



Section on Government Information and Official Publications

Newsletter February 2002

In This Issue:

1. Introduction
2. Call For Papers, Glasgow 2002
3. Annual Report, September 1999- August 2000
4. Section Contacts

1. INTRODUCTION

The *GIOPS Newsletter* is intended as a brief update to all on achievements and on progress made by the Section. The *Newsletter* was last published in October 2000. It is the hope of the

Standing Committee that we will be able to maintain a more regular schedule in the future.

2. CALL FOR PAPERS

68th IFLA Council and General Conference, Glasgow 18-24th August 2002

Theme: *Devolution & Evolution: The Impact of Supra-National and Local Governments on Information Policy and Handling*

The Standing Committee of GIOPS invites information professionals, policy makers, and political scientists from the UK and wider EU; USA, Canada and Mexico (states in the NAFTA region); South America (states in the MERCOSUR region) to submit paper proposals which provide perspectives and detail experience on how different levels and forms of government shape approaches in generation, management and dissemination of governmental information. In particular, consideration should be given to the different forms and levels of government that many countries are now required to reconcile: central, regional/devolved, trade-orientated, etc.

Key Threads

Proposals may focus on, but are not limited to:

- interconnectivity of information programmes and outlets
- potential conflicts in the legislative information processes of national, regional and supra-national approaches
- developing skills requirements on the part of librarians and information professionals
- comparative analyses of the over-riding points of
 - inter-relatedness
 - professional conflict in effective management of governmental information

Scope of Papers

Papers, which should have a practical bent, should aim to cover the following:

- What are the problems and issues faced?

- How are these tackled?
- What are the transferable skills to be learned?
- What is needed to manage the information and to keep on top of a constantly evolving dynamic?

Abstracts

Please email abstracts of one page by **15 February 2002** to the Committee Chair, Bruno Gnassi (bruno.gnassi@communication.gc.ca) with copies to bgnassi@rogers.com, Jane.Wu@fao.org, and Paul.Anderson@scottish.parliament.uk. Submissions should contain the following information: name, position, institution, address, tel. and fax numbers, email address. Notifications of abstract acceptance will be issued by **28 February 2002**.

The deadline for submission of full papers is **19 April 2002**. Papers should not exceed 20 pages, including references. Speakers will be allotted 20-30 minutes for the delivery of their paper at the GIOPS open session. Notifications of acceptance of papers will be issued by **17 May 2002**. In order to be included in the conference papers, a camera-ready copy or RTF file will be due by **30 June 2002**.

Please note that all fees, including registration to the conference, travel, accommodation etc. are the responsibility of the authors of the accepted papers.

2. ANNUAL REPORT, SEPTEMBER 1999 THROUGH AUGUST 2000 (report submitted 11 January 2001 by Helen Sheehy)

Scope

The Section promotes the discovery, collection, bibliographic control, preservation and dissemination of information from and about governments, inter-governmental organizations and public non-governmental organizations.

Membership

The Section has 20 standing committee members and 2 corresponding members. Section membership stands at approximately 120 members.

Meetings

The Standing Committee held two meetings at the Annual Conference in Jerusalem. Fifteen committee members attended the meeting. Several subcommittees, including the Conferences Subcommittee, Publications Subcommittee, Seminars Subcommittee, and the Eastern European Development Subcommittee met separately during the course of the conference. Committee work centered on outstanding projects and planning for the Boston 2001 conference.

Projects

Projects completed:

- The Action Plan for 2000-2001 was updated.
- Translation of the GIOPS brochure from English into Russian, Spanish, French, and German has been completed. These will soon be available on the IFLA web site.
- Translation of the papers from the GIOPS, Russian State Library, and the Parliamentary Library of the Russian Federation sponsored professional seminar which was held in May 1999 has been completed. The papers are available on the World Wide Web. (See publications below.) Work on publishing in alternative formats continues. Special thanks go to SC member Emma A. Voskanyan and the staff at the Russian State Library for the hard work they donated to translating the papers.
- A GIOPS position paper titled "Means of Deposit and Exchange of Public Documents and Information in Countries Without Fully Developed Information Infrastructures" was

finalized. Ms. Jane Wu chaired the subcommittee charged with writing the paper. The paper will be posted on IFLANET for comment.

Several projects are ongoing.

- The database for the *Directory of Government Information Specialists* is largely complete. Editing is proceeding, and the online version should be complete by early 2001.
- Planning continues for possible professional seminars in South America and the Middle East. These seminars would be similar in nature to the Russian & East European Seminar held in May 1999. Contacts have been made with government information specialists in these areas. The feasibility of holding these seminars is contingent on securing outside grants funding.
- A 1983 GIOPS paper defining an official publication was updated and rewritten by Johannes Metz. A subcommittee consisting of Johannes Metz, Bruno Gnassi, Emma Voskanian, and Sandra da Conturbia will work on final language and the definition will be posted on IFLANet.

