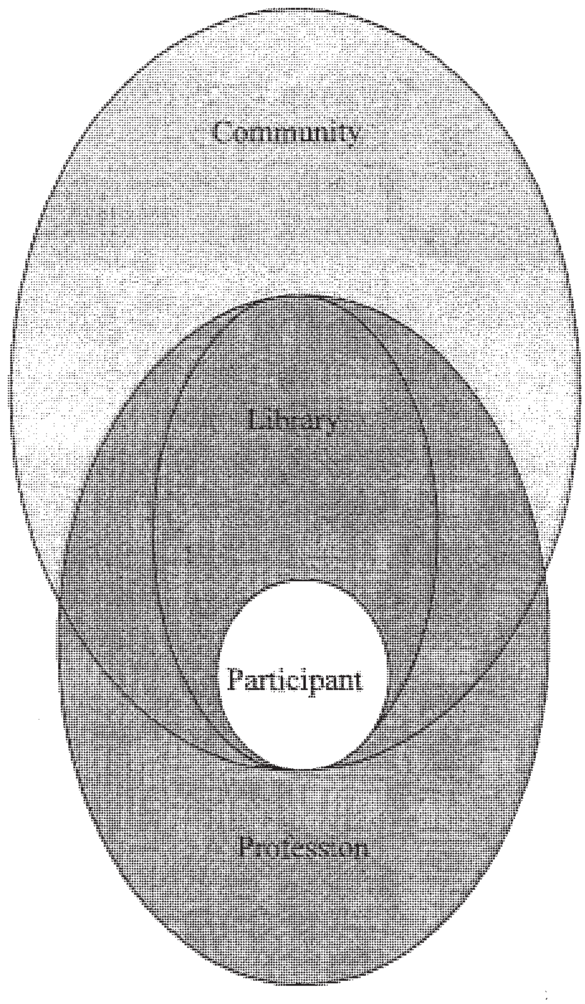
Social Structure

For Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963), the *social structure* sets the boundaries for interpersonal interactions, creating social networks. The structures of the social contexts of the ABLE case were manifested both within the case and the larger context in which it is embedded. The internal social structure of the case was the dyad of a partnership between two professionals, connected loosely to coordinators as well as to other participating professionals. The figures in Chapter 7 illustrate these internal social structures. Typically, individual international partnerships are only as active as the two participants can or want to be. With the ABLE project, the presence of other partnership participants and the coordinators provided encouragement and support.

The social structures of the external contexts surrounding the ABLE project also came into play. The case was not in a vacuum; the participants moved within social contexts in their libraries and communities. The profession in general also played a role, particularly in Bulgaria. Figure 8-1 illustrates the conceptualization of the external social structures that affected the ABLE case.

Figure 8-1

External Social Structures Affecting the ABLE Case



Social Structure as a Facilitating Factor

Elements of both the internal and external social structures were facilitating factors. From the internal structure, three elements in particular contributed to facilitating knowledge transfer: self-selection by the participating libraries, proactive coordinators, and personal friendships. Three elements from the external structure also contributed: support from the library, support from the community, and a sense of connection within the profession.

Internal Social Structure

Perhaps the most important facilitating factor among the internal social structure of the ABLE case was the proactive nature of the coordinators. As mentioned above, the network of coordinators tied together the entire ABLE project and monitored its development. However, the participants noted that the more involved a coordinator was, the better the partnership experience. These Colorado participants commented on the importance of the Colorado coordinator:

> ***Interviewer: What kinds of things facilitated communication between you and your partner you feel?***
> *CO16: [Colorado coordinator].*
> ***Interviewer: [Colorado coordinator]?***
> *CO16: [Colorado coordinator]! [Laughter] If I hadn't heard from my sister library for a while, [Colorado coordinator] would get in there and kind of nudge her or she would forward me messages, so that's what helped with that.*
>
> *CO17: And [Colorado coordinator] is just fabulous, if I'm having a road block she just jumps right in there. Example, last summer, not this summer but a year ago, all of a sudden all of my e-mails to [partner] started bouncing back! And I was getting e-mails from them, and they were like, "Did we do something to offend you!" And [Colorado coordinator] just... it took three months until we finally found somebody who could get the message clear to them.*

The coordinator role was particularly important in encouraging and supporting the partnerships, as the geographical embedded cases demonstrated. The partners relied on them to provide organizational support and a connection between all the partners. This Colorado participant described how attending a meeting arranged by the Colorado coordinator for all Colorado participants at the launch of the ABLE project helped her in the partnership:

> *CO1: [The meeting] really helped us focus and it set out clear goals and clear expectations that we had to meet and because of that we were able to accomplish a lot more things with the partnership.*

Meeting with other participants encouraged and supported participation and thus was a positive influence. A proactive and involved coordinator facilitated knowledge transfer.

A second element of the internal social structure that paved the way to knowledge transfer was the ability to choose to participate. The embedded cases based on geography also revealed the importance of choosing to participate: the Colorado participants appeared more satisfied with their partnerships than the Iowa participants. Self-selection by the libraries to join the project, and then self-selection among the library staff to choose to participate, resulted in interested and committed individuals. As the counter example in the section on adopting units demonstrated, lack of interest can severely hamper knowledge transfer.

The final element of the internal social structure that contributed to facilitating knowledge transfer was the development of personal friendships between participants. Although the ABLE project is considered a group of professional partnerships, the participants in almost every partnership quickly became good personal friends, contributing to their vested interest in successful knowledge transfer. Some partners were of similar ages and had children or grandchildren of similar ages, which helped to create a common bond outside of the library profession:

IA7: It was really good that [partner] and I both had grandkids, that we had a connection in that way. And she liked to cook and I like to cook, so we had some personal interests that then we were able to find a common ground on a personal level, and that I think helped in a feeling of comfort level with us.

Both American and Bulgarian participants spoke of how this level of intimacy and trust in each other contributed to their comfort in communicating with each other. Discovering that another person's sincerity and honesty can be trusted is an important juncture:

CO10: Because they were so... all of them, so gracious, and it was difficult, I think to get constructive criticism from them because we were their hosts and it was impolite of them to speak ill. These are I think significant cultural issues, because... God bless them, how polite. I think it was hard to get, what can we do better next time, what can we do better for the people who come after you. It was hard to get that data. ... I would say that it was a beginning. And in the beginning, everyone is extra polite. I think when we start building a foundation with many layers, eventually, someone is going to say, "You know, we're really tired of X."

CO11: It took a long time to establish the trust between us, even though [Bulgarian partner] and I... I'd e-mail her and she'd e-mail me back and this has been a problem with some of the other libraries where the communication was really difficult to establish. But I think it was a long time before they felt comfortable asking for things. And so, we initially just started sending things and hoping they would be helpful. We sent two very huge boxes of children's books, which they really couldn't use. They didn't have a section in the library for English books for small children. But they donated them to an orphanage that was so happy to have them and we were so thrilled that they routed them that way. And at that point, I think it made it easier for [Bulgarian partner] to say, "you know, we really can't use that, but this is what we could use." ... So it was more kind of trial and error at first, until they felt comfortable actually letting us know what their needs were.

The bonds of friendship were particularly present between the partners who visited each other. Spending time with each other was frequently cited as a factor in becoming familiar and comfortable with one's partner, as discussed in the above section on *communication channels*. Conversations over meals and during outings, sharing both good and bad experiences made friendships stronger. One Iowa participant articulated the added value of a personal relationship with the partner to the partnership:

Interviewer: The personal relationship that you mentioned there... how do you feel about the success of the project without that personal relationship? Do you think it would be possible?
IA11: Yes, it would be possible. But I think it's a natural that kind of develops, even with the guilt factor of making sure you respond promptly! I think it's a natural outgrowth of any kind of working relationship, in any kind of organization you tend to have a healthier professional relationship with the people that you feel comfortable with personally. But I don't think it's crucial. And some of the other people that I've met through the program, I could see having a fairly strictly professional relationship, if they e-mailed me and asked me something, I would respond, but because [partner] lived here, it's more personal.

Other Iowa participants stated this notion quite well:

IA13: It's a lot harder to... well, it's a lot easier to care about people who are your friends and whom you know, than people who live halfway across the world and you don't know them.

IA7: There's a comfort level that has to occur on an individual basis, I think, before you can really start working on a professional level. There's an element of trust that has to develop on that personal level first.

Knowledge transfer may be possible in a relationship without the personal trust, but may not be as rich or as deep. Obviously the incentive to communicate and transfer knowledge could only be helped by the trust present in the personal friendships the partners established.

Personal friendships were made not only between partners, but between participants from the same country. This Bulgarian participant expressed the deep feelings she has for her colleagues:

Interviewer: Tell me what the most important thing is that you've learned from the entire project.
BG10: The most important thing for me personally, I would say, is all the friendships I made. Not only with Americans, I told you about that, but I made friends with the colleagues in Bulgaria, I made friends with Bulgarians in America, so I felt like soul... two souls...
Interviewer: Oh, soul mates!
BG10: Yes, soul mates. I didn't hope for this at the beginning that I can find someone, so that's amazing. ...We share some experience together and it makes us friends forever.

The visiting Bulgarians whom I observed also described to me the satisfaction they felt from communicating with a fellow Bulgarian who was having similar experiences. The two Bulgarians in Colorado spent quite a bit of time together, and they noted that they frequently discussed what they had seen and been learning. The Bulgarians in Iowa also communicated with each other often on the telephone. It appears that being able to discuss what they had observed and experienced helped to strengthen their understanding of the knowledge they had received from their partners.

External Social Structure

The social structures external to the case also had elements that contributed to facilitating knowledge transfer. Most important to the participants was the support of their library colleagues. For those participants who were in staff positions, knowing that their directors supported their work by organizing programs, granting administrative leave for the face-to-face visit, or simply saying "thank you" was very important to their willingness to continue the partnerships. The approval of their co-workers was also important, even if they were not actively involved. The participants did not directly discuss the facilitating nature of the libraries' social structures; these feelings were made clear only in terms of their inhibiting nature, which is presented later.

The support of the community for the partner library and the partnership in general was also remarked upon as a facilitating factor. For example, a Colorado library hosts an on-going knitting club for teenagers, which responded to an idea from the participating librarian to knit hats, scarves and mittens for patrons of their partner Bulgarian library, in which it can become very cold during the winter. The Colorado participant related this story:

> ***Interviewer: I saw the notice about the knitting for the patrons at the [Bulgarian partner] library. How did that get started?***
> *CO8: That was just an idea I had. Because when [Bulgarian partner] came and she said that it gets very cold there in the winter time and people are so poor. They have a lot of elderly people who use the library and she told me that they don't have proper clothing. So I just thought about that and that this could be a good thing. Knitting has become very popular among teenagers recently. Our group has been great! When I did a presentation for the main group, the room was packed! There must have had about 17-20 people in there, all ages, from little kids, seniors, teenagers, and I did my Power Point and I told them about Bulgaria. They really wanted to know why they were doing this, and so that helped a lot. They've been working, I've got a box full of stuff to send.*

Such projects involve the community and develop interest in the partnership, which contributes to its continuation and strengthens the ties between communities.

The final external element that helps to facilitate knowledge transfer is the increased development of relationships within the profession. A benefit to being a part of the ABLE project expressed by the Bulgarian participants was the establishment of professional ties with other librarians in Bulgaria. These ties can reinforce the knowledge transfer from an American partner, or even result in further knowledge transfer between the Bulgarian participants. The Bulgarian participants explained:

> *BG5: After this participated project, I have improved my library skills, because I met Bulgarian persons and have met new friends in Bulgarian libraries in the first.*

> *BG6: I [was] surprised that I will get into so many contacts with Bulgarian colleagues. I [was] surprised that so many Bulgarian librarians make efforts to change the role of Bulgarian libraries in the society. I was not consider that Bulgarian alumnus will continue contacts after coming back and will make their own organization.*

> ***Interviewer: OK, tell me what has been for you, perhaps personally as well as professionally, what has been the best part about being in the ABLE project?***
> BG12: *(...) What else... I made friends! [Laughter] Of course not only friends on the American side, but also here in Bulgaria. We are very close with all the other participants, especially those who were in Colorado. I can always call them, I can be sure that they will help me if I have any questions, professional problems here in Bulgaria.*

One Bulgarian participant was so moved by the new relationships she formed with other Bulgarian librarians during her experience in the United States that she created a division of ULISO especially for those librarians who had been to the United States on the ABLE project or any other visit. She wanted to retain those ties, even though it is difficult for librarians in Bulgaria to visit each other. The website for this division gives them an opportunity to keep in touch and continue to develop those professional—and personal—networks and opportunities for facilitating on-going knowledge transfer.

Social Structure as an Inhibiting Factor

Elements of both the internal and external social structures were also inhibiting factors. Three elements from the internal structure contributed to inhibiting knowledge transfer: turnover in the partnerships, selection by the coordinators instead of self-selecting, and inactive coordinators. As for the external structure, two elements from the library structure were identified: lack of interest from colleagues and lack of leadership from the library director.

Internal Social Structure

The most important demonstration of social structure inhibiting knowledge transfer within the ABLE case came from the turnover in partnerships. A crucial factor in the success of a partnership is the enthusiasm and willingness to be active in the partnership. Partnerships are typically formed between two individuals who have that enthusiasm and willingness, yet unfortunately they are not always able to continue indefinitely with the partnership. Turnover in participants is a critical challenge faced by all international partnerships and ABLE was no exception. Many American participants spoke openly about this challenge. This Colorado participant stated it well:

> *CO11: I know for a fact that if I left the library district, the program would end. ... I know it would. Because there's nobody else who has indicated an interest in being too involved in it. I don't think I could get anybody who would be willing to manage that. So that really bothers me, that bothers me a lot. But I know as long as I'm there, we'll keep our relationship.*

An Iowa participant reflected on the status of the partnership following the departure of the primary partner in their library:

> *IA11: We did the fun parts and when I look at some of the things that [Colorado coordinator] talks about that are happening in Colorado I feel a little guilty, and then we have done absolutely no ... when [primary partner] left, it was like that whole experience left with her.*

When asked what could be sustained in the partnership following the end of grant money support, the above participant noted:

> *IA11: Well, the relationship is there. The personal relationship. If [Bulgarian partner] were to leave the library, I can't imagine it would be sustained. We're going to have to re-establish something. I don't have a relationship with the director, [primary partner] did. So having [primary partner] leave, was one kind of slash at it, so we're going to have to take some steps to see if there is something there that can be maintained.*

These comments highlight the strong likelihood of the death of the partnership, and consequently of knowledge transfer, if only a few people are involved.

The anxiety felt by many American participants regarding the effect that turnover would likely have on the partnerships was not articulated by the Bulgarian participants. I believe the consideration by the Bulgarians that the entire library is partnered, not just one or two people, contributed to the security felt by the Bulgarian participants. Even though a partnership would weaken significantly if the single person in a Bulgarian library who spoke English were to leave, this did not appear to be an issue for the Bulgarian participants whom I interviewed. Interestingly, there were two participating Bulgarian libraries where there was not an English speaker on staff, but I was not able to interview the participants and so could not obtain their opinions. However, the Bulgarian coordinators assured me that these two libraries believed themselves to be active participants in the ABLE project. Their American partners, however, disagreed; in fact, one American partner recently withdrew from the project entirely due to lack of participation on their Bulgarian partner's side.

The second element of the internal social structure's effect upon inhibiting knowledge transfer is the lack of choice to participate in the ABLE project. Those participants who were able to decide for themselves whether or not to participate reported a positive experience; those who were selected by coordinators often did not. The most significant example was demonstrated by the geographical embedded cases. In Iowa, the libraries were hand-picked by the Iowa coordinator, based upon the director's status in the Iowa library community, as well as particular characteristics that he felt made the libraries unique and good examples for the Bulgarian libraries to follow. He then directly contacted the library directors and invited them to participate, sometimes after the State Librarian contacted them first to introduce them to the project and present her stamp of approval. An Iowa partner explained:

> *IA6: Well, it started with a phone call actually from the state librarian. And she really called to just give me a head's up that I was going to get a call from [Iowa coordinator] and she wanted to let me know that it was a legitimate project and the state library was aware of it and she didn't want me to be caught flat-footed when he called out of the blue and said "hey, do you want to do an exchange program with Bulgaria?" [Laughter] That was how it started, and then he actually called me later that same day and talked about the project and I thought it sounded like something that would be interesting and a lot of fun. He had actually chosen [library] and had specific reasons for doing so. Because they wanted to match us with a chitalishte library that has more of a focus on preserving culture and heritage than some of the other public libraries do and because that's a big deal in this community, more so than in other Iowa communities, he thought that would be a good partnership.*

However, this approach had a distinct disadvantage in that many library directors were not familiar with the Iowa coordinator and did not fully understand the opportunity they were being offered. Some felt that the project would have been more readily and enthusiastically accepted if the State Library had been more involved at the beginning.

> *IA5: If you had done it like [Colorado coordinator] did, it would have come through the state library, in whatever way that is. And it makes sense to me, it should come through the state library. It would have been marketed differently. I don't think it was marketed at all to us, other than maybe [state librarian] asked me to do it or told me I should do it.*

It was evident from the interviews with the Iowa participants that the ABLE project was presented in quite a different way than in Colorado, which may have been to the detriment of the project and ultimately to the possibility of knowledge transfer. If the library directors did not fully understand what was being asked of them, yet still agreed to participate, their perception of the knowledge transfer activity may have been limited, inhibiting the transfer activities.

The final element of the internal social structure that inhibited knowledge transfer has to do with the actions of the coordinators. Sometimes the participants expressed a desire for more coordination even from proactive and involved coordinators to create the smoothest possible running of the partnerships. This Colorado participant discussed her desire for more concrete examples of possible activities:

> *CO13: Well, I guess there were other obstacles. Things like not knowing exactly what to do. I mean, I got some ideas from [another Colorado participant], she sent out some ideas and actually people put together some ideas, you know, lists of... here are things to do. But we never, it never felt like we got past a fairly... pretty much an introductory stage. So we never really got any projects going or... it seemed like they were interested in doing some children's things, and our children's librarian felt like she had her plate full, and so she wasn't able to pick up on it. So the one thing that seemed kind of an open thing from their end, we didn't pick up on.*

The above comment also highlights the voluntary nature of partnerships. If participants do not have the time, energy or interest, the partnership will falter. The coordinators' roles were to support, encourage and involve the volunteer partners in their establishment and maintenance of knowledge transfer within a partnership.

