



International Federation of Library
Associations and Institutions



The Information Point
(The Government Libraries Section Newsletter)

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Note from the Editor

This is the official newsletter of the Government Libraries Section of IFLA. It is published twice yearly.

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Views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the Section Officers or the Editor.

We would like to see more representation from all the continents and would welcome a volunteer from each continent to supply a continental update to the newsletter—if you are interested then please contact the Editor.

Copy can be submitted to the Editor Patrick.Ryan893@mod.uk in plain ASCII text format, MS Word format or in the body of an email message. Accompanying photographs are welcome.

FEEDBACK

We welcome your feedback to the newsletter editor at Patrick.Ryan893@mod.uk

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Chair's Column

Welcome

Colleagues and Friends!

It has been merely four months since our outstanding IFLA Durban annual conference. At this conference I was elected to lead the Government Libraries Section once again after a two-year hiatus. A debt of thanks is owed to Nancy Bolt, chair from 2005-2007, who was the impetus behind the ambitious, multi-year project to write guidelines for government libraries which is discussed elsewhere in this newsletter. We also extend our thanks to Rob Klaverstijn (The Netherlands) for his long-time service as our secretary/treasurer and to Christine Wellems (Germany) for her work as Information Coordinator.

During the Durban conference we came up with our theme for the IFLA Québec conference for August 2008. The overall conference theme is *Libraries Without Borders: Navigating Towards Global Understanding*. The program theme for the Government Libraries Section will be *Conquering Barriers – The Politics of Information: Communication, Collaboration, and Content*. A call for papers appears on the IFLA Québec conference site at <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla74/call-gov-en.htm> which explains in detail the types of papers we are seeking.

In addition to our Section program, we will jointly sponsor a two-hour program with the Law Libraries Section, Government Information and Official Publications Section, and Library and Research Services to Parliaments entitled *The Seal of Approval: Official and Authentic Law in Digital Form* which will look at authentication of official digital legal information and government documents.

I look forward to working with and sharing ideas from our seven new members of Government Libraries, five of whom have never been an elected member of any IFLA section before. All current members appear on the last page of this issue and we encourage readers to write to us with comments and ideas. Each section may have up to five corresponding members. Such members are not elected members and may not vote on issues before the section but their interest is appreciated and their involvement in the past has proven to be valuable. Corresponding members may not always be able to attend an annual conference but this should not diminish their interest and input. Presently, we have three corresponding members (Mali, Sweden and the U.S.) and the chair may appoint two more. If you share our interests and would like to be a corresponding member, please email the chair. Like elected section members, corresponding members will be added to our email list and will participate in our email deliberations throughout the year.



Government Libraries Section Annual Report

This has been a very good year for the Government Libraries Section. For the first time, the section held a mid-term conference in Cardiff, Wales, attended by 32 librarians from Europe, the US, and India. The theme of the conference was *Government Libraries: Creating Impact from Information*. Key speakers were Claudia Lux, (Germany) IFLA incoming President; Arwel Jones and Dr. Geraint Evans at the National Library of Wales; Ian Snowley, President of CILIP (Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals); Ian Thomson, Director of the South Wales Europe Direct Information Center; and Mary Bone, Chatham House Think Tank Librarian. Another key activity was to

review the first full draft of the *Guidelines for Government Libraries*.

At the IFLA Annual Conference in Durban, the Section sponsored two programs. The first was entitled *Government Libraries: Approaches to Multi-lingual Collections and Services* and featured four quality papers: Rebecca Davies (paper delivered by Patrick Ryan) from the Welsh Assembly Library, Cardiff, Wales; TF Constable and Mrs. Motsarome Mebena from the University of South Africa; Ching-Chih Chen, from Simmons College, Boston, USA; and Areceli García Martín from Madrid, Spain. A second program was the second hearing on the *Guidelines for Government Libraries*.

Three newsletters were also published by Newsletter Editor, Patrick Ryan. Patrick also produced a brochure about the section for distribution at the Durban conference. The election of the new Standing Committee resulted in a SC of 12 people.



**CDL: Heads of Profession
for Library and Information
Management**

Sue Westcott, Hon Secretary

At the recent pre-IFLA conference in Cardiff, delegates shared experience on what worked well in their libraries and the government departments they worked in. During that discussion the arrangements in the UK for cross departmental working were described and it was suggested that colleagues might be further interested in how this worked.

CDL, which stands for the Committee of Departmental Librarians, is the cross-government committee of all 25 heads of profession for UK central government departments. It was established over 50

years ago and has the recognition of the Cabinet Office and other key parts of government as the “voice” of the library and information profession in government. It is not however an official body, it is funded by each member department contributing a fixed sum to projects annually and relies heavily on the work of committee members on top of their day jobs, although official time is allowed for this activity. It has a small secretariat consisting of a Chair, Vice Chair (who also represents us at high level meetings across government, as our Head of Profession), Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. It meets formally 3 times a year and has a number of sub-groups working on areas such as policy, training and development, disaster planning, co-operative procurement and negotiations with the copyright collecting agency in the UK. Some of these groups are permanent, having an agreed programme of work each year, others are task and finish groups which will come to an end when a piece of work is finished. It has both a constitution and a vision statement to underpin its work.