Publications

Scientific and Practical Seminar. ***The Role of Libraries in Ensuring Public Access to Official Publications and Government Information.*** 24-27 May, 1999, Russian State Library, Moscow, Russian Federation Published electronically and available on the Russian State Library web site at URL: http://www.rsl.ru/e_new1_8.htm.

GIOPS Position Paper, as Approved by GIOPS, Jerusalem, 2000.

Means of Deposit and Exchange of Public Documents and Information in Countries Without Fully Developed Information Infrastructures. Published in the October 2000 Newsletter. It will be posted on IFLANET for comments.

Newsletter, October 2000. It will be posted on IFLANet.

Conference Programs

Open Session: The Section's program theme in Jerusalem was "2000 Years of Government Information." It was well attended and generated a significant amount of discussion among the attendees. Four papers were given.

1. ***Access to government information in Israel: stages in the continuing development of a national information policy. L'accès à l'information gouvernementale en Israël : les étapes de la mise en place d'une politique nationale d'information. DEBBIE RABINA (School of Communication, Information and Library Studies, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA). URL: <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla66/papers/018-160e.htm>***

Abstract

Israel does not have a long tradition or commitment to ensure access to government information. Historically, the contrary has always been true: no policy plan, no legislation, and no public discourse were created to encourage access to government information. Ministries and government agencies, such as the State Archive, always perceived the information gathered within their institution as their own. The first legislative steps to assure access government information came in 1981 in the form of the Privacy Protection Law, but implementation of the law was practically nonexistent until recently, and even now it is deficient. In such a reality the population never created a demand for

information. The public was submissive to this approach, and no objections were voiced against censorship in the press or against withholding of information by the government.

The 1990s saw an increased demand for a more comprehensive information policy and to enhanced access to government information. This can be attributed to several factors, among them the Oslo Peace Accords, signed in 1993, the lobbying efforts of the Coalition of Freedom of Information, which brought to the passing of the Freedom of Information Law in 1998, and by the desire to join the international community and comply with standards set in international treaties. As a result, the 1990s have seen an abundance of committees, reports, web sites, and legislation meant to regulate government information. Israel is now seriously considering for the first time, the need for a comprehensive information policy, and is coping with principles of freedom of information and with government controlled databases. A lot still needs to be done, and many areas are being overlooked, among them the vital role of libraries as a channel between Government and the public.

2. Controlling government: the people and the rule of law. Le contrôle du gouvernement : le peuple et l'autorité de la loi. ROBERTA I. SHAFFER (Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, USA). URL: <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla66/papers/046-160e.htm>

Abstract

This paper will briefly review how various cultures-ancient and modern-have used the power of publication, and the methods that they have employed in the context of the technology available to them and the ability of their people to understand the laws as promulgated. It will take a brief look at selected jurisdictions to compare and contrast how government information transformed or stymied innovation and social change.

3. The World Bank: partner and provider of development information. La Banque Mondiale: Partenaire et producteur d'information pour le développement. PAMELA TRIPP-MELBY (Joint Bank Fund Library of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Washington DC, USA) URL: <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla66/papers/019-160e.htm>

Abstract

The World Bank Group is a non-profit international organization founded in 1945 which provides loans, grants, and development assistance to developing countries. Through a new concept, the Comprehensive Development Framework, the World Bank seeks to make a wide variety of people and groups in borrowing countries full partners in the design of projects in order to enhance development aid effectiveness. The World Bank seeks further to involve partners in the launching of a new Internet portal site, The Global Development Gateway, which would bring together collaborators on the best of development knowledge. Other information initiatives underway to share the World Bank's global development expertise include the Archives of Development project, the World Development Sources, and others available via the organization's web site.

4. Judaic law in an Internet world. La loi à l'âge de l'Internet. ROBIN TREISTMAN (Knesset Website, Knesset Library, Hakiryá, Jerusalem). URL: <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla66/papers/020-160e.htm>

Abstract

As the Internet becomes more central in the daily life of the individual, the question arises how have various sociological groups adapted to this change. Specifically, this paper will deal with how those adhering to "ancient Jewish law" relate to the Internet and its related issues. What will be covered is a summary of the development of Judaic law, how it views something considered "neutral", and how various groups of observant Jews use or prohibit the use of the Internet.

Workshop: The Section also sponsored a very well received half-day, hands-on workshop on "Government Information on the Web." The Graduate School of Library Science at Hebrew University graciously provided outstanding facilities, technical support, and refreshments for the workshop attendees. Topics covered included a basic introduction to the World Wide Web, a lesson in search engines, and a tour of Web sites of governments, parliaments and international organizations. Time was allowed for individual exploration of the sites. The section developed a web site for the workshop, **Government Information on the Internet: a Primer**, which is available at <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/crsweb/docs/ifla/internet/primer.htm>.

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