The coordination in Iowa was seen to be particularly problematic by the Iowa participants. Many expressed frustration at a lack of guidance and were not sure to whom to turn for assistance. Without this leadership, attention to the partnerships has sometimes faltered, as these Iowa participants described:

> *IA4: If it could be improved, it probably would be more encouragement, maybe once a month an e-mail coming from [Iowa coordinator] or [Colorado coordinator] or somebody saying, have you talked to ... we didn't intend not to, but it just kind of got put there on the back burner. So that could probably be an improvement, if just someone sent out a little reminder once a month, you know... are you talking? Are you communicating? Because quite frankly we didn't even know if another visit was going to happen, because they weren't sure of the funding.*
>
> *IA12: I think it comes down to communication. There'll be long stretches of time, months, four, five, six months at a time and not hear anything from ABLE, or from [Colorado coordinator]. You just sort of know, well, the project's progressing, I guess, nobody's told me we're not going. And maybe they didn't know anything either. And then suddenly there'd be this flurry of activity, a ton of e-mails back and forth, come to this meeting, come to this meeting.*

One explanation for the lack of leadership in Iowa came from these participants, who noted that the Iowa coordinator is not a part of the library field in that state:

> *IA4: I don't know if [Iowa coordinator] should be the one doing it, but it seems like the only thing we heard is from [Iowa coordinator], so I don't know if we need another coordinator somehow in the library field, or what, but it does seem to be that there's kind of a lack of communication until, you know last minute.*
>
> *IA5: And [Iowa coordinator] is meaningless to me. I've never known who he was. Yet, that's who mostly my e-mails have come from. That's interesting.*

At the time of these comments, changes were being implemented in the ABLE structure that brought in a member of the Iowa library profession as lead coordinator. Recent contact with the Iowa participants has shown that some of the frustration has dissolved and there is more "hands-on" involvement and leadership.

External Social Structure

While facilitation of knowledge transfer came from the external social structures of the library, community and profession, actions that inhibited transfer were primarily identified as stemming from just the library's social structure. The need for institutional support within the library was identified as a requirement for knowledge transfer, and not receiving that support had negative consequences. This Iowa participant explained:

> *IA3: Actually, this whole project might fold, because we have a new director and she's not really interested in it. So, it's still just me, unless I can get the programming people to support me. So, there's no longer any support for it any longer at all. Whereas before, there was neutral support, but there was support. Now there's no support for it.*

Without that support, a vibrant and active partnership is difficult. The participant feels pressure to discontinue allocating time to pursuing the partnership, at least on work time. This links to the time pressure discussed above in the *time* section and the consequent negative impact on knowledge transfer.

The participants spoke about the role of the library directors in setting the tone for the library overall and its involvement with the ABLE project. This Colorado participant reflected on the role of the library directors in Colorado:

> *CO17: I found, at a meeting a month ago, people of my level, managers right under the director, met and I was talking with somebody else at another large library, a large library, and the manager there said "oh, yeah, so and so, I think it was her, she went to Bulgaria." I said, "wow, did she come back and do a presentation?" "Well, no..." "Well, aren't you guys interested, you should ask her." "Well, you know, Bulgaria isn't even on my top 10 of places to go, and we've just got so many things to do, I'm not sure if staff would be interested." So I don't know what he did. So, you see, you have the barriers where directors aren't*

fired up, and if they're not supporting you... I can't say that [library director] supported, he just got out of the way and I went for it. And then once it became the juggernaut, there wasn't much the poor man could do to stop it, because we were out there as a big player. So he's been OK, I mean, at any point he could have blocked it, and at least he didn't do that.

Another Colorado participant discussed the leadership in two different libraries that she visited in Bulgaria, which demonstrated the different possible effects based on two kinds of leadership.

CO8: I did presentations at both libraries. I did a presentation for the [library 1] staff and then I did a much larger presentation at the [library 2] about our library. So I had a variety of Power Point presentations! But even when I did that presentation at the [library 2] and when I toured it, the staff did not seem as excited about working in a library as the [library 1] people did. There's such a team at [library 1] and they're so excited and it comes from the director. She's excited about being a librarian, about serving the community, about providing these services. And they are all excited. They're all excited about the project. They were all coming up to me when I was at the [library 1]. At the [library 2] they seemed much more detached. I went on the tour of the library and some of the people seemed irritated as I was asking questions and taking pictures and I thought what a difference! And it really shows you how the person at the top of the library, at the Director level, sets the tone for the library. That was my impression.

Such an observation shows the impact the engagement of the library director can have on knowledge transfer. Whether or not knowledge transfer is facilitated or inhibited can depend strongly on the library director's attitudes and actions.

Other than the need for institutional support, other areas of the library's social structure inhibited knowledge transfer, especially from the partner to the rest of the library staff. Many Bulgarian participants talked about the challenges they encountered in their libraries after their return from the United States. These traveling librarians had seen and experienced many new and exciting opportunities, which they wished to bring back to their colleagues and implement quickly. However, the colleagues were not always willing to engage with the returning participants and accept the knowledge that the returning visitor wanted to transfer to them. Thus, knowledge transfer within the participating libraries was sometimes limited. A Bulgarian partner discussed her experiences with her colleagues upon her return from the United States:

> *BG1: In this way I work in my space, but the other my colleagues learn more about American libraries too. I told them and continue to talk about it. And everything that I learn, that I see, I tell them.*
> ***Interviewer: Has it been difficult to talk to your colleagues about what you learned in the Bettendorf public library?***
> *BG1: Honestly?*
> ***Interviewer: Yes, please.***
> *BG1: Here work 18 librarians, and maybe, my opinion, only two or three librarians are thinking less conservative in this project, but the others like it.*
> ***Interviewer: So there are two or three of your colleagues who aren't interested?***
> *BG1: No, they... they not... they do understand but they afraid, they worry, they think that it's hard job. But they are, they have interest. But they afraid what they must to do.*

Another Bulgarian partner shared her perspective:

> *BG26: I have difficulties even at first presentation. I was so positive about experience when I come back from America, but in first presentation I see negative reaction. Staff not willing to do extra work but change needs extra work. My excitement went away.*

It is often difficult to maintain the energy and excitement associated with learning something new and wanting to share it with peers and implement it in the library. Even though the library directors of the participating libraries may indicate approval, the social structures of the participating Bulgarian libraries sometimes placed the participating librarians in uncomfortable positions of being agents of change to a staff wary of the new knowledge. These experiences demonstrate that experiencing firsthand something new facilitates knowledge transfer, while trying to transfer that knowledge to others "secondhand" is difficult when the social structure is inhibiting.

In extreme cases the returning visitors were met with hostility, as this Bulgarian participant illustrated:

BG10: I think about my colleagues too, because... You know, I have traveled abroad and I am not so popular.
Interviewer: Here?
BG10: Yes.
Interviewer: Are they jealous?
BG10: Yes. And that maybe is my lesson, not to trust them. Not everyone is wishing me good.
Interviewer: Right, right. That makes it very hard, doesn't it, to try to share what you have learned with your colleagues here.
BG10: Yes, very hard, but I try somehow. (...) A lot of the things I want to try I can't do. I have very many ideas that I want to do and I can't. (...) I want to share with the others who work here, I was so happy when I came back. I have very many ideas that I wanted to tell everyone. I had good idea, very good idea, but they didn't want to listen. Only my director, she wanted to. She wanted to hear my idea so I wrote it, she was kind. But the others, they don't want to listen. They are jealous, yes. Because they don't like difference, somehow I am different.

While this may be an extreme case, the jealousy perceived by the Bulgarian partner had adversely affected her desire to implement the new knowledge she had witnessed at her partner library. Such feelings are a definite barrier to knowledge transfer.

Difficulty in transferring knowledge upon return to the library was not a uniquely Bulgarian situation. The American participants also spoke of challenges within their libraries that affected how they could transfer their new knowledge to the library staff. Although the American partners usually organized programs to present about their trips to Bulgaria, there was rarely movement in the staff beyond attending the programs. In fact, the staff who did not directly participate in the partnership often expressed resentment toward the participant. This was particularly clear when the Bulgarian partner visited, due to the large demand upon the host librarian's time. A Colorado participant gave this example:

CO8: I was going to say, another drawback I'd have to say with the project in general, was when [Bulgarian partner] came, it took so much of my time that week that I was with her, I wasn't able to do any of my other work. I was with her most of the time, and some people who worked for me, questioned the project and said, you know, is this really worth it? We've got lots of important things to do

here at the library and you're spending so much time with this Bulgarian visitor and there are things that need to be done here. Really, is Bulgaria more important than what we do.
Interviewer: How did you find yourself responding to those issues?
CO8: I said, well, you know, it is just one week. And we are very busy, but I felt it was important. But I still think, for the staff, I'm not sure... for some staff members, how they view the project. Not in a very positive way.

Another Colorado participant shared her perspective:

CO17: I do know some of the library directors here who pretty much felt it was not an important project and they had work to do right here, thank you very much, so why were we wasting money and staff time, staff resources, helping Bulgarians when we had work right here, in the United States, in Colorado to do. And again, I had problems... it's a fine line where you don't want the staff to think "well geez, all you think about is that freakin' Bulgarian project" and keeping them from forgetting altogether...

The American participants also experienced reluctance from their coworkers to receive knowledge that they wanted to share. Being made to feel that the partnership was not important—demonstrated by the staff's lack of interest—does not encourage the partner.

Summary

The social structures both inside and outside the ABLE case were factors in facilitating and inhibiting knowledge transfer. The internal social structures facilitated knowledge transfer through proactive coordinators, self-selection for participation, and the development of personal friendships. However, the internal structures inhibited transfer with inactive coordinators, lack of choice in participation, and partner turnover. The external social structures facilitated transfer through support from library colleagues and the community and ties with other professional colleagues. The external structures also inhibited transfer with a lack of support from library colleagues and directors. The participants' experiences affirmed that supportive internal and external social structures were necessary for developing a strong partnership conducive to knowledge transfer.

Culture

Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) specified *culture* as shared attitudes and values that underpin the other elements, because they can only be interpreted in terms of cultural values and beliefs. However, specifically addressing the cultural element brings to light the questions of what is valued, how these values are demonstrated and how they can affect knowledge transfer. Examining the role of culture as a facilitating or inhibiting factor in knowledge transfer was not very productive, as the participants did not have a deep understanding of their partners' cultures. Therefore, it was difficult for them to assess the impact had by this element on knowledge transfer, except superficially. Nonetheless, they were able to identify some ways in which culture affected knowledge transfer, both positively and negatively.

Culture as a Facilitating Factor

When the participants spoke of culture facilitating knowledge transfer, they often discussed how comparing the superficial differences and similarities encouraged appreciation and respect between them. More than one participant commented on the links created through comparing the differences between the two cultures:

> *CO11: Well, we've definitely found similarities. The differences I think draw us closer together than the similarities do... because it's just so much fun. You know, if we do something one way... like the way they celebrate Easter is different than the way we do, you know, being Bulgarian Orthodox. And those things, you know, you write back and say "oh, this is how we do it" and they say "this is how we do it" and it's just interesting, and I think that draws you more together than the similarities do.*

> *CO12: Culture plays an extremely important role in the project. While language and cultural differences can sometimes hinder communication, I think the difference in cultures was one of the main attractions of the project, at least to me. I wanted to find out how we were different and how we were similar. I found that despite cultural differences, the librarians involved, for the most part, on both sides, had similar goals for their institutions.*

This Bulgarian participant's succinct evaluation of the role of culture in the partnership summarized the sentiments of many of the participants, both American and Bulgarian:

> *BG6: Sometimes encourage, sometimes prevents. More encourage, because differences make communication more interesting.*

An Iowa participant concurred:

> *IA1: I think the cultural differences are small enough not to be an issue but big enough to be very interesting.*

A Colorado participant also summed it up well:

> *CO16: The whole program was about learning about the other culture, so if you're not open to accepting the differences as they are, you shouldn't be in the program anyway.*

Having an open spirit to accept and understand differences is a key characteristic that supports knowledge transfer, as was discussed in the *adopting units* section.

Participants from both cultures commented that while cultural differences made communication interesting, the similarities also facilitated knowledge transfer. On a personal level, sharing parental issues and simply being part of the human race was often mentioned as a bridge for communication.

> *CO12: It's reinforced my sense that people are people, no matter what they look like or where they are. You see the same family interactions, you see the same... I did a lot of people watching while I was there. And you do see the same... the language is different, but you see the same interactions, the same gestures... the same... expressions on people's faces. People are angry or they're happy or they're frustrated with their child or any of that.*

While it may seem obvious that "people are people," this recognition was mentioned several times. Acknowledging such universal similarities and exploring them forged a common bond between the partners outside of the profession and enabled them to build a relationship that supported knowledge transfer.

Participants found that comparing national cultures also allowed them to better understand their own culture. These Bulgarian participants described the value of international partnerships in terms of understanding their culture:

> *BG7: But for me this cross-cultural communication is very interesting. Not only language, but to understand other people, how they think, about their culture, their history... and when we have, when we get with other people we are trying to explain ourselves, which is very important, because we think about ourselves in a different point of view. I think it's important.*

> *BG21: Being in America gave me chance not only to learn more about a different country but chance to look at my own country, my people, our positive and negative traits. There were some times when I felt very proud to be Bulgarian.*

American participants also commented on examining their own society and culture through the vantage point of an outsider:

> *CO8: My feeling was that, they may not be rich in material possessions, but they're rich in spirit. After being there... they have more interaction with each other than we do in the United States. So I got a different perspective of my own culture from being there. ... After being over there and seeing... they all know each other. I mean, that was a city of 150,000 people, you walk down the street and everybody knows each other. (...) They really connect with each other very strongly and I feel in our society we've become more isolated. People go home, they have the automatic garage door opener, they go in and sit in their homes, they're on their computers, but there's not as much interaction with neighbors as there probably was 10 years ago.*

> *CO9: It was enjoyable having her over, it was always fun. It was a joy to show her the pieces of the United States that we showed her. (...) So it's seeing what your country has through the eyes of a visitor, and the excitement of a visitor as they have that first look, which is always so enjoyable.*

The American participants also discussed viewing their own libraries:

> *CO5: It makes you more acute, everything's new, so you're seeing something in a new way. And I was able to see my world in his eyes, as something new, even something simplistic... I think it helped me focus on what we just do all the time. And then, what aspects of it, like when I was having to look at ok, what would we want him to experience, what is it that we do that is a little bit different from traditional type library service and why would we want to share that experience with someone, and what about it is it that makes it special or unique or worth having someone spend their time seeing.*

IA9: Well, I mean, if you start to think about... maybe you want to talk with them about how you get to know your community and how you market your services into the community, then I think it causes you to look at, well, what am I doing with my library and how do I get to know my community and how do I tell my community what I'm doing, that's the kind of thing I'm talking about. You kind of look at yourself with fresh eyes.

CO10: My experience was... what I liked best about it, was it forced me to have to think about the things I take for granted within my own library, my own society, which is "what does it mean to be a democratic republic information repository and distributor?" It was like the whole, things you take for granted. That was the best part, was I really started looking at things with different eyes.

Examining one's own culture and its representations in the library by considering it through someone else's eyes can have a positive effect on knowledge transfer by making one thoughtfully choose what knowledge is worth transferring.

Besides the cultural aspect found in comparing the different national cultures, sharing the culture of the profession was also a facilitating factor. No matter their national culture, the participants understood the difficulties libraries face in fighting for funding and getting people to come to the library for their information needs. This Bulgarian participant discussed the similarities she saw during the PLA conference she attended while visiting the United States:

BG5: At this conference I met different persons who have same problems, we talk about the same problems in different kind of country. Not only in America, in Bulgaria, different country is same problem and we talk about you have good idea, we talk about I have no problem but maybe you have good idea. This is positive topic in conference, I like the conference.

Several American participants highlighted the common professional dedication:

CO8: I think, one thing I've noticed that we have in common, and I noted it in my report, we both want to help our community and we're dedicated to serving the public. We're really dedicated to serving the public to the best of our abilities. In their case, with whatever limited resources they have, they're doing the best they can to serve the public and they have a strong desire to help people and we're the same way. It's the common ground.

CO7: I believe that we all share a basic belief in the value of and need for libraries. The drive to make successful libraries was something that motivated the entire project from the beginning. All of the Bulgarian librarians I met were really devoted to their profession to the point of living in poverty to pursue it.

CO8: I think it's the type of people who are attracted to the library field. Because even in the United States, although to them it seems like we make this fantastic salary, librarians don't make fantastic salaries here in the United States. People who go into the field think they're going into it not for the money, and it's the same in Bulgaria. Librarians go into the profession not for the money. It's because they're dedicated to the profession, they want to serve the public.

IA4: I visited in May of 2006. The visit went well. I appreciated the time they spent with me. I learned that we have a lot in common. We are all committed, dedicated professionals trying to provide the best library service possible to our communities.

Another Colorado participant reflected on the moment he realized that he and his Bulgarian partner shared a common perspective on the needs in libraries worldwide:

CO4: So there was, I think, a common excitement, certainly with [library director] and I, where we realized that in both cases, in America as well as Bulgaria, there are lot of librarians who cannot speak the language of economic development and who don't understand the significance of getting outside of the library or being part of a community or trying to find a way to make these connections. So from the beginning with all the strangeness and your history is so much deeper and different than ours, I finally got to the point where it felt like [library director] was absolutely, like she and I were on the same wavelength altogether about what needed to happen at any library in any country. And that was a really cool discovery.

Similarities in the professional culture were particularly important in creating links through which the partners could relate.

