

<b>MERIDIAN</b>
<b>Nora Skaburskiene: Bursieri în America</b>

**Bursieri în America**de **Nora SKABURSKIENE**

*Rezumat: În cadrul unui proiect al Fundației pentru o Societate Deschisă, bibliotecari din țări foste comuniste au beneficiat de un stagiu de trei luni în Statele Unite. Deși valoroși, aplicanții români nu au fost selecționați.*

*(Library of Congress; Soros Foundation; stagii profesionale)*



We should thank for the coincidence of historical events that have brought Karl Popper, the professor of logic and scientific method, and the famous American philanthropist, George Soros, together.

We appreciate the profound influence of Popper's philosophy, articulated in his book *Open Society and Its Enemies*, on Mr. Soros's philosophy and his philanthropic activities.

The "Open Society" philosophy is based on recognition that nobody has a monopoly on the truth, that different people have different views and interests, and that there is a need for institutions to protect the rights of all people to allow them to live together in peace. We have found out that the Library of Congress representatives share the identical principles that result in regularly organized LC/Soros Visiting Fellows Programs. In 1999, a small group of 12 enthusiastic and open-minded female librarians arrived in Washington in order to experience the internal mechanism of the global library structure in a democratic and open society.

It has been a great opportunity for all the Soros Fellows to study at LC and learn a great deal about its ongoing projects, numerous activities and services provided for the Congress and citizens of the USA. We have found LC a remarkable resource not only for scholars, researchers, and individuals, but also for library professionals from all over the world.

Luckily enough, we came here just in time to observe the process of transformation from the old library system to the new ILS. Having heard so much about that, we can only feel sorry that we will not be able to see the new system when operational. Still, we are impressed by the enthusiasm of the librarians and the appropriate organization of all the training programs.

LC has provided us with a great deal of theoretical knowledge on working habits in libraries as well as the American librarianship and has well prepared us for practical every-day jobs at different libraries in the Washington area. We also do appreciate the efforts of every single librarian at our host libraries who has helped and encouraged us to see the library's world with the information needs of its patrons. Everything we have learned there comes from the practical needs and the different tasks which are associated with these libraries. We highly value the skills we have acquired during our internship.

All of us arrived in Washington as a group of complete strangers but now, three months later, we will be going home as close friends, friends forever. It is not just the invaluable professional training that we have gone through in these three months, but it

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has also been a personal experience, learning a lot about and from each other, although it has not always been easy to express our inner thoughts and emotions in a foreign language.

For most of us this was the first time in America, but we hope not the last. There is so much to tell our families and friends about the places we have been to. The names of different places will probably pass into oblivion within a few years but we will always remember smiling faces of all those people we have met inside and outside the libraries. We would like to express our deepest thankfulness to all of them for having taken such good care of us and making our stay so pleasant and enjoyable. We will return home with unforgettable experience and evergreen memories. All the people there in America kept us always so busy that there has almost been no time and no reason to feel homesick.

During these three months we have had plenty of time to think about the Americans as well as America, and lots of people asked us the same question: what has most impressed us in America? We will be happy to share our impressions, expectations, and emotions with all of you, readers of *Biblos*.

“A mixture of different cultures, races, and languages. Nobody really pays attention to your foreign accent.”

“One can find the whole world in just one city.”

“Wherever I go, people are so polite and attentive to my needs.”

“Open, positive, and optimistic people are the treasure of America.”

“ Washington is a big, clean and picturesque city.”

“ The Smithsonian Museums are the best and what’s more, they are all for free.”

“Library of Congress reminds me of a huge factory.”

“ Washington is a marvellous green city with lots of gardens and parks. I was especially impressed by its azaleas and the traditional Cherry Blossom Festival.”

“America has a very high standard of living with all different kinds of opportunities for their citizens.”

“ Disabled and handicapped people are treated as equal members of the society.”

“Librarians are here for patrons, not patrons for librarians.”

“A vast land where you need to travel for hours to get to another state.”

“A country of many varieties and choices. You have the freedom to make up your mind and do whatever you want to with your life.”