Recent achievements have included the setting up of a knowledge council, across government, to ensure that knowledge management develops properly, several cross-government procurement agreements for electronic publications and the establishment of a shared competency framework which all departments will use for recruitment and development of staff. By working together we can ensure that government as a whole is properly supported by its information managers, that we are recognised and valued, and staff have the best career opportunities possible. It also enables informal networking and support amongst senior colleagues as we cope with the demands of the changing world around us.



Durban Conference: A Personal View

By Patrick Ryan, MOD London

Another year, another IFLA opening ceremony and this time, in Durban, South Africa. The opening ceremonies are like the Olympics, an opportunity for the hosting country to show off its assets. I was reminded of this as the hostess went through a full a-z of all the countries in attendance. There followed some singing which built up to an emotional speech by Justice Albie Sachs of the Constitutional Court of SA. Sachs, a lawyer and a playwright, lost an arm and sight in one eye when a bomb was placed in his car by South African security agents in 1988 while he was in exile in Mozambique. 'Libraries are boring', Conferences are boring' Is there anything more boring than a conference of Librarians? – he asked his audience. We intended to dispel this myth.

His delivery was certainly not boring. Utilising mixed media, he even sang unaccompanied half way through his delivery. He paid tribute to school libraries and to the librarian who kept him in books while in prison and to those who helped him assemble a legal library for SA. In these tributes he spoke of libraries for social change and he opened my eyes once more to the value of libraries. Mobile libraries in SA are essential; as are school libraries. Living as I do in a country where there is a lot of debate on the value of libraries it is a fitful reminder that in SA there is an acceptance that libraries are essential. They know why – maybe in the developed world we are in danger of forgetting why. Development should not suggest that you do not need libraries to continue to develop. This is what I like about IFLA, it reinforces my values as far as libraries are concerned and drives out the scepticism I develop day-to-day.

The other thing about IFLA is that it brings me back to an operational level. It gives me time to concentrate away from

the politics of delivery to value of delivery and how it can be delivered. To hear some papers brings them life. You can read the papers on the website but you will miss Helen Partridge bringing to life her work on how people search for information. [www.ifla.org/IV/ifla73/papers/133-Partridge-en.pdf]. Choosing Helen's 'finding out about information' turns out to be one of the harder study options for her students – particularly her IT students! Even harder when they chose the option, thinking it would be an easy call.

One of the things about IFLA though, is that it is a mixed bag. You do need a survival guide. Don't make a detailed plan, for if you do, be prepared to break it. Just dip into sessions, get up and go as soon as you have heard what you came to hear and dip in somewhere else. Taken like this it develops the critical faculties. IFLA develops the soul and inner patience

I found particularly useful the updating session on digitisation from national libraries around the world. A discussion on the need for bibliographic data in the modern world and a stimulating talk on Web 2.0 by an IT librarian who questioned the need for what most of us have done in the past – never mind what we will do in the future. Another interesting session was on the use of *second life* for libraries, which showed me how far away we really are travelling from the traditional library. The buzzword is a convergence culture where people want music, text and film – extracts of which comprise their information requirements. Second life could allow us to partake in such a transformational agenda – how many of us are preparing for and pursuing this?

And so another conference ended. More than 200 papers are on the IFLA website at www.ifla.org/IV/ifla73/programme2007.htm. I urge you to read them.



Call for Papers

Government Libraries Section Theme: "Conquering Barriers — The Politics of Information: Communication, Collaboration, and Content"

Today's information professional must deal with a variety of competing interests. We cannot operate in a vacuum and must learn to partner with colleagues, information providers and others with a vested interest in our success. We are seeking papers which discuss real library and information center examples where you may have had to break down some barriers between librarians, the information providers and the end users.

Perhaps an information provider was once considered a threat to your survival but you collaborated with the provider to provide a service. Perhaps there were internal office or organizational politics that posed barriers to the provision of information but were overcome by successful communication. Some information professionals may have worked closely with an information provider to customize content that would work in your office environment.

Tell us about it. Share your experience.

Please send a detailed abstract (1 page or at least 300 words) of the proposed paper (must not have been published elsewhere) and relevant biographical information for the author(s)/presenter(s) by 1 February 2008 via email to Rebecca Davies at: rebecca.davies12@wales.gsi.gov.uk

The abstracts will be reviewed by members of the Government Libraries Section. Proposals selected will be identified by 29 February 2008. Completed papers will be due by 25 April 2008. Papers should be no longer than 15 typed pages. A maximum of 20 minutes will be allowed for a summary delivery of the paper during the Section's Open Programme in Québec. Members of the Section will work with authors to ensure a quality and timely paper.

Please note that the expenses of attending the Québec conference (including travel, conference fee, and any other expenses) will be the responsibility of the author(s)/presenter(s) of the accepted papers.



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