Having a common profession provided the link between partners from different cultures. Although there are considerable differences due to national culture (heterophily), the common professional culture (homophily) was a significant factor in bringing together the partners and creating an equal partnership. One Iowa participant explained the respect for her partner's professionalism:

> *IA7: Because I really wasn't out to teach. [Bulgarian partner] was a librarian, she was a professional. [Bulgarian library director] was a librarian, she's a professional. I wasn't out to teach them anything, I don't think. I was maybe as a model, just saying OK, this is what we do. Take it or leave it. If you can use it, OK. If you can't use it, OK. ...I figure they have knowledge, they have their own system. And if they can use something from my knowledge, that's terrific. And if I can use something from their knowledge, terrific. I don't know if I was really out to teach them anything.*

There was a definite sense of equality between the individuals as professionals. The notion that the transfer of knowledge was a mutual endeavor was clear to the participants, even if they were not sure what knowledge they might transfer:

> *IA4: I think we're both going to grow from it. I mean, there are things you can always learn from somebody else, no matter who it is. So, I think there are obviously going to be differences and there's going to be things that we both will learn from working with and having time with another professional. So that's going to work for both ways.*

> *BG7: It's much easier to contact with someone who you already know. I hope that we will have other mutual initiatives. I know full well what we need here. The problem is that I'm not sure how my colleagues and I could help our American colleagues. Communication is better when people have something mutual to do.*

They were not in an unequal relationship; they respected each others' status as professionals and the knowledge that comes with it.

The counter example provided earlier in the *adopting units* section also suffered from the lack of a common profession:

> *IA6: No, no, in fact he was not even a librarian, his background was in computer science. And that was a large part of the problem. He hadn't worked at the library for very long, he wasn't a librarian, and so when we would try to talk about things, he couldn't answer my questions about his library because he just didn't know. ...*
> ***Interviewer: So, I'm wondering why was he chosen?***
> *IA6: He was chosen because he was the only one who spoke English. There's no one else in the library who speaks English.*

This experience was unfortunate, but it stands as a good counter-example to the success that can be had when a profession is held in common. Similar values concerning librarianship and dedication to the profession were important common bonds between the partners, which opened up the possibility for establishing communication across a cultural gap and beginning the transfer of knowledge.

Culture as an Inhibiting Factor

The participants only identified one cultural element that acted as an inhibitor to knowledge transfer: language. As with many international partnerships, half of the partners in the ABLE case were required to be conversant in a non-native language, i.e., the Bulgarian partners had to be able to communicate in English. The Bulgarian participants' various levels of ability in English sometimes caused problems, but the American participants respected their partners' willingness to communicate in a foreign language. Language as a cultural artifact can certainly have an effect on knowledge transfer between cultures. Issues of vocabulary, translation and non-verbal cues can all pose challenges to knowledge transfer.

Lack of vocabulary tended to be highlighted in the Americans' overall assessments of their Bulgarian partners' language abilities. For example:

> *CO9: I would say language was the only barrier that I felt. And I think [Bulgarian partner] felt that too. I don't speak Bulgarian, many words of it, now [Bulgarian partner] speaks English much, much better, but she'd be constantly frustrated because she didn't have the vocabulary to express beyond simple concepts.*

This Colorado participant touched on a feeling expressed by many Bulgarians: the frustration of not being able to express yourself in the way you are used to doing in your own language:

> *CO13: There were a couple of small things that people just brought up. Things like... [Bulgarian partner] said to me at one time, "you know, in Bulgarian I'm a funny person." I was really aware that they had to work hard, because they had to use this foreign language all the time.*

Another Colorado participant related a humorous exchange with her partner, due to a misunderstanding of an English idiom:

> *CO11: The language has been interesting, because I have to be careful about idioms and American expressions. I had e-mailed her back and told her that I couldn't wait to hear from her again. She didn't realize that that just meant that I was anxious to hear from her, that I enjoyed hearing from her, she thought that I was sitting at my computer, waiting for her to reply, that minute! [Laughter] She e-mailed back, very apologetic about not e-mailing right away and she didn't realize I couldn't wait! [Laughter] So we've had some fun with those sort of exchanges. You have to just kind of be really careful with the expressions you use.*

The issue of vocabulary weakness can be a significant barrier to knowledge transfer. Struggling to find the correct words to carry the meaning of what one wishes to convey can be very frustrating, resulting in an emotional toll. The exchange recounted by CO11 highlights the awareness required by the Americans of their own use of language, which many participants commented upon. Modifying one's own language to accommodate a non-native speaker can be helpful, but then the risk is simplifying too much so that meaning is no longer carried. Finding this balance can be quite tricky.

Requiring only one side of the partnership to learn the other's language seemed unfair to some American participants, who expressed an interest and desire to learn Bulgarian in order to communicate with their partners in their native language. An Iowa participant explained her viewpoint:

> *IA3: And they required that they know good English before they could come over, which is wonderful, but... you know, I always thought that they should require that we knew some Bulgarian before we went over.*
> ***Interviewer: What would be the purpose of learning Bulgarian if they already spoke English? Can you state that, explicitly, why that would matter?***
> *IA3: For one thing, showing that we are as proud of their language as we are of ours. For another, it shows that we care enough about their country that we are willing to put forth a little effort to learn. And, the other thing is, if you're going to be a partner you ought to be a partner, and a partner would work both ways. So it shouldn't be all on their back to learn our language, we ought to be learning their language also.*

In terms of supporting knowledge transfer, the argument for learning some Bulgarian may be valid, as it would help to build the respect and trust needed for effective transfer. On the other hand, some American participants did not believe that it was worthwhile to learn Bulgarian, as this Iowa participant stated:

> *IA8: I don't think it's appropriate to have Americans learn Bulgarian because you can only use it in one little tiny country in the world, whereas if the Bulgarians learn English, you know... And it's just perchance English right now, a hundred years ago it was French, everybody had to learn French and maybe a hundred years from now it will be Chinese, we learn Chinese or we don't play. So I don't feel bad about that, basically. I think it's an advantage to them to learn English right now, it could only help their country to have more English speakers.*

For their part, the Bulgarians agreed, noting that their ability to communicate in English will only help them as their nation becomes an active member of the EU. While the Bulgarians appreciated any effort on the part of the Americans to learn Bulgarian, they fully realized that they have more to gain by learning English. For them, the fact that they needed to know English in order to participate was practically a non-issue, simply a necessity to participate in the ABLE project. However, the differences in language ability could significantly inhibit knowledge transfer.

Translation and interpretation are not always the best responses to alleviating the issues caused by imbalances in language ability. This Iowa participant pointed out the challenges in translation that were faced while the American partners were in Bulgaria:

> *IA6: And of course, the translator was not a librarian most of the time, so we got into that issue too, where I wondered how well some things were translated, especially as we were talking about cataloging and MARC records and that kind of stuff. How does a translator translate MARC if she doesn't know what it is.*

When the translator is not in the profession, an additional layer of difficulty is added to the communication barriers present in intercultural communication. I also experienced this firsthand while in Bulgaria to collect data, which I addressed in Chapter 6. In effect, a translator or interpreter may add an additional layer that complicates instead of simplifies knowledge transfer.

Another complicating factor in language is non-verbal communication. Culture-specific nonverbal actions can wreak havoc on knowledge transfer. This Iowa participant described the effects of non-verbal language:

> *IA13: And I looked up and the first time I saw everybody going like this [shaking head], I thought oh my god, they're just not buying this at all, they think I'm full of crap! But then I forgot, that's how they signify they're agreeing! So there were all these shaking heads, and it was like, yeah. They were getting it.*

This Colorado participant echoed the above sentiment, relating his experience with a Bulgarian visitor:

> *CO13: [Bulgarian participant] often shook his head and you know, I was always thinking, oh, things aren't going well, when he was actually saying yes. And I found myself often realizing that I was reacting incorrectly to what... because he would say something and shake his head, and I thought that he was being ironic or.... His words were being affirmative and then he was shaking his head. I often forgot that that meant he was nodding. That was a big stumbler for me and [Bulgarian participant].*

In Bulgaria, agreement is indicated by shaking one's head from side-to-side and disagreement by nodding up and down, the opposite of the American style. This was a non-verbal cue that every American partner mentioned at some point as a moment of confusion, whether with their partner or while in Bulgaria. Some Bulgarians also commented about the confusion caused by such a difference in non-verbal cues, especially during their visit in the United States. Non-verbal cues are so engrained in one's body language that they are very difficult to change and the participants had to pay close attention to their usage. This was perhaps one of the greatest communication barriers between visiting partners, because it was so difficult to change.

Summary

As with all international partnerships, the culture element was an important component of the relationships between the partners. As far as culture being a facilitating factor to knowledge transfer, the interest sparked by comparing the two cultures led to mutual respect. Also, this comparison allowed the participants to see their own cultures through the eyes of a stranger, helping them to identify knowledge that would be worth transferring. As an inhibiting factor, the participants only identified language as potentially complicating knowledge transfer in international partnerships, because one side of the partnership must communicate in a non-native language. A lack of vocabulary and different nonverbal cues can impede knowledge transfer, which translation cannot always remedy. Although it is respectful to show interest in learning the other side's language, it is not always practical. Thus, knowledge transfer must rely on one side's use of a non-native language. While culture is a crucial element, underpinning all the other elements, it is also the most difficult to assess.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the data collected and analyzed under the guidance of the research question "what factors affect the intercultural transfer of professional knowledge in international partnerships?" The Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model provided a rich analysis of the data, allowing me to come closer to understanding the processes at work during knowledge transfer in international partnerships and the multiple factors that facilitate or inhibit them. Table 8-5 summarizes the major findings described in this chapter.

Table 8-5

Summary of Major Findings

Element	Facilitates	Inhibits
Time	• Duration of partnership	• Difficulty finding time to e-mail partner • Re-prioritizing required by long visits • Short visits to Bulgaria
Item	• Relative advantage • Observable • Testable • Not Complex • Compatible with receiving culture	• No relative advantage • Not observable • Not testable • Complex • Incompatible with receiving culture
Adopting Unit	• Curiosity • Sharing common ground • Flexibility • Being “ambassadors”	• Different professional background • Unwilling to participate • Lack of facilitating personal characteristics

Table 8-5, continued

Element	Facilitates	Inhibits
Communication Channels	• Ready availability of e-mail • Quicker establishment of relationship during face-to-face visits • Creating tacit knowledge during visits	• E-mail spam • Writing in a foreign language • Need to monitor language in writing • Timing of face-to-face visits
Social Structure	• Helpful coordinators • Choosing to participate • Development of personal friendships • Support of library colleagues • Interest from community • Development of relationships within the profession	• Inactive coordinators • Requiring participation • Turnover in partnerships • Lack of support from library directors • Lack of colleague interest

Table 8-5, continued

Element	Facilitates	Inhibits
Culture	• Comparing cultural differences and similarities • Seeing own culture through another perspective • Sharing professional culture	• Challenges with language differences

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION

The previous chapters have presented the problem and question driving the research for this dissertation, discussed the guiding literature and theoretical framework, explained the study's design, described the ABLE case, and presented the resultant findings. In this chapter, I discuss the findings, organized by element from the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model, in relation to the research problem and the literature. I also address the theoretical components related to each element, presented in Table 4-4. Avenues for future research concerning particular elements are also proposed where appropriate. First, I briefly review the model in light of its usage in this research.

Re-presentation of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) Model

The larger theoretical lens used in the study was diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 2003), but the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model provided the framework for the specific analysis of the communicative environment and experiences of the ABLE participants. To review, this model describes diffusion as:

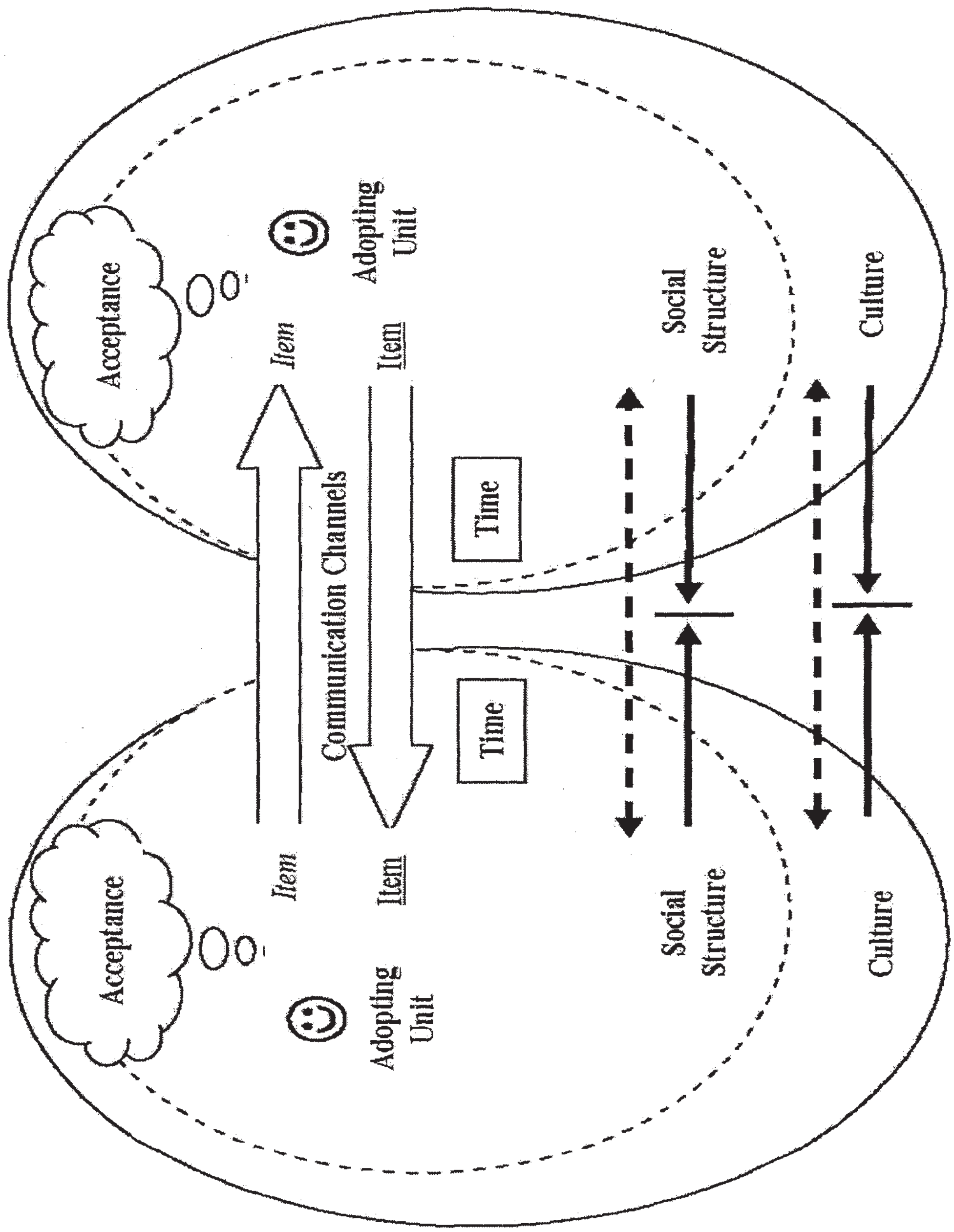
> The (1) *acceptance*, (2) over *time*, (3) of some specific *item*—an idea or practice, (4) by individuals, groups or other *adopting units*, linked (5) to specific *channels of communication*, (6) to a *social structure*, and (7) to a given system of values, or *culture*. (p. 240, emphasis in original)

Using the model as the interpretive lens during data analysis revealed that these seven elements entwined in a fashion that was not obvious from the linear order of the above statement. The elements of time, item, communication channels, and adopting units could be analyzed in relation to each other, as well as in terms of the social system and culture within which they were embedded. Examining factors related to the social structures required addressing the adopting units who populated them, as well as the cultural context. The culture element was not describable without referring to the visible elements—the adopting units, items and social structures—that rendered them evident. So while this chapter will address findings in terms of each element individually and in the sequence given by Katz, Levin and Hamilton, I wish to stress that this is simply a choice to frame the presentation; these elements are not truly separable and must be considered together to gain the overall perspective on intercultural knowledge transfer.

While the more finely grained discrete elements of diffusion in the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model contribute to a more precise consideration of the attribution of factors, application of the model demonstrated how the elements actually overlap and interconnect, inducing a complex assessment of the data. Figure 9-1 illustrates the entwining nature of the model as I perceived it during data analysis.

Figure 9-1

Graphic Representation of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) Model



A given international partnership system can be understood as comprised of two connected yet distinct sub-systems. At the center of each sub-system is an adopting unit (i.e., an individual partner), working within a social structure (i.e., a library), both of which are embedded within a larger social structure and culture. The adopting unit's response to and usage of communication channels and time is governed by this social structure and culture. The adopting unit's ability to accept an item is a function of the item as well as the social structure and culture from which it came and into which it is entering. The elements of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton model interact with each other within each sub-system. The sub-systems that make the larger system of the partnership do not overlap, because each has a distinct culture that dictates what is acceptable for that particular sub-system.

However, there are two ways through which the sub-systems connect: (a) the communication channels used by the adopting units (indicated by the thick one-way arrows); and (b) similarities in the social structures and cultures (indicated by the dashed two-way arrows). With a common professional paradigm, libraries around the world tend to have similar social structure components and face similar challenges. For example, in the ABLE case, the participating libraries all offered services to children and adults and were competing with alternate access points to information and entertainment, such as the Internet or other media. Similar professional issues can also arise from common cultural characteristics, such as challenges due to the low status of libraries and the tendency for librarianship to be a job held by women, as found in both American and Bulgarian cultures. These similarities in social structures and cultures acted as common points on which the participants could base their relationship, connecting the sub-systems.

At the same time, some professional responses do not translate well across social structures and cultures (indicated by the dashed one-way arrows separated by a "wall"). So, while cultural differences dictate particular and distinctive actions by the adopting units specific to their social structures, making the partners heterophilous, the shared profession offers a basis for possible similarity, making them homophilous. Figure 9-1 gives a more accurate representation of the interacting elements in the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model than the linear statement does.

In the remainder of the chapter, I discuss the findings by element, addressing their relation to the research question, the literature, and the theoretical components. Table 4-4 is presented here as Table 9-1 for ease of reference.

Table 9-1

Theoretical Components and Elements from the Katz, Levin and Hamilton Model (1963)

Element	Related Theoretical Components
Acceptance	Innovation-decision process
Time	Rate of adoption
	Adopter categories
Item	Attributes of innovations
	Reinvention/Adaptation
Adopting Units	Adopter categories
	Heterophily/homophily
	Opinion leaders
Communication Channels	Roles of mass media and interpersonal channels
	Heterophily/homophily
Social Structure	Social networks
	Opinion leaders
	Change agents
	Type of innovation-decision
Culture	Attributes of innovations
	Roles of mass media and interpersonal channels
	Consequences of diffusion
	Reinvention/adaptation
	Type of innovation-decision

Acceptance

For this study, I operationally defined *acceptance* as simply the understanding of new knowledge, whether or not that knowledge is ever implemented. I defined it as such in light of the particular intangible quality of knowledge—sometimes knowledge cannot be applied in any concrete way, but it contributes overall to the individual's understanding of the world. Indeed, the participants identified both actionable and non-actionable knowledge they had received from their partner, resulting in the abstract and concrete acceptance discussed in the findings.

While analyzing this element I realized that it did not respond to the research question but was instead the goal of knowledge transfer. Stating that a piece of knowledge has been accepted—i.e., integrated into one's own memory and cognitive framework—is the same as saying that the knowledge has been successfully transferred. Whether or not the knowledge becomes externally and physically implemented is another question. Thus, I treated this element separately from the other six elements that did have distinct facilitating and inhibiting components affecting the knowledge transfer process.

The theoretical issue related to acceptance is the innovation-decision process (Rogers, 2003). This process consists of five stages: (a) exposure to knowledge (knowledge stage); (b) formation of favorable attitude (persuasion stage); (c) recognition of a positive truth-value and decision to accept (decision stage); (d) application of actionable knowledge or guide of future opinions (implementation stage); and (e) discussion of decision (confirmation stage; Rogers, 2003, p. 169). The acceptance of a physical innovation is typically attributed to stage four, implementation, when the application of the innovation is demonstrated externally. I termed this type of acceptance as “concrete acceptance.” However, when the innovation is knowledge, external demonstration of acceptance is not always immediately possible—it becomes a “guide of future opinions” (p. 169). This is the type I designated as “abstract acceptance.” As the findings illustrated, there were many occasions of both concrete and abstract acceptance.

The type of acceptance in my study appeared to link to the type of knowledge being transferred; cultural knowledge was more likely to be abstractly accepted while professional knowledge was more likely to be concretely accepted. This may be related to the “hardware” (physical embodiment of an innovation) and “software” (knowledge base for the innovation) components (Rogers, 2003). For the ABLE participants, knowledge that had a hardware component, such as practical professional applications, were more likely to be concretely accepted. Knowledge that was only software was abstractly accepted but might be eventually implemented. An example of such eventual application of “software” was the National Library Week in Bulgaria.

The determination of when acceptance of knowledge occurs is not frequently studied, given the difficulty to track and attribute eventual beliefs and actions to a particular moment of past knowledge transfer. Furthermore, some scholars have argued for a reconsideration of knowledge to reflect its intangible and transient nature (Cook & Brown, 1999; McFarlane, 2006a; Orlikowski, 2002; Polanyi, 1966; Ryle, 1949). Considering the item as “knowing” instead of “knowledge” might result in significant differences in identifying and exploring the acceptance element in regards to such an innovation. The ABLE project and its emphasis on the transfer of intangible knowledge instead of tangible products may offer an outlet for further research on the innovation-decision process when the innovation is considered a verb instead of a noun.

Time

I originally did not consider the element of *time* as a mitigating factor in knowledge transfer within the ABLE case, as my study did not take a traditional diffusion study approach in which time is used to measure the rate of adoption (the S-shaped curve) and determine the categories of adopters (innovator, early adopter, early majority, late majority, and laggard; Rogers, 2003). The literature review on international partnerships also did not emphasize time as a possible factor except for the evaluation by Cole (2002), who remarked on the time-intensive activities of the partners. As the findings showed, however, the element of time was a very important factor. While the duration of a partnership was shown to facilitate knowledge transfer, the American participants in particular identified time as an inhibitor in two ways: (a) managing time in their professional responsibilities to devote to the cultivation of the partnerships; and (b) managing time with reprioritized schedules to accommodate the Bulgarian partner during their extended visits. The Bulgarian participants did not discuss time as either an inhibiting or facilitating factor.

Even though the majority of communication is done through e-mail, participants feel challenged to find time to write; hence the quality of the relationship, and, therefore, the possible quality of knowledge transfer, is negatively affected. I found it particularly interesting that only the American participants discussed this inhibiting factor; the Bulgarian participants did not mention it. When asked about challenges to their participation as a partner, nearly all the American participants discussed how busy they were at work, whereas the Bulgarian participants attributed delays in corresponding to technology difficulties or not knowing what to write. The Bulgarian participants also have busy workdays, but they did not consider this an inhibiting factor. Infrequent correspondence due to a lack of time appears to be primarily an American issue. Perhaps there is a cultural reason behind the different regard to time, but I did not pursue this line of questioning and it merits further consideration.

The second inhibiting factor related to time was the pressures felt by the American hosts during their Bulgarian partners' visits to manage the schedules and priorities for themselves, other library staff, and host families. The presence of the Bulgarian visitor and demands on the time of the American partner appeared to have frustrated the staffs of many participating libraries. This frustration could in turn have an effect on the receptiveness of the staff to knowledge transfer; if they are frustrated by the presence of the visitor, how likely are they to interact and share knowledge with the visitor? Another circumstance particular to the visits in the United States was the need to plan transportation for the visitors. The American participants who hosted a visitor noted the car-oriented layout of American cities made it difficult for the Bulgarian visitors to be self-sufficient, requiring a lot of time from the partners to transport the visitors.

The visits were also time-consuming from a visitor's point of view. Although the length of the visits by the Bulgarians and their need for transportation significantly disrupted the lives of the hosting staff, the Bulgarians' lives were also disrupted by such a long visit, as they had to leave family and work for several weeks. For the Americans, while not as long, their visit occurred during a busy month as public libraries prepared for summer programs. The issues of demands on time from both perspectives may inhibit further transactions between the partners and perhaps the sustainability of the partnership, if one partner perceives it as being too demanding of time.

Another point to consider is the Bulgarian participants appeared to be just as busy in their jobs as the Americans were, but they did not mention the need to find time to write their partner. Is this difference simply a cultural perception of time? Or could it be related to a perception that the Bulgarians "need" the information from the Americans more and so would afford to be patient? The ABLE project is presented by the coordinators and participants as international partnerships of equals, as it is comprised of peer professionals. However, is this really the case? As Canto and Hannah (2001) pointed out in a review of educational partnerships, there remained a residue of imbalanced power structure within former colonial relationships. Although the United States and Bulgaria do not have a former colonial connection, the difference in the participants' responses to time as an inhibiting factor may hint at interesting undercurrents of power in international partnerships between non-peer nations.

Item

The *item* considered in my study was knowledge, but there was not one particular item of knowledge to be transferred, creating another deviation from a traditional diffusion study. Even though diffusion studies can track intangible items, such as social movements (Chabot, 2000; McAdam & Rucht, 1993; Strang & Soule, 1998), policies (Hays, 1996), and theories (Van der Veer Martens & Goodrum, 2006), knowledge as an item is not easily considered in diffusion studies, due to the difficulties in what constitutes the acceptance of an intangible innovation (Rogers, 2003). However, the "innovation attributes" from diffusion theory were found in my research to apply to the notion of knowledge, through its various representations. What the participants identified as transferred knowledge raised several interesting points.

Considering the attributes of an item gives pause for an interesting examination of how knowledge can be considered an innovation. Chatman (1986) discussed information as an innovation, arguing that any information new to the receiver can be considered innovative; the same argument can be applied to knowledge. How observable or testable does knowledge have to be in order to be accepted? This discussion is linked to the discussion on the two types of acceptance I identified—perhaps actionable knowledge has a different composite of innovation attributes than non-actionable knowledge. Or, perhaps there are other attributes altogether specific to intangible items that contribute to their acceptance or rejection? This discussion is outside the purview of this dissertation, but it deserves further investigation to bolster research on intangible items.

The review of the diffusion literature made the point for the tendency of traditional diffusion programs to have an inherent pro-innovation bias (Diaz Bordenave, 1976, 1977). Because the ABLE project did not have one innovation to be accepted by a receiving population, there was not an explicit pro-innovation bias. Each partnership dyad chose the knowledge to transfer, based on its unique circumstances. The joint conception of the ABLE project by the founders perhaps led to the lack of pro-innovation bias, and the participants were quite sensitized to the perception of their partnerships as being between equals. By focusing on the equality of the relationship, the ABLE case supported the reverse diffusion suggested by McFarlane (2006b) and Fajana (1995). However, as I mentioned in the discussion of the *time* element, the notion that the Bulgarians may be content to wait for a response because they have more to learn in terms of professional knowledge gives rise to the question of whether there may still be an emphasis on the directionality of the knowledge flow.

Another component from diffusion theory is the notion of reinvention or adaptation of the original innovation to better fit the particular situation: "Flexibility in the process of adopting an innovation may reduce mistakes and encourage customization of the innovation to fit it more appropriately to local and/or changing conditions" (Rogers, 2003, p. 185; see also Buttolph, 1992; Hays, 1996; and Rice & Rogers, 1980). Reinvention is rejected by the pro-innovation bias, because the innovation is considered perfect in its entirety and ought to be accepted without any changes. Such rigid determinism is especially charged in intercultural diffusion circumstances, when the item in question is usually not ideally suited to the receiving culture, due to its own cultural imbuement. As with the lack of pro-innovation bias, the ABLE case also supported and even encouraged adaptation of the knowledge being transferred so it better fit the individual circumstances of the participants. The participants shared knowledge without any requirement that it be used exactly as they had used it; they offered their experience as an example, not as a template.

As with reducing the pro-innovation bias, the open attitude to reinvention also supported the reverse diffusion suggested by McFarlane (2006b) by opening up the discussion of how to use proffered knowledge without rigidly predetermining its use. The assumed equal status of the partners supported this flexibility, as there was not a great imbalance of power that has been often found in international partnerships that focus on development (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Canto & Hannah, 2001; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Diaz Bordenave, 1977). However, I have called into question the "equal" status of the partners, and perhaps more research is merited to investigate hidden power structures that are nonetheless present in even a jointly formed diffusion project.

It is curious to note that the Bulgarian participants did not mention receiving items of cultural knowledge from their American partners. One would expect that they were receiving just as much knowledge about American culture as the Americans were receiving about Bulgarian culture. While the American participants made clear why they did not identify more professional items—they felt that they were more developed compared to Bulgarian librarians—it is not so clear why the Bulgarian participants did not mention receiving American cultural items. Were the Bulgarian participants simply focusing on the professional benefits, as the Americans focused on the cultural items? Was each group simply identifying that area in which they felt they received knowledge? Is one type of knowledge more "valued" than the other? If requests for one sort of knowledge over another are emphasized, what effect could this emphasis on certain types of knowledge have on the ultimate balance of the partnership?

Adopting Units

The participants in the ABLE project felt that many personal characteristics of the partners contributed to facilitating knowledge transfer between them. Being open, curious, and willing to experience new things was crucial to successful participation. Many partners also used the term "ambassador" to describe their perception of their partnership activities. The consideration of personal characteristics was an interesting finding that I had not encountered in the literature. Although some literature addressed characteristics of *adopting units* in terms of the voluntary nature of partnerships, i.e., being willing to participate (Bolt, 2004; Bolt & Cole, 2004), overall the literature did not consider the personal characteristics of individuals that would contribute to their inclination to participate or to the quality of their actual participation.

In terms of the components of diffusion theory related to adopting units, Rogers (2003) primarily focused on categorizing individuals in terms of when they adopted the innovation; innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards make up the S-shaped curve. Rogers did describe these categories with broad adjectives; for example, innovators and early adopters are cosmopolite and adventurous, late majority adopters are more skeptical, and laggards are very skeptical. Again, because my research was not a traditional diffusion study and did not have the spread over time, the participants could not be classified with these categories *per se*. However, looking at the psychological aspects of these categories in light of the characteristics identified by the participants may point to some interesting research in the overlap between individuals interested in partnering and the affect on diffusion.

My findings do relate to a central tenet of diffusion theory: heterophily and homophily. People need to have a balance between what they do and do not have in common so that information considered as new is brought to their interactions (Rogers, 2003). Rogers and Bhowmik (1970-71) identified "objective" (obvious) and "subjective" (perceived) differences and similarities to provide further refinement to the homophily-heterophily scale. Within the ABLE project, objective heterophily is certainly present, given the different locations and cultures of the participants, which they identified as primarily a curiosity factor. More important for the participants was the subjective homophily in the shared ground that they identified in their common personal and professional experiences. Also, the mutual understanding of the partnership's mission and goals, as recommended by Cortez et al. (2007), established homophily. Altogether, the participants were able to strike a balance of homophily and heterophily.

Related to the homophily-heterophily issue among adopting units is opinion leadership. Opinion leaders bring innovations into a population because they are more likely to have heterophilous connections; they then shape and influence the consideration of an item by a population (Rogers, 2003). Because there was no population in which a particular item needed to spread, I could not consider opinion leadership within the ABLE project. However, I realized that the participants could be considered opinion leaders outside of the ABLE project, that is, within the library spheres of the individual participants. Many participants identified a feeling of differentiation from their peers due to their participation in the project, a state that Chan and Misra (1990) identify as opinion leadership potential. These individuals could become what Burt (1999) called "opinion brokers." For example, discussing the implications of the ABLE project in Bulgaria with the Bulgarian participants pointed out that they were beginning to lead the field there, due to changes gained from their partnerships. Thus, the relation between what makes an opinion leader and what makes someone want to participate in an international partnership may be an interesting route for further research.

Communication Channels

The ABLE case relied on two modes of interpersonal *communication channels*: e-mail and face-to-face visits. Each mode had facilitating and inhibiting effects upon knowledge transfer. It is interesting to note that the most relied upon mode—e-mail—had more of an inhibiting effect whereas the most costly and infrequent mode—face-to-face—was a facilitator of knowledge transfer. However, the participants fully realized the requirement to rely on e-mail and were willing to make it work, even though they would have preferred more visits.

The theoretical components of diffusion identified in Table 9-1 are the roles of mass media and interpersonal channels and the issue of heterophily-homophily again. In terms of mass media roles, there are typically no appropriate traditional mass media outlets for international partnerships, as they rely solely on interpersonal communication. However, certain aspects of Internet-based communication may be considered similar to mass media dissemination effects, such as e-mail lists and websites. In the ABLE project, while the coordinators did occasionally make use of e-mail lists and there exists a website for the project, these were not mentioned by the participants as communication sources. Perhaps these could be used by coordinators in a more vigorous manner to strengthen the partnerships. The use of dissemination channels within a specific group has not been addressed in the literature on international partnerships, so this area may offer interesting future research opportunities to determine its usefulness.

The issue of heterophily-homophily relates to communication channels in terms of access to new information and innovations (Rogers, 2003). An individual who has heterophilous links, i.e., he or she communicates with others who are dissimilar, will be more widely exposed to different and new information. However, an individual who has homophilous links, i.e., he or she communicates with others who are similar, will not gain any new information. Granovetter (1973) illustrated this concept and its relation to network structure with the terms "strong ties" and "weak ties." Strong ties are forged between people who are frequently together and are similar, whereas weak ties are between people who do not frequently communicate or are quite different from each other. Communication between weakly tied individuals, such as international partners, offers more opportunities for access to innovations.

The findings from my study reflected findings on the importance of face-to-face interaction from the extant literature on virtual global teams and international partnerships. The business and organizational studies literature demonstrated the importance of face-to-face communication for the development of trust and mutual understanding (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Roberts, 2000; Sapsed, Gann, Marshall & Salter, 2005). The literature on international partnerships recommends across the board that they ideally should have a face-to-face component; the findings from my study fully support this recommendation. Given that face-to-face visits are an expensive venture, they must be well planned and organized for maximum benefit. My study's finding that some participants felt the visits would be more productive with a different rotation—Americans visiting their partners first—indicated that the visitors may not have been obtaining the maximum possible benefit from their time abroad. An interesting experiment would be to schedule visits between new partners with the American going first, to see if the comments from some partners in my study hold true: by seeing firsthand what the Bulgarian partner is facing, the American partner could better guide the Bulgarian visitor during the visit.

As technology continues to improve, more robust and sophisticated Internet technology might continue to bridge the gap between distance and face-to-face communication and many ABLE participants are willing to try new technologies. The fact remains though that tacit knowledge is still transferred primarily by face-to-face interaction. If technology is improved, what affect might that have on tacit knowledge? International partnerships such as those in the ABLE project are well poised for further research with advanced communication technology in the partnerships.

Social Structure

The findings from the study regarding the ABLE case's *social structure* made quite clear what components of this element facilitate and inhibit knowledge transfer. In terms of facilitating, the fact that the ABLE project had coordinators responsible for overseeing partnerships gave them a chance at success not found in partnerships just between two individuals and without a coordinating body. The embedded case by geography illustrated this point well; the differences between the Iowa and Colorado cases highlighted the importance of the coordinator's leadership. Also, the overall size and open structure of the ABLE case contributed to developing links between partners and making them feel as though they had the structural support within the project to achieve success. However, support from the larger social structure context within which the ABLE partners were embedded—the library and the community—was also definitely important. The social structure of the ABLE project is unlike any found in the extant literature in that it consists of a group of partnerships, instead of just one. From the findings, it may be argued that joining partnerships together in a form of consortium, guided by overseeing participants, may offer a structural organization that can better support the partnerships, especially when library or community level support is lacking.

A definite inhibiting factor was the turnover in participants, a significant barrier to knowledge transfer. Turnover is particularly critical in international partnerships, as they are usually formed by two individuals and do not include others on staff; if one partner leaves, the partnership may be doomed. This is not a new finding; Agada (1998) and Lister (2000) have pointed to the need to examine the interpersonal relationships between individuals as representing cooperative endeavors between organizations. However, little research has been done on the topic of turnover and how to mitigate its negative effects, perhaps due to the macro-level perspective taken in the international partnership literatures, focusing on organizations partnering with organizations, such as between NGOs (Fowler, 1998; Lister, 2000), universities (Girot & Enders, 2003; Harper, 1995; Kajberg, 2004), and libraries (Doyle & Scarry, 1994). My own research at the dyad level indicated a distinct need for consideration of the micro-level. Many of the ABLE participants expressed a desire to integrate the partnership more substantially in the libraries but either did not know how or did not have the support to do so. Further investigations into this problem are needed.

A theoretical component related to social structure is the analysis of the social networks that make up the structure. Although an indication of the social network in the ABLE case emerged through the embedded sets, it would be interesting to see the relationships between the individuals participating in the project and the other staff members of their libraries, as well as with the profession at large. Such a study might indicate if and how the knowledge gained from the partnership dyad is further transferred into the larger professional population. A related component is the opinion leader, as the place of the opinion leader in the social network contributes greatly to the attributed persuasive power. Another component is the change agent, the individual who brings the innovation to the population and ties together two disparate systems (Rogers, 2003). The ABLE participants could be seen as change agents as they stimulate change between themselves, but perhaps they could also be seen as change agents in the larger scheme of the profession. If such a role could be evidenced, the argument that international partnerships are good mechanisms for developing the library field may be upheld.

The type of innovation-decision made in regards to adopting an innovation is related to the social structure. Rogers (2003) identified three types of decisions that rely upon the social structure: optional, collective and authority (p. 403). Optional decisions are made by individuals independent of the system, collective decisions are made by consensus within a group, and authority decisions are made by those with significant power. The degree of connectedness within a social structure comes into play with these decisions: if the structure is tightly connected, collective decisions may be standard; if it is loosely connected, then optional decisions may be the norm. The type of innovation also has a role; some innovations must be adopted by everyone, whereas some may be adopted by only a few. In the ABLE project, the social structure was quite loose, so the partnership dyad had wide leeway to decide what to transfer. However, some innovations required the entire professional community to agree to implement them, such as the National Library Week in Bulgaria.

Culture

While it is evident that the greatest differences between the participants are based on the two different national cultures, and would likely have a significant impact on relationship building, the ABLE case showed that these differences contribute to needed heterophily in a positive way. The participants saw their differences as interesting and inviting curiosity, which relates back to the curiosity criterion as being very important in the adopting units. Furthermore, they also recognized the ability to reflect upon and better understand their own cultural tendencies by comparing them to their partners' cultural responses as well as by the need to explain them to their partners. Overall, the participants had a positive approach to experiencing cultural differences.

The one inhibiting factor identified by the participants as related to culture was language. They found it challenging to cross linguistic barriers, especially in e-mail. This challenge mirrors that articulated in the professional literature on partnerships, but it has not been specifically addressed. Challenges with language are considered a *de facto* barrier, but little has been suggested to overcome them. A few American participants in my study recognized these issues and suggested they learn some Bulgarian to demonstrate at least their respect for their partners' willingness to learn English. The need for one partner to learn the other's language is inherent in the majority of international partnership possibilities. More research is deserved to investigate the impact of language differences on the quality of the partnership relationship, as well as to identify possible routes to alleviate the challenges.

Culture plays a supporting role in all the elements, as they can only be interpreted through the lens of cultural values for a given society; this is reflected in the theoretical components related to culture in Table 9-1. Determining the attributes of an innovation depends fully on the sending and receiving cultures, particularly in terms of compatibility. Reinvention especially demonstrates the role of culture in understanding an innovation and applying it. Topics appropriate for mass media or interpersonal communication vary according to cultural norms, as well as who may speak to whom when considering interpersonal communication. The type of innovation-decision is also affected by culture; those cultures that have a more collective stance will be more likely to use collective or authoritarian decision types. Individuals rely on culture to determine what are appropriate attitudes and behavior concerning innovations and interactions with them.

One theoretical component related specifically to culture is the unintended or unanticipated consequences of innovation adoption across cultures. Many diffusion studies have shown the havoc that can be unintentionally wreaked on a society that is not prepared for a particular innovation (Niehoff, 1966; Pelto, 1973; Spicer, 1952). These are extreme cases and awareness of such possibilities has helped to reduce their occurrence. However, unanticipated consequences—either positive or negative—are possible in any instance of knowledge transfer. Once again, my study deviated from traditional diffusion studies; because of the lack of one innovation to track within a population, it was difficult to identify any possible unintended consequences that had an effect on an entire group. One exception was the National Library Week in Bulgaria, which emerged from the growth in the LIS profession there, due in part to the partnerships. There were, however, instances of unintended consequences occurring with individuals; for example, the hostility from some participants' coworkers, or the promotion of some participants to directors of their libraries, due to their participation in ABLE. While large-scale consequences were few, many individuals experienced unanticipated consequences.

It would be interesting to apply Hofstede's (1997, 2001) dimensions of culture to knowledge transfer in international partnerships. The relationships between the national cultures on these dimensions may open new avenues of discussion and consideration of partnerships. For instance, as I discussed earlier concerning virtual global teams, Davidkov (2004) identified Bulgaria as being high on uncertainty avoidance, whereas the United States is lower. What implications does this have for knowledge transfer in a partnership between people from these two countries? Are these dimensions predictive in any way concerning the interactions between partners?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discussed and interpreted the findings from Chapter 8 in light of the research problem, the literature, and the theory of diffusion. I first revisited the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model to demonstrate how the elements interconnect with each other, forming a strongly coupled system. My study illustrates how an international partnership is a complexly intertwined system, consisting of two sub-systems, themselves each composed of intertwining elements. These intertwining elements consisted of many components that affect intercultural knowledge transfer. As this chapter showed, there is much complexity in an international partnership, and much more to be learned about them. My study points to many further paths in a rich research field. Each element can be a context for its own research program to plumb the depths of knowledge transfer in international partnerships. Taken together, however, as I did in my study, the elements act as a cohesive system to describe factors affecting intercultural knowledge transfer in such partnerships.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the dissertation by presenting a summary of the study and its findings, then addressing implications and recommendations suggested by the findings for intercultural knowledge transfer in international partnerships. Finally, I propose avenues of future research on this topic inspired by the research for this dissertation.

Summary of the Study

International partnerships are frequently implemented as a solution to transfer knowledge, typically between developing and developed nations. The LIS profession has long argued for the supposed benefits of partnerships and many partnerships have been created over the years. Anecdotal evidence, however, has illustrated scant success and a paucity of empirical inquiry has limited responses as to why a presumably "good" strategy has not proved satisfactory. Although the LIS field assumes that international partnerships are useful mechanisms for transferring professional knowledge in the goal of improving both libraries, there is not a clear understanding of these partnerships and how knowledge transfer works within them.

My research investigated this problem by exploring a group of international partnerships and the factors that affect knowledge transfer between the partners. I carried out an in-depth empirical investigation using a robust theoretical framework for guidance. The research question driving my dissertation was "what factors affect—either facilitate or inhibit—knowledge transfer in an international partnership?" I conducted a qualitative case study of a group of partnerships, the ABLE project, using the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model of diffusion to orient my work. Through multiple qualitative data collection techniques, couched in a naturalistic inquiry approach, and analyzed with a robust model of diffusion, my research revealed several important findings concerning how and why international partnerships can be important strategies to intercultural knowledge transfer.

Overall, the elements of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model—time, item, adopting units, communication channels, social structure and culture—proved to be factors that affect knowledge transfer. The only exception was the element of acceptance, which I showed was itself the outcome of knowledge transfer. Each of the other factors had components that facilitated and inhibited intercultural knowledge transfer.

Several components facilitated knowledge transfer. The duration of a partnership proved to be a crucial factor in the participants' comfort with each other, having a direct effect upon building trust and the consequent willingness to share knowledge. The knowledge being transferred was a facilitating factor when it was perceived as relatively more advantageous, not complex and compatible with the receiving partner's situation; if the knowledge could also be observed in action and tested was an additional contribution to its facilitation of transfer. Certain personal characteristics of the partners contributed positively to knowledge transfer, such as curiosity, commitment, excitement, flexibility and a sense of adventure. Other characteristics of partners that were not purely attitudinal also contributed, such as sharing common ground in the profession and personal interests, and a sense of being an ambassador. Face-to-face communication was shown to be the most preferred mode of communication and was related to the transfer of knowledge, particularly tacit knowledge, between the partners. However, the convenience and cost-effectiveness of e-mail also made this mode a facilitating factor. Partnerships do not exist in a vacuum and the social structure provided by proactive partners or coordinators, the choice of participation, the development of friendships, and the support of the library and the community at large were all important facilitating factors. The use of differences and similarities in cultures as a starting point for conversation was recognized as a facilitator in transfer, as was the respect for each other that emerged from this discussion.

Corresponding to the numerous facilitating components for knowledge transfer, there were several that acted as inhibitors. A component that was mentioned solely by the American participants was the need to find time to work on the partnership; they perceived a significant challenge to manage time for communication and to accommodate the length of the Bulgarian visits. It was difficult to consider the knowledge being transferred as an inhibiting factor; because of the nature of knowledge, it can be accepted and never brought to action. However, knowledge that was not perceived as relatively advantageous and compatible, and was too complex, was typically not applied to the receiving context. Furthermore, if the knowledge was not observable or testable, the receiving partner had a more difficult time of applying it. Just as certain personal characteristics contributed to facilitating knowledge transfer, the lack of those characteristics inhibited transfer. The case of one partnership illustrated dramatically the effect that can be had upon developing a partnership when the partner does not demonstrate the facilitating personal characteristics. Communication by e-mail was identified as an inhibiting factor due to the lack of non-verbal communication cues and immediate interaction. Although face-to-face communication was preferred as the facilitating communication mode, it was very expensive and time-consuming for the partners. The social structure inhibited transfer due to turnover in partners, feeling coerced to participate, and inactive coordinators, as well as a lack of institutional and social support from the library. The only component of culture identified as an inhibiting factor was the difficulty encountered with language, such as lack of vocabulary, different non-verbal cues, and challenges with interpretation.

While still an early exploration of the factors affecting knowledge transfer in international partnerships, my study has identified several factors that facilitate or inhibit transfer. These can be grouped overall into the elements of time, item, adopting units, communication channels, social structure and culture. Understanding these elements and their components that facilitate or inhibit knowledge transfer can contribute to a better formation of an interpretive space for knowledge transfer within international partnerships, leading ultimately to the ability of such partnerships to truly contribute to the development of libraries throughout the world.

Limitations

Although my research revealed many factors that facilitate or inhibit intercultural knowledge transfer in international partnerships, I must recall the limitations to my study. There were three primary limitations that delimit the scope and applicability of my findings: the case study approach, the content area, and a single theoretical framework.

A primary limitation was based on the case study approach, as I discussed in Chapters 2 and 5. There are concerns with the ability to generalize from a particular case, because it cannot be statistically representative of a larger population. Although a case can be chosen because it is illustrative of a larger issue, and not just intrinsically interesting, a case is by definition a limited sample and offers only theoretical generalization (Stake, 2005). In response to this limitation, I used a complex research methodology, permitting me to gather data from multiple sources and in multiple forms. I also found three sets of embedded cases and seven mini-cases within the larger ABLE case, allowing me to compare and contrast more than one unit of analysis as recommended by Yin (2003) and Stake (2005).

A second limitation was in terms of the specific professional area that comprised the case study. The case I chose was limited to individuals in public libraries who were participating in a certain partnership project. Perhaps librarians in other areas, such as academic or special libraries, might have different experiences and perspectives on international partnerships. Even if other types of librarians had been included, the study would still be limited by profession. International partnerships exist within other professions, such as nursing and education as the Literature Review showed. Replicating the study with different types of professionals might result in the identification of other factors or the solidification of the factors identified here, leading to possible generalizations concerning knowledge transfer in international partnerships. There may perhaps evolve a theory related specifically to international partnerships between professionals and the activities within them that contribute to intercultural knowledge transfer.

A final limitation was the use of one theory to guide and interpret the study. Gioia and Pitre (1990) recommended a research approach from multiple paradigmatic perspectives for a fuller understanding of a complex topic. Mixed methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) offers such a possibility, which merits consideration for future research on a complex topic such as international partnerships. Another alternative to alleviate the limited perspective is to select other frameworks from particular elements of the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model that might further probe the exact functions of those elements. For example, further investigations into the element of *adopting units* using psychological theories might explain in greater detail and depth the ways in which the individuals and groups participating in an international partnership understand the partnerships, and subsequently have an effect upon their activities and actions. The use of one theoretical framework limited my perspective, so the use of other frameworks might illuminate other factors that I was unable to identify.

Implications

Even while recognizing the limitations of my study, the findings present several implications for international partnerships in LIS as well as such partnerships in general. Because the model I followed has not been widely used, my study also has implications for diffusion theory.

International Partnerships

Certain implications from my study's context, the LIS profession, can be drawn. The findings showed that international partnerships have the potential to be successful mechanisms for developing both libraries participating in the partnership. Although the exact type and amount of development will more than likely vary for each library, they both will benefit from the partnership if it is successful in establishing a strong communicative environment to support the partners. To establish the needed environment, more attention must be paid to integrating the partnership into the library beyond the individuals directly involved in communicating. When the library's staff and community recognize the value of the partnership, then strong ties can be forged between the participating libraries and their communities, not just the individuals. In a world that is becoming increasingly globalized, the possibility for the local public library to become a location for global connection should not be overlooked.

The notion of establishing an interpretive space within a partnership has not been previously suggested and merits further investigation. As the Literature Review showed, only a few empirical studies have been done on international partnerships of any sort in the professional fields and guiding theoretical frameworks are scarce. A notable exception is the field of international development, where the theory of power has been used to examine the actions within a partnership, but at an organization-level focus, not interpersonal. My study has demonstrated the possible contribution by applying diffusion theory in a professional field at an interpersonal level.

Finally, my research showed that international partnerships between libraries merit further examination as a context for understanding the dynamics between partners and the establishment and maintenance of successful knowledge transfer. There are several findings that are possibly present in any form of international partnership between professionals; further research is needed to be certain. However, given the frequency of partnership usage in LIS, this is a field that may be cultivated to contribute more to an overall understanding of international partnerships in general.

My study also offers some implications for international partnerships in general. The findings and their interpretation presented in this dissertation can be expanded to apply to international partnerships in other contexts. Certain recommendations for practice can be advanced to maximize the possibility of knowledge transfer in international partnerships. Table 10-1 summarizes these recommendations.

Table 10-1

Recommendations for Maximizing Knowledge Transfer in an International Partnership

1. Recognize and prepare for a significant time commitment.
    a. Arrange regularly scheduled and frequent communications.
    b. Understand that a face-to-face visit will require significant shifts in priorities and responsibilities for the hosting staff.
    c. Be in the partnership for “the long haul”; understand that the longer the partnership endures, the better the relationship and ultimate knowledge transfer will be.
2. Recognize that it is a partnership with a balance of equality.
    a. Establish the mission and goals of the partnership together.
    b. Respect each other’s knowledge and experience.
    c. Offer suggestions, do not impose requirements.
3. Recognize that immediate results are not always possible.
    a. Knowledge is not always applicable to a given situation.
    b. Knowledge that is relatively more advantageous, has observable representations, can be tested, is simple, and compatible with the partner’s existing knowledge is easiest to transfer.
4. Recognize that reinvention by the partner is not wrong.
5. Be an ambassador of your organization and your culture.
    a. Demonstrate curiosity, interest in sharing, and willingness to learn.
    b. Identify the common ground shared by you and your partner.
    c. Participate actively in communication and encourage your partner.

Table 10-1, continued

6. Employ all communication channels as fully as possible.
    a. Explore the fullest communication possible with technology.
    b. Recognize that deep tacit knowledge is very challenging to create with only virtual communication.
    c. Allow for language abilities.
    d. If face-to-face visits are possible, identify the best ways to maximize knowledge transfer during the visit for both host and visitor.
7. Establish a supportive social structure.
    a. Select individuals and organizations that want to participate.
    b. Develop friendship with your partner.
    c. Develop support from your colleagues and your community.
    d. Consider forming a consortium with other partnerships to develop supportive ties with others.
8. Recognize cultural effects.
    a. Be open to comparing cultural differences and similarities.
    b. Realize you may perceive your own culture in a different light.
    c. Be open to learning your partner's language, if it is not the communicating language.
    d. Help your partner learn your language, if it is the communicating language.

Diffusion Theory

My study also contributed to diffusion theory in a small way by demonstrating that the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model is a helpful tool for investigating and deconstructing the communicative environment within an international partnership. The model proved to be a very effective analytical tool for separating out the components of an international partnership and then examining their effects on knowledge transfer. As I had anticipated, the discrete elements of adopting units, social structure and culture in the model allowed me to pick apart the contributions of these elements in a way that the more general "social system" element of Rogers' (2003) model would not. Identifying the components of the partnerships specifically related to these elements illuminated their overall effects on a partnership as well as their particular facilitating and inhibiting factors. My study demonstrated the usefulness of this long-overlooked model in the context of intercultural knowledge transfer. Using the Katz, Levin and Hamilton model in more studies will help determine its ultimate appropriateness.

Future Research

Besides the above suggestion for using the Katz, Levin and Hamilton (1963) model in more studies, I have identified many other possible routes of future research. It has been said that good research raises more questions than it answers, and I encountered multiple questions and ideas for future research throughout the course of my current research. I mentioned many concerning specific facilitating and inhibiting factors in the last chapter, as well as in the areas of content and method, which I review here. Table 10-2, presented at the end of this section, summarizes suggested future research.

Factors

Although I did not consider *acceptance* as a factor affecting knowledge transfer, the discussion of this element identified the possibility of further research into how it is expressed when the innovation is intangible knowledge, particularly if knowledge is treated as a verb (i.e., "knowing") instead of noun. Cook and Brown (1999) and Orlikowski (2002) have proposed an alternative consideration of the transfer of "knowing" in their research on organizational learning. Translating their work to an organizational context of a voluntary international partnership may provoke interesting issues concerning the determination of acceptance.

Further study into the participants' relationships with *time* and prioritizing may give interesting insight to the pressures faced by the participants and how they may be alleviated. Also, examining the partners' perceptions of time and devotion to the partnership through a cultural lens may provide an interesting comparison of approaches to the partnership. Finally, analyzing the building of trust in terms of the length of time of the partnership may clarify the role of partnership duration on establishing trust.

Knowledge as an *item* of transfer offered several interesting research avenues. Applying the attributes of an innovation identified by Rogers (2003) to knowledge raised the question of whether these attributes are appropriate to an intangible item such as knowledge, or if there are other attributes that might more adequately describe the acceptance of knowledge that does not have physical embodiments. Also, the discussion of the pro-innovation bias and reinvention combined with the question of devoting time to the partnership hinted at tacit power structures in even partnerships perceived as equal. Although there is not a previous colonial relationship between the United States and

Bulgaria, other factors such as access to funding and the enduring model of colonialism may contribute to inherent disparities in power between these two countries; more research is needed in this regard. Finally, the different types of knowledge transferred in the ABLE case (professional or cultural) made me wonder about the possible unequal valuation of the knowledge types and the possibility of how this may affect the balance inside a partnership.

The findings related to *adopting units* have inspired me to consider further the psychological aspects of partnership. What makes an individual interested in being involved in a partnership? Are there common denominators among the personal characteristics of those involved in international partnerships that point to predictors of participation in voluntary service-oriented activities? What is the relationship between one's interest in being a partner and the "profile" of an opinion leader?

As for *communication channels*, interesting avenues for further research involved technology, including the use of dissemination channels such as electronic lists and websites within a specified group of partners to support the development of partnerships, and the use of more sophisticated technology to assist the transfer of tacit knowledge. Another possible avenue is the potential effect of rotating face-to-face visits to maximize the visitor's experience.

The unique *social structure* of the ABLE case offered a possible model for future international partnerships to follow; additional studies on groups of partnerships are needed to examine their unique structures in comparison to the more typical two-organization partnership. Also, turnover in a partnership is a critical issue and deserves an in-depth exploration to understand why turnover occurs, how it affects the partnership, and how it could be alleviated by more fully integrating a partnership between two individuals to a partnership between two organizations. The social networks of the individuals involved in a partnership and their relations to their libraries and communities may shed light, not only on the issue of turnover, but on the translational effect of the partnership to its larger context and the role of the partners as change agents.

Culture is quite difficult to study, but as it underpins all the above elements and creates the primary difference between partners, it deserves further and more in-depth attention. A possible research avenue may be in considering participating national cultures through Hofstede's (1997, 2000) dimensions of culture. Perhaps the position of a given national culture on these dimensions may illuminate actions, reactions and interpretations of the partners concerning the partnership and the roles of the above elements in the transfer of knowledge. Also, the role of language and how the partners navigate language barriers deserves further research to identify its impact on the quality of the partnership.

Context

As I mentioned above in the discussion of the limitation of focusing on one profession, replicating this study with international partnerships in other professions may lead to the evolution of a theory of professional international partnerships. Clearly many more studies on international partnerships in various specialties in LIS as well as in other professions are required before generalizable statements can be advanced. The education and nursing professions have already integrated the notion of international partnerships into their professional practices, but there are other fields too. For example, I was intrigued to learn from one of the ABLE partners of a partnership between firefighters in that town and firefighters in Bulgaria. What other professions are turning to international partnerships as a possible solution to intercultural knowledge transfer and international strengthening of professional ties? What might their particular experiences tell us about international partnerships and about intercultural knowledge transfer?

Methods

In the discussion of data collection in Chapter 6, I identified a few data collection methods that need to be modified in future research. One area is the gathering of e-mail correspondence; the method of accessing e-mail should be modified. Many participants did not keep their e-mails, which made it difficult to access their virtual relationship. Future research on the use of e-mail as a method and better ways to access it is deserved. Also, the method of journal writing showed interesting possibilities. Not much research has been done on the use of this method. Perhaps asking all participants to keep journals of their experiences would be an interesting way to access their experiences in a deeper way. Accessing the "reality" of an international partnership that is carried out primarily through virtual means may require innovative methods.

Table 10-2

Summary of Future Research Avenues

<u>Partnerships</u>

Effect of partnership duration on trust building

Demands on time during visits

Tacit power structures in partnerships

Psychological characteristics of participants as predictors of interest

Effects of voluntary nature on partnership

Actions as opinion leaders or change agents in larger community contexts

Use of face-to-face versus electronic communication for introductions

Use of consortia and coordinators to support independent dyads of partnerships

Turnover and expansion of partnership beyond the individual

Social network analysis of partners and further diffusion of knowledge

Language learning by both partners

Sustainability of a partnership

<u>Knowledge Transfer in General</u>

Determination of point of acceptance of knowledge or knowing

Relationship with time and prioritizing from a cultural viewpoint

Attributes of knowledge as an innovation

Inherent directionality of knowledge flow between partners

Effect of reinvention on willingness to share knowledge

Homophily and heterophily in intercultural contexts

Development of Internet-supported communication technologies

Table 10-2, continued

Knowledge Transfer in General, continued

Perception of larger organization concerning the partnership; institutional barriers

Effect of choice or coercion on participation in partnership

Applicability of Hofstede's dimensions

Contexts

Various LIS contexts: special, academic, school and public libraries

Other professional contexts

Methods

Collection of e-mail correspondence

Collection of other Internet-based communication (chat, VOIP)

Use of personal journals

Identification of other methods to capture "reality" of virtual relationship

Chapter Summary

This final chapter wraps up my dissertation by summarizing the research presented in the previous chapters. I discussed the limitations of my study before presenting the implications and recommendations for international partnerships and diffusion theory. Many fertile areas for future research were also outlined, indicating the rich research terrain that this study has only begun to uncover. I hope the research presented in this dissertation advances the LIS profession one more step toward making international partnerships a practical—not just potential—solution to library development throughout the world.

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APPENDIX A: Institutional Review Board Approval

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

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GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
RESEARCH AND GRANTS CENTER
Campus Box 4003

October 3, 2005

Rebecca Miller
SLIM
341 South 52nd St.
Lincoln, NE 68510

Dear Ms. Miller:

Your application for approval to use human subjects, entitled "The Diffusion of Professional Knowledge in Intercultural Exchanges: The American-Bulgarian Library Exchange Case Study," has been reviewed. I am pleased to inform you that your application was approved and you may begin your research as outlined in your application materials.

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I wish you success with your research project. If I can help you in any way, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jeffrey Tysinger
Chair, Institutional Review Board

pf

cc: Herbert Achleitner

An Equal Opportunity Employer

APPENDIX B: Introduction Letter for Participants (English)

The Diffusion of Professional Knowledge in Intercultural Exchanges: A Case Study of the American-Bulgarian Library Exchange

Rebecca Miller
Doctoral Candidate
School of Library & Information Management
Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas

Thank you for your willingness to help this research project!
This research has two goals:

1. Provide information to the ABLE grant project for its evaluation
2. Provide information to me for my dissertation

To reach these goals, several methods will be used. They are:

1. Individual interviews
2. Focus group interviews
3. E-mail collection
4. Observation
5. Participant journaling

Not everyone will be involved in all these methods.

- The individual interviews will be with as many people as possible; I hope to interview everyone who has participated in the ABLE or its predecessor, the Colorado-Bulgarian Library Partnership.
- Focus group interviews will be conducted with participants who attend regional library association meetings or are involved with upcoming face-to-face meetings between the participants.
- E-mail collection will be done with the assistance of the coordinators, who will request and collect e-mail exchanges between the partners from the American participants.
- During the face-to-face visits, I will be visiting and observing as much as I can. However, time and budget limitations will restrict my ability to observe at each library that hosts a guest; therefore not all participants will be a part of this method.
- Also during the face-to-face visits, I will ask the visiting participants to keep a personal journal to chronicle their experience, which I will collect after the visit is over. Only those participants who are visiting their partner libraries will participate in this method.

To these ends, your input and participation are valuable and appreciated. You will receive an informed consent document for the overall study as well as each individual method in which you are included, at the time of participation. If you have any questions at all about the research topic, the methods used, or my background, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you!

620-481-9956 rmiller2@emporia.edu

APPENDIX C: Introduction Letter for Participants (Bulgarian)

Разпространението на професионални знания в Интеркултурни обмени:
Американо-българския библиотечен обмен - ABLE
Проучването е "по конкретен случай"

Ребека Милър Банър
Докторантка
Факултет по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на
Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ

Благодаря Ви за готовността да помогнете в този проучвателен проект!

Проучването има две цели:

1. Да осиури информация за проекта ABLE с цел неговото оценяване.
2. Да осигури информация за моята дисертация.

За постигането на тези цели ще бъдат използвани няколко метода. Те са:

1. Събиране на електронни пощи
2. Индивидуални интервюта
3. Интервюта на фокус групи
4. Наблюдение
5. Лични протоколи/дневници на участниците

Не всеки ще бъде въвлечен във всички тези методи.

- Индивидуалните интервюта ще бъдат с възможно най-много лица; Надявам се да интервюирам всеки, който е участвал в ABLE или неговия предшественик в Колорадо-Българското библиотечно сътрудничество.
- Интервютата на фокус групите ще се провеждат с участници, които присъстват на срещи на регионални библиотечни сдружения или са включени в предстоящи „лице-в-лице" срещи между участниците.
- Събирането на електронни пощи ще бъде осъществено с помощта на координаторите, които ще изискват и ще събират обменените електронни писма между партньорите от американските участници.
- По време на „лице-в-лице" визитите, аз ще ги посещавам и ще наблюдавам възможно най-много. Все пак, времето и бюджетните ограничения ще ограничат моята възможност да наблюдавам всяка библиотека, която е домакин на гост; следователно не всички участници ще бъдат включени в този метод.
- Също така, по време на „лице-в-лице" срещите, ще помоля гостуващите участници да поддържат личен дневник/протокол, за да вписват в него своя опит/преживявания, който ще събирам след като визитата приключи. Само тези участници, които посещават тяхната библиотека-партньор ще участват в този метод.

До този момент, вашето съдействие и участие са ценни. Ще получите осведомителен документ за съгласие за цялостното проучване, както и за всеки индивидуален метод, в който сте включен по време на участието ви. Ако имате някакви въпроси относно темата на проучването, използваните методи, или моята квалификация, моля не се колебайте да се свържете с мен. Благодаря ви!

1-620-481-9956 rmiller2@emporia.edu

APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form for Overall Study (English)

Informed Consent Document for the Overall Study

The School of Library and Information Management at Emporia State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided so you can decide to participate in this study or not.

The purpose of this study is to gain information about the American-Bulgarian Library Exchange grant to evaluate the grant and support the researcher's dissertation. The study is a "case study" consisting of all participants in the grant. Because it is a case study, the input from all participants is important and necessary. Everyone's opinion and contribution will matter. To encourage participation, measures have been taken to protect your identity outside of the grant. Furthermore, measures have been taken to protect the confidentiality of your input within the grant. Precise measures will be outlined in the information sheet accompanying every data collection method.

The following data collection methods will be used:

E-mail collection	Individual interviews	Focus group interviews
Observation	Personal journals	

For the personal journals, the Bulgarian participants are invited to write in Bulgarian. A translator who is not involved with the grant will translate the responses. The individual and focus group interviews held with the Bulgarians will be conducted in English, with the help of an interpreter if necessary. Overall, these methods are commonly and widely used in qualitative studies, and have been shown to cause little if any harm to the participant when used ethically. You should be aware that if you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, without reproach.

In exchange for your willingness to participate, you have the right to expect the following from the researcher:

Respectful and objective consideration of responses
Respect for requests to clarify information or to modify responses
Assured privacy and confidentiality of responses
Complete anonymity if any information given is used as an example in any publication based on this research

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Rebecca Miller
Doctoral Student
rmiller2@emporia.edu

School of Library & Information Management
Emporia State University
Emporia, Kansas, USA

Informed Consent Agreement for the Overall Study

- I have read the Informed Consent document that describes the overall study.
- I understand that more detailed information about possible risks of each data collection method will accompany the application of each method.
- I understand that I will have the opportunity to ask questions about the study and the methods used at any time.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without reproach.
- I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study.

____________________________________ ____________________

Signature Date

APPENDIX E: Informed Consent Form for Overall Study (Bulgarian)
Осведомителен документ за съгласие за цялостно изследване

Факултетът по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ поддържа практиката на защита на лицата, участващи в проучвания.. Следващата информация ви се предлага, за да решите дали да вземете участие в това проучване или не.

Целта на това проучване е да събере информация за Американо-Българския проект за Библиотечен обмен - ABLE, да се направи оценка на проекта и да се подкрепи изследователска дисертация. Проучването е "по конкретен случай", базирано на становището на всички участници в проекта. Понеже е изследване „по конкретен случай", приносът на всички участници е важен и необходим. Мнението и съдействието на всеки е от значение. За да се насърчи участието са предприети мерки за защита на идентичността ви извън проекта. Нещо повече, предприети са мерки за защита на поверителността на приносът ви и в рамките на проекта. Точните параметри ще бъдат очертани в информационен лист, съпровождащ всеки метод за събиране на данните.

Следните методи за събиране на данни ще бъдат използвани:

- Събиране на електронни пощи
- Индивидуални интервюта
- Интервюта на фокус групи
- Наблюдение
- Лични протоколи/дневници

За личните протоколи/дневници, българските участници се поканват да пишат на български език. Преводач, който не е включен в проекта ще преведе отзивите. Индивидуалните интервюта и интервютата на фокус групите, проведени с българи ще се превеждат на английски, с помощта на преводач, ако е нужно. Като цяло, тези методи са широко разпространени и използвани за качествени изследвания и проучвания и са смятани за нанасящи малка, ако изобщо я има, вреда на участника, когато се използват етично. Трябва да сте наясно че ако решите да участвате, може да се оттеглите по всяко време, без да бъдете упрекнати.

В замяна на готовността ви да участвате, имате правото да очаквате следното от изследователя:

- Коректно и обективно обсъждане на отговорите и данните
- Зачитане на молбите за поясняване на информацията или за промяна на отговорите.
- Осигурена конфиденциалност на отговорите и данните
- Пълна анонимност, ако дадена информация се използва като пример в публикация, базирана на това проучване.

Благодарим ви предварително за вашето участие!

Ребека Милър Банър
Докторантка
Факултет по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на
Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ rmiller2@emporia.edu

Осведомителен договор за даване на съгласие за цялостно изследване:

- Прочел съм осведомителния документ, описващ цялостното проучване.
- Разбирам, че по-детайлна информация за възможни рискове при всеки метод за събиране на данни ще съпровожда приложението за всеки метод.
- Разбирам, че ще имам възможност да задавам въпроси относно проучването и използваните методи по всяко време.
- Разбирам, че моето участие е доброволно и мога да се оттегля по всяко време без да бъда упрекнат.
- Разбирам, че с отговора ми на този е-мейл, аз се съгласявам да участвам в проучването.

____________________________________ ______________________

Подрис Дата

APPENDIX F: Informed Consent Form for Individual Interviews (English)

Informed Consent Document: Individual Interviews

The School of Library and Information Management at Emporia State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided so you can decide to participate in this study or not.

The purpose of this study is to gain information about the American-Bulgarian Library Exchange grant to evaluate the grant and support my dissertation. The study is a "case study" consisting of all participants in the grant. Because it is a case study, the input from all participants is important and necessary. Everyone's opinion and contribution will matter. To encourage participation, measures have been taken to protect your identity outside of the grant. Furthermore, measures have been taken to protect the confidentiality of your input within the grant. This document outlines the potential risks and specific measures to be taken for the **individual interview** data collection method.

Individual interviews will be held with all participants in the grant. During the interview, the researcher will ask you about your experiences during the grant. She will also ask you a few background questions. At any time you can stop the interview if you feel uncomfortable. The interviews will be audio taped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher, after which the tapes will be destroyed. A copy of the transcript will be sent to you for an accuracy check; your feedback is encouraged. There is little, if any, potential risk for harm from these interviews. All transcripts will be kept in strict confidentiality, with only the researcher having access. Any identifying features will be eliminated from the transcripts if excerpts are used as examples in any and all publications based on this research.

You should be aware that if you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, without reproach. In exchange for your willingness to participate, you have the right to expect the following from the researcher:

Respectful and objective consideration of responses

Respect for requests to clarify information or to modify responses

Assured privacy and confidentiality of responses

Complete anonymity if any information given is used as an example in any publication based on this research

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Rebecca Miller
Doctoral Student
rmiller2@emporia.edu

School of Library & Information Management
Emporia State University
Emporia, Kansas, USA

Informed Consent Agreement for **Individual Interview**

- I have read the Informed Consent document for the **individual interview** data collection method.
- I understand that the data collected from the **individual interviews** will be held in strict confidentiality.
- I understand that I can ask questions about the study and the methods used at any time.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without reproach.
- I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the **individual interview** data collection method.

____ ________________

Signature Date

APPENDIX G: Informed Consent Form for Individual Interviews (Bulgarian)

Осведомителен документ за съгласие: Индивидуални интервюта

Факултетът по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ поддържа практиката на защита на лицата, участващи в проучвания.. Следващата информация ви се предлага, за да решите дали да вземете участие в това проучване или не.

Целта на това проучване е да събере информация за Американо-Българския проект за Библиотечен обмен - ABLE, да се направи оценка на проекта и да се подкрепи изследователска дисертация. Проучването е "по конкретен случай", базирано на становището на всички участници в проекта. Понеже е изследване „по конкретен случай", приносът на всички участници е важен и необходим. Мнението и съдействието на всеки е от значение. За да се насърчи участието са предприети мерки за защита на идентичността извън проекта. Нещо повече, предприети са мерки за защита на поверителността на приносът ви и в рамките на проекта. Този документ очертава потенциалните рискове и специфични мерки, които трябва да се предприемат за събирането на данни чрез метода на индивидуалното интервю.

Вие трябва да знаете, че ако решите да участвате, може да се оттеглите по всяко време без да бедете упрекнат. В замяна на готовността ви да участвате, имате правото да очаквате следното от изследователя:

- Почтително и обективно обсъждане на отговорите
- Зачитане на молбите за поясняване на информацията или за промяна на отговорите.
- Осигурена засекретеност на отговорите
- Пълна анонимност ако дадена информация се използва като пример в публикация, базирана на това проучване.

Благодарим ви предварително за вашето участие!
Ребека Милър Банър
Докторантка
Факултет по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на
Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ
rmiller2@emporia.edu

Осведомителен договор за даване на съгласие за индивидуално интервю

- Прочел съм осведомителния документ за съгласие за събиране на данни чрез метода за индивидуално интервю.
- Разбирам, че данните, събрани чрез индивидуални интервюта ще бъдат пазени в строга конфиденциалност.
- Разбирам, че мога да задавам въпроси относно проучването и използваните методи по всяко време.
- Разбирам, че моето участие е доброволно и мога да се оттегля по всяко време без да бъда упрекнат.
- Разбирам, че чрез подписа ми долу се съгласявам да участвам в метода за събиране на данни чрез индивидуално интервю.

____ ______________________

Подрис Дата

APPENDIX H: Informed Consent Form for Focus Group Interviews (English)

Informed Consent Document: Focus Group Interviews

The School of Library and Information Management at Emporia State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided so you can decide to participate in this study or not.

The purpose of this study is to gain information about the American-Bulgarian Library Exchange grant to evaluate the grant and support my dissertation. The study is a "case study" consisting of all participants in the grant. Because it is a case study, the input from all participants is important and necessary. Everyone's opinion and contribution will matter. To encourage participation, measures have been taken to protect your identity outside of the grant. Furthermore, measures have been taken to protect the confidentiality of your input within the grant.

Focus group interviews will be held with participants who participate in the visits, at the end of the visit. During the interview, the researcher will ask you about your experiences during the visit. She will also ask you a few background questions. At any time you can leave the interview if you feel uncomfortable. The interviews will be audio taped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher, after which the tapes will be destroyed. A copy of the transcript will be sent to you for an accuracy check; your feedback is encouraged. There is little, if any, potential risk for harm from these interviews. All transcripts will be kept in strict confidentiality, with only the researcher having access. Any identifying features will be eliminated from the transcripts if excerpts are used as examples in any and all publications based on this research.

You should be aware that if you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, without reproach. In exchange for your willingness to participate, you have the right to expect the following from the researcher:

Respectful and objective consideration of responses
Respect for requests to clarify information or to modify responses
Assured privacy and confidentiality of responses
Complete anonymity if any information given is used as an example in any publication based on this research

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Rebecca Miller
Doctoral Student
rmiller2@emporia.edu

School of Library & Information Management
Emporia State University
Emporia, Kansas, USA

Informed Consent Agreement for **Focus Group Interviews**

- I have read the Informed Consent document for the **focus group interview** data collection method.
- I understand that the data collected from the **focus group interviews** will be held in strict confidentiality.
- I understand that I can ask questions about the study and the methods used at any time.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without reproach.
- I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the **focus group interview** data collection method.

________________________________ ______________________

Signature Date

APPENDIX I: Informed Consent Form for Focus Group Interviews (Bulgarian)

Осведомителен документ за съгласие: интервюта във фокус-групи

Факултетът по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ поддържа практиката на защита на лицата, участващи в проучвания. Следващата информация ви се предлага, за да решите дали да вземете участие в това проучване или не.

Целта на това проучване е да събере информация за Американо-Българския проект за Библиотечен обмен - ABLE, да се направи оценка на проекта и да се подкрепи изследователска дисертация. Проучването е "по конкретен случай", базирано на становището на всички участници в проекта. Понеже е изследване „по конкретен случай", приносът на всички участници е важен и необходим. Мнението и съдействието на всеки е от значение. За да се насърчи участието са предприети мерки за защита на идентичността извън проекта. Нещо повече, предприети са мерки за защита на поверителността на приносът ви и в рамките на проекта. Този документ очертава потенциалните рискове и специфични мерки, които трябва да се предприемат за събирането на данни чрез метода на индивидуалното интервю.

Интервютата във фокус група ще се провеждат с участници, които са включени в посещения. Данните се съборат в края на тези посещения. По време на интервюто изследователят ще ви задава въпроси за вашия опит по време на посещенията. Тя ще зададе няколко основни въпроси. Вие можете да напуснете интервюто по всяко време, ако се чувствате некомфортно. Интервютата ще бъдат записани на лента и транскрибирани от изследователя, след което лентите ще бъдат унищожени. Копие от транскрибираното интервю ще ви бъде изпратено за проверка на точността; вашето мнение е желателно. Има много малък, ако изобщо има, потенциален риск от негативни последици от тези интервюта. Всички транскрипти ще бъдат държани в строга поверителност, като само изследователят има достъп до тях. Всяка информация, идентифицираща някого или нещо, ще бъде елиминирана от транскриптите, ако части от тях се използват като примери в някоя или всички публикации относно това изследване.

Вие трябва да знаете, че ако решите да участвате, може да се оттеглите по всяко време без да бедете упрекнат. В замяна на готовността ви да участвате, имате правото да очаквате следното от изследователя:

- Почтително и обективно обсъждане на отговорите
- Зачитане на молбите за поясняване на информацията или за промяна на отговорите.
- Осигурена засекретеност на отговорите
- Пълна анонимност ако дадена информация се използва като пример в публикация, базирана на това проучване.

Благодарим ви предварително за вашето участие!
Ребека Милър Банър
Докторантка

Факултет по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на
Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ
rmiller2@emporia.edu

Осведомителен договор за даване на съгласие за интервю във фокус група

- Прочел съм осведомителния документ за съгласие за събиране на данни чрез метода на интервю във фокус група.
- Разбирам, че данните, събрани от интервютата във фокус група, се пазят в строга конфиденциалност.
- Разбирам, че мога да задавам въпроси относно проучването и неговите методи по всяко време.
- Разбирам, че моето участие е доброволно и аз мога да се оттегля по всяко време, без да бъда упрекнат.
- Разбирам, че с подписа си се съгласявам да участвам в метода за събиране на данни чрез интервю във фокус група.

_______________________________________ __________________________

Подпис Дата

APPENDIX J: Informed Consent Form for E-mail Collection (English)

Informed Consent Document: E-mail Collection

The School of Library and Information Management at Emporia State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided so you can decide to participate in this study or not.

The purpose of this study is to gain information about the American-Bulgarian Library Exchange grant to evaluate the grant and support my dissertation. The study is a "case study" consisting of all participants in the grant. Because it is a case study, the input from all participants is important and necessary. Everyone's opinion and contribution will matter. To encourage participation, measures have been taken to protect your identity outside of the grant. Furthermore, measures have been taken to protect the confidentiality of your input within the grant.

The researcher will request copies of your e-mail correspondence with your partner library. These copies will be funneled through the grant coordinators for Colorado and Iowa and identifiable elements, such as e-mail address information, will be stripped away. You have the right to delete other portions of the e-mail correspondence that you do not want considered in the study.

You should be aware that if you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, without reproach. In exchange for your willingness to participate, you have the right to expect the following from me:

Respectful and objective consideration of responses

Respect for requests to clarify information or to modify responses

Assured privacy and confidentiality of responses

Complete anonymity if any information given is used as an example in any publication based on this research

I thank you in advance for your participation.

Rebecca Miller
Doctoral Student
millerre@emporia.edu

School of Library & Information Management
Emporia State University
Emporia, Kansas, USA

Informed Consent Agreement for **E-mail Collection**

- I have read the Informed Consent document for the **e-mail** data collection method.
- I understand that the data collected from the **e-mail** will be held in strict confidentiality.
- I understand that I can ask questions about the study and the methods used at any time.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without reproach.
- I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the **e-mail collection** method.

______________________________________ ________________

Signature Date

APPENDIX K: Informed Consent Form for E-mail Collection (Bulgarian)

Осведомителен документ за съгласие: Събиране на електронни пощи

Факултетът по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ поддържа практиката на защита на лицата, участващи в проучвания.. Следващата информация ви се предлага, за да решите дали да вземете участие в това проучване или не.

Целта на проучването е да събере информация за Американо-Българския проект за Библиотечен обмен - ABLE, да се направи оценка на проекта и да се подкрепи изследователска дисертация. Проучването е "по конкретен случай", базирано на становището на всички участници в проекта. Понеже е изследване „по конкретен случай", приносът на всички участници е важен и необходим. Мнението и съдействието на всеки е от значение. За да се насърчи участието са предприети мерки за защита на идентичността извън проекта. Нещо повече, предприети са мерки за защита на поверителността на приноса ви и в рамките на съгласието.

Изследователят ще изиска копия от вашата e-mail кореспонденция с вашата библиотека-партньор. Тези копия ще бъдат доставени чрез координаторите на проекта за Колорадо и Айова, а идентифициращи елементи, като например информация за e-mail адрес, ще бъдат изтрити. Имате правото да изтриете и други части от e-mail кореспонденцията, които не желаете да бъдат разглеждани в проучването.

Вие трябва да знаете, че ако решите да участвате, може да се оттеглите по всяко време без да бъдете упрекнат. В замяна на готовността ви да участвате, имате правото да очаквате следното от мен:

- Коректно и обективно обсъждане на отговорите
- Зачитане на молбите за поясняване на информацията или за промяна на отговорите.
- Осигурена конфиденциалност на отговорите
- Пълна анонимност, ако дадена информация се използва като пример в публикация, базирана на това проучване.

Благодарим ви предварително за вашето участие!

Ребека Милър Банър
Докторантка
Факултет по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на
Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ
rmiller2@emporia.edu

Осведомителен договор за съгласие

- Прочел съм осведомителния документ за съгласие с метода за събиране на данни чрез електронна поща.
- Разбирам, че данните, събрани от електронната поща ще бъдат пазени в строга конфиденциалност.
- Разбирам, че мога да задавам въпроси относно проучването и използваните методи по всяко време.
- Разбирам, че моето участие е доброволно и мога да се оттегля по всяко време без да бъда упрекнат.
- Разбирам, че с предоставяне на електронната си поща, се съгласявам да участвам в метода за събиране на данни чрез електронна поща.

____________________________________ ____________________

Подрис Дата

APPENDIX L: Informed Consent Form for Direct Observation (English)

Informed Consent Document: Observation

The School of Library and Information Management at Emporia State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided so you can decide to participate in this study or not.

The purpose of this study is to gain information about the American-Bulgarian Library Exchange grant to evaluate the grant and support my dissertation. The study is a "case study" consisting of all participants in the grant. Because it is a case study, the input from all participants is important and necessary. Everyone's opinion and contribution will matter. To encourage participation, measures have been taken to protect your identity outside of the grant. Furthermore, measures have been taken to protect the confidentiality of your input within the grant.

The researcher will conduct observation of your visit to your partner library and the host country. She will unobtrusively observe your interaction with your hosts and other individuals during professional meetings. She will not observe during personal moments. She will not judge your actions or those with whom you are interacting. There is little, if any, potential risk for harm from these observations. All notes will be kept in strict confidentiality, with only the researcher having access. Any identifying features will be eliminated from the notes if they are used as examples in any and all publications based on this research.

You should be aware that if you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, without reproach. In exchange for your willingness to participate, you have the right to expect the following from me:

Respectful and objective consideration of responses

Respect for requests to clarify information or to modify responses

Assured privacy and confidentiality of responses

Complete anonymity if any information given is used as an example in any publication based on this research

I thank you in advance for your participation.

Rebecca Miller
Doctoral Student
rmiller2@emporia.edu

School of Library & Information Management
Emporia State University
Emporia, Kansas, USA

Informed Consent Agreement for **Observation**

- I have read the Informed Consent document for the **observation** data collection method.
- I understand that the data collected from the **observations** will be held in strict confidentiality.
- I understand that I can ask questions about the study and the methods used at any time.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without reproach.
- I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the **observation** data collection method.

______________________________________ __________________

Signature Date

APPENDIX M: Informed Consent Form for Direct Observation (Bulgarian)

Осведомителен документ за съгласие: Наблюдение

Факултетът по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ поддържа практиката на защита на лицата, участващи в проучвания.. Следващата информация ви се предлага, за да решите дали да вземете участие в това проучване или не.

Целта на това проучване е да събере информация за Американо-Българския проект за Библиотечен обмен - ABLE, да се направи оценка на проекта и да се подкрепи изследователска дисертация. Проучването е “по конкретен случай”, базирано на становището на всички участници в проекта. Понеже е изследване „по конкретен случай”, приносът на всички участници е важен и необходим. Мнението и съдействието на всеки е от значение. За да се насърчи участието са предприети мерки за защита на идентичността извън проекта. Нещо повече, предприети са мерки за защита на поверителността на приносът ви и в рамките на проекта.

Изследователят ще проведе набюдение за вашето посещение във вашата библиотека-партньор в страната домакин. Той дискретно ще наблюдава вашето взаимодействие с домакините ви и с други лица по време на професионални срещи. Той няма да ви наблюдава по време на лични срещи. Той няма да оценява действията ви или на тези, с които контактувате. Съществува малък, ако изобщо съществува, потенциален риск за вреда от тези наблюдения. Всички бележки ще бъдат пазени в строга конфиденциалност, като само изследователят ще има достъп до тях. Всякакви идентифициращи белези ще бъдат премахнати от бележките, ако се използват като пример в някоя или във всички публикации, базирани на това проучване.

Вие трябва да знаете, че ако решите да участвате, може да се оттеглите по всяко време без да бъдете упрекнат. В замяна на готовността ви да участвате, имате правото да очаквате следното от мен:

- Коректно и обективно обсъждане на данните
- Зачитане на молбите за поясняване на информацията или за промяна на отговорите.
- Осигурена конфиденциалност на данните
- Пълна анонимност, ако дадена информация се използва като пример в публикация, базирана на това проучване.

Благодарим ви предварително за вашето участие!

Ребека Милър Банър
Докторантка
Факултет по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на
Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ
rmiller2@emporia.edu

Осведомителен договор за съгласие

- Прочел съм осведомителния документ за съгласие с метода за събиране на данни чрез наблюдение.
- Разбирам, че данните, събрани от наблюдението ще бъдат пазени в строга конфиденциалност.
- Разбирам, че мога да задавам въпроси относно проучването и използваните методи по всяко време.
- Разбирам, че моето участие е доброволно и мога да се оттегля по всяко време без да бъда упрекнат.
- Разбирам, че с отговарянето на този e-mail, се съгласявам да участвам в метода за събиране на данни чрез наблюдение.

____________________________________ ____________________

Подрис Дата

APPENDIX N: Informed Consent Form for Journal (English)

Informed Consent Document: Journal

The School of Library and Information Management at Emporia State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided so you can decide to participate in this study or not.

The purpose of this study is to gain information about the American-Bulgarian Library Exchange grant to evaluate the grant and support the researcher's dissertation. The study is a "case study" consisting of all participants in the grant. Because it is a case study, the input from all participants is important and necessary. Everyone's opinion and contribution will matter. To encourage participation, measures have been taken to protect your identity outside of the grant. Furthermore, measures have been taken to protect the confidentiality of your input within the grant.

The journal method is used when the researcher cannot spend a long time with you. Your observations and experiences during your visit are important data to the researcher, but the only way she can access it is through your journals. You are encouraged to keep a daily journal. You choose what to write in the journal, but a prompt is included with the journal to give you ideas about topics to write on. You are encouraged to use the journal as your personal account of the visit – if you wish, you can keep the journal following the visit as a record of your experience. You are asked to photocopy the journal, omitting or blacking out any material you believe is too personal for inclusion, and send the photocopy to the researcher following your return home. There is little, if any, potential risk for harm from the journal method. You choose what to include and all photocopied journals will be kept in strict confidentiality, with only the researcher having access. Any identifying features will be eliminated if any excerpts are used as examples in any and all publications based on this research.

You should be aware that if you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, without reproach. In exchange for your willingness to participate, you have the right to expect the following from the researcher:

Respectful and objective consideration of responses
Respect for requests to clarify information or to modify responses
Assured privacy and confidentiality of responses
Complete anonymity if any information given is used as an example in any publication based on this research

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Rebecca Miller
Doctoral Student
rmiller2@emporia.edu

School of Library & Information Management
Emporia State University
Emporia, Kansas, USA

Informed Consent Agreement: **Journal**

- I have read the Informed Consent document for the **journal** data collection method.
- I understand that the data collected from the **journals** will be held in strict confidentiality.
- I understand that I can ask questions about the study and the methods used at any time.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without reproach.
- I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the **journal** data collection method.

____ ____________________

Signature Date

APPENDIX O: Informed Consent Form for Journal (Bulgarian)

Осведомителен документ за съгласие:
Метод за анализ на протоколи /дневници на госта

Факултетът по Библиотечно-информационен мениджмънт на Щатския университет Емпория, Канзас, САЩ поддържа практиката на защита на лицата, участващи в проучвания.. Следващата информация ви се предлага, за да решите дали да вземете участие в това проучване или не.

Целта на това проучване е да събере информация за Американо-Българския проект за Библиотечен обмен - ABLE, да се направи оценка на проекта и да се подкрепи изследователска дисертация. Проучването е "по конкретен случай", базирано на становището на всички участници в проекта. Понеже е изследване „по конкретен случай", приносът на всички участници е важен и необходим. Мнението и съдействието на всеки е от значение. За да се насърчи участието са предприети мерки за защита на идентичността извън проекта. Нещо повече, предприети са мерки за защита на поверителността на приносът ви и в рамките на проекта.

Методът за анализ на протоколи (записки)/дневници се използва, когато изследователят не може да прекара дълго време с вас. Вашите наблюдения и опит по време на визитата ви са важна информация за изследователя. Единственият начин, чрез който той може да достигне до тях, е посредством вашите протоколи/дневници. Насърчавани сте да поддържате всекидневно протоколи/дневници. Вие избирате какво да пишете в тях, но списък с теми за насочване е включен към протоколите/дневниците, за да ви даде идея за теми, по които да пишете. Насърчавани сте да използвате протоколи/дневници като свой собствен отчет за посещението. Чрез тяхното запазване след визитата те ще ви послужат като документ за натрупания опит и практика. Ако сте българин, моля водете протоколите/дневника си на български език. Преводач, който не е включен в проекта ще преведе отзивите в тях. Помолен сте да ксерокопирате протоколите/дневниците, пропускайки или изтривайки всеки материал, който считате за прекалено личен, за да бъде включен, и да изпратите фотокопието на изследователя веднага след като се завърнете вкъщи. Има малък, ако изобщо съществува, потенциален риск за вреда от този метод. Вие избирате какво да включите и всички ксерокопирани протоколи/дневници ще бъдат пазени в строга конфидинциалност, като само изследователят ще има достъп до тях. Всякакви идентифициращи данни ще бъдат елиминирани ако се използват извадки като примери в някоя или във всички публикации, базирани на проучването.

Вие трябва да знаете, че ако решите да участвате, може да се оттеглите по всяко време без да бъдете упрекнати. В замяна на готовността ви да участвате, имате правото да очаквате следното от изследователя:

- Коректно и обективно обсъждане на сведенията
- Зачитане на молбите за поясняване на информацията или за промяна на отзивите.
- Осигурена конфиденциалност на отзивите
- Пълна анонимност, ако дадена информация се използва като пример в публикация, базирана на това проучване.

Благодарим ви предварително за вашето участие!

Rebecca Miller School of Library & Information
Management
Doctoral Student Emporia State University
rmiller2@emporia.edu Emporia, Kansas, USA

Осведомителен договор за даване на съгласие

- Прочел съм осведомителния документ за съгласие с методът за водене на протоколи/дневници за събиране на данни.
- Разбирам, че данните, събрани от протоколите/дневниците ще бъдат пазени в строга поверителност.
- Разбирам, че мога да задавам въпроси относно проучването и използваните методи по всяко време.
- Разбирам, че моето участие е доброволно и мога да се оттегля по всяко време без да бъда упрекнат.
- Разбирам, че чрез подписа ми долу се съгласявам да участвам в методът за водене на протоколи /дневници за събиране на данни.

_______________________________________ _____________________
Подрис Дата

APPENDIX P: Final List of Questions for Individual Interviews (Partners)

1. What kind of LIS training (formal or informal) have you received?
2. What is the official title of your position?
3. How long have you been in this position?
4. How long have you participated in the partnership project?
5. What prompted your library to want to join, if you know or in your opinion?
6. Why did you want to be the participating librarian in the partnership?
7. What benefits did you anticipate when you started at the participating librarian?
8. What drawbacks did you anticipate when you started as the participating librarian?
9. What benefits had you not anticipated when you started?
10. What drawbacks had you not anticipated when you started (i.e., what positive or negative things did you not consider at the start)?
11. Please tell me about your experiences with the ABLE project.
    - What do you think has worked?
    - What do you think has not worked?
    - Why?
12. Have you visited your partner?
    - When did you visit?
    - How did it go?
    - What did you learn?
13. How would you describe your relationship with your partner before you visited them in person? Why? Examples?
14. How would you describe your relationship with your partner after you visited them in person? Why? Examples?
15. In your opinion, what are the goals of the ABLE project?
    - What has been your experience in reaching those goals?
16. What are some of the barriers to communicating with your partner?
17. What are some of the facilitators to communicating with your partner?
18. Is it easy or difficult to communicate with your partner? Why or why not?
19. Were there instances where your partner did not understand what you were trying to share?
    - What happened? Why do you think this happened?
    - Were you able to get them to understand? How?
20. What have you learned from participating in the project?
    - How did you learn this?
21. What do you think you have taught your partner?
    - How do you think you did this?
22. Do you think the project has had an effect on the participating libraries?
    - What kind of effect?
    - How can you tell?
23. What kinds of things can you continue doing with your partner after the grant is over?
24. What kinds of improvements or changes do you think are needed to the project?
    - Anything that needs changed right now?

Any suggestions on what to do differently in the future?

25. To what extent has *culture* played a role in the partnership? Do cultural differences and similarities prevent or encourage the exchange of information, or play no role? How and why? Examples?
26. To what extent has *technology* played a role in the partnership? Does technology hinder or help the exchange of information, or play no role? How and why? Examples?
27. To what extent has *sharing a profession* played a role in the partnership? Do professional differences and similarities prevent or encourage the exchange of information, or play no role? How and why? Examples?
28. What *personal* attributes or characteristics (either yours or your partner's) do you believe have contributed to the outcome of your partnership? Why? Examples?
29. What *professional* attributes or characteristics (either yours or your partner's) do you believe have contributed to the outcome of your partnership? Why? Examples?
30. Are there any other factors that you believe have affected how you share information with your partner? Please list any and explain why.

APPENDIX Q: Final List of Questions for Individual Interviews (Coordinators)
Individual Interview Questions: Coordinators

1. Please tell me about the history of the ABLE project.

2. How did you come to be a coordinator in the ABLE project?
   (own professional background, how long participated, how joined)

3. Please tell me about your experiences with the ABLE project.
   What has worked?
   What has not?
   Why? Stories?

4. In your opinion, what are the goals of the ABLE project?
   (Check for diffusion of library practices, knowledge)
   What has been your experience in reaching those goals?
   Any stories that illustrate the success to reach these goals?
   Any stories that illustrate the failure to reach these goals?

5. From your own experience or from what you have heard from the participants, what are some of the barriers or facilitators to communication between the partners?
   Culture? *(value of libraries, appropriateness of actions)*
   Language? *(vocabulary, level of ability, gestures, distances)*
   Technology? *(e-mail communication, availability)*
   Other?
   How do any or all of these act as barriers or facilitators?

6. As coordinator, what have you learned from participating in the project?
   (values, not just know-what)
   How did you learn this?

7. From your observation and interactions with the participating librarians, what have you seen the librarians teaching each other? Stories?

8. Have you witnessed or heard about instances where the participating librarians had difficulty understanding each other and "missing the message"?
   What happened?
   Was it resolved? If so, how?

APPENDIX R: Final List of Questions for Individual Interviews (Library Directors)
Individual Interview Questions: Library Directors

1. How did you hear about the ABLE project?
2. Why did you want the library to join?
3. What has your library learned from the American library?
4. What do you think you have taught the American library?
5. In general, what can American libraries learn from Bulgarian libraries?
6. What in the ABLE project has worked well?
7. What in the ABLE project needs improvement?
8. What do you think the impact has been so far on Bulgarian libraries?

APPENDIX S: Transcription Protocol
Transcription Protocol

Transcription format

Times New Roman
12 point
1 inch margin all around
Flush left
Single space
Speaker's code before each new line speaking, on same line (ex: CO1:)
Save in appropriate sub-folder in DISS folder as Rich Text Format
File name: CODE DATE (ex: CO1 3May05)

Transcription procedure

1. Re-read interview notes
2. Open Microsoft Word document
3. At top of page, write participant code, date interviewed, audiotape label, topic
4. Two lines return, then start with transcription
5. Make notes of ideas on separate sheet (labeled CODE DATE notes)
6. Save in appropriate sub-folder under DISS folder
7. Re-read transcription while listening again to interview
8. When completed, mark audio tape with "T"

Transcription rules

Do not transcribe all words in "conversation analysis" format.
Do not transcribe encouraging noises made by non-speaking interview participant
Write out word reductions (shoulda, oughta, gonna)
UNLESS mimicking another speaker
Do not clean up the transcript; leave slang, jargon, foul language, grammatical errors

Transcription notation

Speaker	Code
Short pauses (less than one second)	Ellipses (…)
Long pauses (more than one second)	[X second pause]
Pausing/agreeing noises	Umm, mm-hmm, uh-huh
Noises	[Laughter] [Coughs]
Interruptions	[Phone rings]
Unclear speech	[word?]
Emphasis, loud voice	CAPS
Tone other than normal conversation	[tone] at beginning of each tone type
Paraphrasing others	[mimicking voice] and quotes around text
Interrupting	Hyphen at end of text being interrupted [interrupting] on line of interrupting speaker
Overlapping	[overlapping] on any lines of overlapped speech
Inaudible	[inaudible] Note if longer than one word
Sensitive information	= before and after word(s) =John Doe=
Notes from interview	<notes>

SOURCES:
McLellan, E., MacQueen, K. M., & Neidig, J. L. (2003, February). Beyond the 1ualitative interview: Data preparation and transcription. *Field Methods, 15*(1), 63-84.

Poland, B. D. (2002). Transcription Quality. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.). *Handbook of interview research: Context & method* (pp. 629-649). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX T: Member Check Form –Follow-up E-mail

To American participants:
Hello [NAME]!

How are you? How is the library? It feels like forever since I was there to interview you. How time flies, especially when you're transcribing all these interviews!!

I am happy to report though that I finally have them ready for feedback. I hope you can take some time to answer some more questions and provide some documentation. I realize this is a busy season, so anything you can help me with would be appreciated.

Let me explain the attachments. First, the document titled "member check" gives the directions for all the stuff I'm asking of you now. So, read it first. The other document, titled "interview", is the transcript of our interview. I'd like you to read through it and see if there is anything you'd like to edit or add. The instructions for this are in the member check document. As always, please contact me if you have any questions.

Thanks a million, [NAME]. I'm finding out some really interesting things from the interviews and I look forward to hearing back from you with more!

To Bulgarian participants:
Hello [NAME]! Zdravei!

How are you doing? I hope everyone at the library is fine. Please tell everyone I say hello!

I have to ask a favor of you. I only now realized that I never sent out the transcripts from my interviews with my Bulgarian friends. I am going to send it to you now and I hope you will have some time to review it and answer the questions on the attached sheet.

Please do not worry about any grammatically incorrect English you may see in your transcript. Remember, we were having a conversation and correct and complete sentences do not happen in conversation! :-) So do not worry about the quality of your grammar - I only care about the quality of your thinking. And you - as well as everyone I interviewed - had very, very good and interesting thoughts about the ABLE project!

So, I am attaching two files. The first one (labeled "member check") is the sheet of extra questions I have for you based on our interview. Please read it before reading the transcript (the second file).

One more request - please send me any e-mail you have exchanged with your partner.

Thank you for everything! If you have ANY questions, please send me an e-mail. I have learned so much already and I am looking forward to your responses!

APPENDIX U: Member Check Form—Follow-up Document

FINALLY! Here is the transcript from our interview, after so long. I apologize for the tardiness!

Now I need your help for the following things…

1. Please read the transcript to see if you wish to add to or edit any comments you said.

If you wish to print it out, write directly on it, and then mail it back, that's fine.

If you wish to use the commenting function on Word, that is fine too.

If you want to write directly in the text of the transcript, please use a different font type, font size, or underline so I know there is a comment there.

2. Please provide answers to these follow-up questions. Don't hesitate to ask me if you have questions about the questions!

You can write answers under the questions on this document.

You can send a reply to each question in an e-mail.

You can contact me to arrange an in-person interview by telephone or instant messaging.

3. Please provide any documents that are associated with the partnership.

4. Finally, (as if I haven't asked you for enough already!), please gather the e-mail exchanged between you and the participants in Sofia, starting with the first one (if you kept it).

In the informed consent you signed, I said that the e-mails would be requested by Nancy Bolt and be stripped of identifying characteristics.

We can go that route, but given Nancy's schedule, it will be easier if you can send them straight to me.

HOWEVER, I promised you anonymity, so if you do not feel comfortable sending it straight to me, we will make arrangements with Nancy.

Whether you send them to Nancy or to me, please copy and paste the e-mails into a word document so they are all together. Then send it as an e-mail attachment.

APPENDIX V: Moderator Guide for Focus Group Interviews
Focus Group Moderator Guide

Welcome participants
Sit participants in circle
Tape recorder in middle

Explain purpose of interview:
Learn about each other
Review experiences of partnership: compare/contrast

Conferences:

- Tell me about your partnerships – have you visited or hosted your partner?
- What has worked or not worked in your partnership?
- Have you learned anything from your partner? What?
- Have you taught anything to your partner? What?
- What has affected how you share knowledge with your partner?

Visits:

- How has the visit been?
- What are your overall impressions?
- What have you learned about the host country?
- What have you learned about the library profession?
- Do you see any application for what you've learned here in your home library?
- You came here to strengthen relationships, do you think that happened? Why or why not?
- Has any professional knowledge been imparted or received? Why or why not? Stories?
- How do you think culture plays a role in diffusing information? Stories?
- How has communicating across a language barrier affected the transfer of information?
- What form of communication do you think works best for transferring information: mass media or interpersonal? Why?
- What differences in social structure in the library compared to home have you noticed? How would this affect the diffusion of information?

APPENDIX W: Document Cover Sheet
Document Analysis Sheet

Document Title	
Type ___ Official document ___ Meeting notes ___ E-mail ___ Newspaper article ___ Newsletter article ___ Other:	Location

Date written	
Author(s)	
Author(s) Role(s)	
Audience	
Topic	
Summary	
Special Features	
Notes	

APPENDIX X: Journal Prompting Sheet

Thank you for agreeing to keep this journal while you are abroad. I would rather be able to travel with you on your entire visit, and talk with you directly about what you are experiencing, but unfortunately that is not possible. This is the next best thing though, and I hope you will realize how important your contributions are to the study. I know journaling is not for everyone, but I hope you will find this journal a handy place to jot down thoughts and impressions of your visit, as well as any "travel notes". I hope you will be able to write everyday, but I know how tiring a visit such as this can be. Please just try your best to capture your impressions, opinions, and thoughts about your experiences. I am including here a brief list of questions that might help stimulate writing, but you certainly are not limited to these! You will get to keep this journal, so I hope you will create a document you will enjoy reading later on.
Thank you again, and happy writing!

How are you feeling?
What did you do today?
Who did you visit with?
What part of today's activities really stood out for you? Why?
Do you feel like you shared any professional knowledge or practices with your hosts today?
Why or why not? What happened? How can you tell it was received?
Did you learn anything new about the library profession today? What did you learn?
How did you learn this? What do you think about what you learned?

APPENDIX Y: Data Handling Protocol

Data Handling Protocol

Individual Interviews

Transcribe using Transcription Protocol
- Save as .doc
  - Label: Geo code + Participant number
  - Deposit in N-Vivo
- Save as .rtf to send for member check
  - Label: Interview

Prepare member check document
- Save as .doc
  - Label: Geo code + Participant number + MC
  - Deposit in N-Vivo
- Save as .rtf to send for member check
  - Label: Follow up

Prepare interview notes
- Save as .doc
  - Label: Geo code + Participant number + N
  - Deposit in N-Vivo

Receive interview
- Save as .doc
  - Label Geo code + Participant number + R
  - Deposit in N-Vivo

Receive member check document
- Save as .doc
  - Label: Geo code + Participant number + MCR
  - Deposit in N-Vivo

Focus Group Interviews

Transcribe using Transcription Protocol
- Save as .doc
  - Label: Geo code + FG + Number
  - Deposit in N-Vivo

Documentation Collection

Prepare Document Analysis Sheet
- Save as .doc
  - Label: <descriptive title>
  - Label: Geo code + Participant number + <descriptive title>
  - Deposit in N-Vivo

Observation

Key in observation notes

Save as .doc

Label: Geo code + Participant number + Day number

Deposit in N-Vivo

Participant Journals

Review formatting of documents

Save as .doc

Label: Geo code + Participant number + J

Deposit in N-Vivo

Reflexive Journal

Transfer to MS Word

Save as .doc

Label: Date

Deposit in N-Vivo

APPENDIX Z: Data Analysis Protocol
Data Analysis Protocol

Demographic Coding
- When: Document is received
- In "Document Properties":
  - Individual Interviews: Date, Gender, Locale
  - Focus Group Interviews: Date, Number of participants, Locale
  - Document: Participant code, Date collected, Type
  - Observation: Date(s) observed, Participant codes
  - Participant Journals: Dates covered, Date collected, Participant code
  - Reflexive Journal: Date written, Topic

Open Coding
- When: Following demographic coding
- First pass through document
  - Identify and code selection/source with existing nodes
- Second pass through document
  - Identify and code selection/source with new nodes

Axial Coding
- When: Following open coding
- Review "Free Nodes"
  - Access associated documents if necessary
  - Sort into "Tree Nodes"
- Review "Tree Nodes"
  - Access associated documents if necessary

Memos
- When: As necessary
- Write memos in "Memos" folder
- Back up copies of memos to Word
- Send memos through open and axial coding

Appendix AA: Attributes of Implemented Items

Practice	Advantage?	Observable?	Testable?	Simple?	Compatible?	Acceptable?	Implemented?
Bulgarian Participants							
Providing community-topic info	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Story-time, children's activities	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Invite press to everything	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Bookmarks, give-aways	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Know what citizens need	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
Webpages	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
Service to patrons outside building	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
National Library Week	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Organize library for easy patron use	+	+	-	-	+	-	+

Practice	Advantage?	Observable?	Testable?	Simple?	Compatible?	Acceptable?	Implemented?
Volunteers teaching classes	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
Encourage populace to vote	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
Librarians working together	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
Computer cataloging support	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
Make partners with other orgs	+	-	-	-	+	-	+
Library has to search for sponsors	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
Librarians seek advocacy from gov't	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
American Participants							
Taking time with patron	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Food, drink, *martenitsas*	-	+	+	+	+	+	+

Appendix BB: Attributes of Non-Implemented Items

Practice	Advantage?	Observable?	Testable?	Simple?	Compatible?	Acceptable?	Implemented?
Bulgarian Participants							
Separate circulation/reference	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
Open lay-out of building	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Volunteer for community	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Participate in campaigns w/other orgs	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Replace paper circulation records	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
American Participants							
May 24th holiday	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Space in bookstore for library display	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Community History departments	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Shorter hours for library	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Creative solutions to budget constraints	-	+	-	-	-	-	-

I, Rebecca Leigh Miller Banner, hereby submit this dissertation to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctoral degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available for use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involves potential financial gain will be allowed without written permission of the author.

Signature of Author

29 May 2008

Date

The Intercultural Transfer of
Professional Knowledge in International Partnerships:
A Case Study of the American Bulgarian Library Exchange

Title of Dissertation

Signature of Graduate Office Staff Member

5-29-08

Date Received