IFLA. Government Libraries Section. Mid-term conference (Barcelona, April 22-23, 2010)
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Introduction to the IFLA Government Libraries Section

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Abstract
This paper tries to offer a clear and basic vision of what IFLA and the Government Libraries Section are and how they can help libraries and librarians. It describes the role of the Section, why and how a library, an association, an institution or an individual may join, and what could they do within the Section frame once they are their members.

Keywords
IFLA, IFLA Government Libraries Section, government libraries, international associations

1. Introduction to IFLA

1.1. Definition

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is the global voice of the library and information profession. It is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users.

IFLA provides librarians from all over the world with a forum for exchanging ideas, promotion of international cooperation, unifying library practices and advancing the cause of librarianship.

It was established in 1927 as an independent, international, not-for-profit, non-political, non-governmental organisation. It has around 1700 registered members in 150 countries, including associations, libraries, institutions and individuals.

The Royal Library, the National Library of the Netherlands, in The Hague, provides facilities for the IFLA headquarters.

IFLA bases its activity in three pillars:
- The society pillar, focusing on the role and impact of libraries and information services in society

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- The <u>profession</u> pillar, focusing on the professional practice and helping libraries and information services to fulfil their purposes.
- The <u>members</u> pillar, including services to members, management of their membership of IFLA, conferences and publications.

IFLA aims to:
- Promote high standards of provision and delivery of library and information services
- Encourage widespread understanding of the value of good library & information services
- Represent the interests of our members throughout the world

It represents a large number of library and information professionals worldwide, now estimated to be between 500.000 and 1.000.000.

1.2. Structure

IFLA has 6 Core Activities:
- ALP (Action for Development through Libraries Programme)
- CLM (Committee on Copyright and other Legal Matters)
- FAIFE (Committee on Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression)
- PAC (Core Activity on Preservation and Conservation)
- ICADS (IFLA-CDNL Alliance for Digital Strategies)
- UCA (UNIMARC Core Activity)

There are 48 Sections and 12 Special Interest Groups (SIGs), distributed among the following 5 Divisions:
    I. Library Types
    II. Library Collections
    III. Library Services
    IV. Support of the Profession
    V. Regions

E.g., Division I (Library Types) has the following Sections:
- Academic and Research Libraries
- Art Libraries
- Government Libraries
- Health and Biosciences Libraries
- Law Libraries
- etc.

And the following SIGs:
- Agricultural Libraries
- National Organisations and International Relations (NOIR)

There are Joint Activities as well:
- IFLA/IPA Steering Group
- World Summit on the Information Society

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IFLA is directed by the Governing Board. It is formed by 21 members, responsible for governance, financial and professional directions. Those are:

- President
- President-elect
- Treasurer
- Chairs of the Committees, Divisions, etc.
- Secretary General

There are 2 Committees:

- Professional Committee (12 members). Ensures coordination of the work of all the units within IFLA responsible for professional activities, policies, and programmes
- Executive Committee (6 members). Executive responsibility delegated by the Governing Board.

1.3. Annual conference

The World Library and Information Congress, General Conference and Assembly, is held once a year since 1927 (Edinburgh, Scotland), when IFLA was founded.
Last one took place in Milan (Italy) and next one will be on August 2010 in Gothenburg (Sweden).

1.4. Publications[1]

IFLA is responsible for several publications:

- *IFLA Journal*. Since 1975.
- *Publication Series*. The last volume is no. 141, *The History and Cultural Heritage of Chinese Calligraphy, Printing, and Library Work*.
- *Series on Bibliographic Control*. Latest volume is no. 39, *National Bibliographies in the Digital Age: Guidance and New Directions*.
- *International Cataloguing and Bibliographic Control (ICBC) Journal.*
- *Professional Reports Series*. Latest title is no. 118, *Richtlinien für Behördenbibliotheken* (the German language version of the Guidelines for Libraries of Government Departments, published by the Government Libraries Section).
- Newsletters from Groups (Divisions, Sections, etc.)
- Proceedings of the annual conferences. Available online.
- Other: guidelines, manifestos, statements, strategic plans.

1.5. Membership

Categories of membership and affiliation are:

- Associations
  - International
  - National
  - Other
- Institutions
  - Institutions
  - Institutional Sub-units
  - One-person Library Centres

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[1] More information and access to some publications on http://www.ifla.org/en/ifla-publications

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- o School Libraries
- Individuals
  - o Personal Affiliate
  - o Student Affiliate

There are different number of votes, fees and number of sections to register to.

1.6. Why join IFLA?

Librarians and information specialist may establish international contacts to further or evaluate their every day practice. IFLA membership may also broaden their professional horizon by contributing to library work in their specific area at an international level.

A good way to do that is becoming an IFLA member and getting involved in the many activities. IFLA and IFLA section activities are not limited to the annual conference but occur throughout the year.

The benefits of IFLA membership are:
- Meeting other information specialists in the same field
- Broaden professional horizon
- Be part of the international community
- Networking and collaboration
- Helping others & helping yourself (reciprocal benefit)
- Exchange of ideas
- Benchmarking and best practices
- Guidance and advisory (research, work and professional activities)
- Nominating and voting rights
- Publications
- Discounts

Members may register for one or more Sections. After that, they will be able to nominate one person for each Section they are registered in (associations and institutions can nominate, individuals cannot).

2. Government Libraries Section[2]

2.1. Government libraries

According to the *Guidelines for Libraries of Government Departments*, government libraries are:
- Libraries of the legislature (parliamentary libraries).
- Libraries of the executive (Government Ministries and Departments; Government Agencies, Organisations and Projects; state, regional and local governments; Diplomatic Missions and Embassies; and National libraries).
- Libraries of the judiciary (judicial libraries).

Some of those libraries are represented in other sections:
- Section no. 3: Library and Research Services for Parliaments (includes parliamentary libraries)

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[2] http://www.ifla.org/en/about-the-government-libraries-section

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- Section no. 1: National Libraries.
- Section no. 48: Law Libraries (includes judicial libraries)

2.2. Definition and planning

Government Libraries is Section 04 within the Division I: Library Types.

The Section encourages the growth and the development of government libraries by means of assisting in their mutual cooperation and by increasing awareness of the value of government information staff and services to the administration and to the citizenry. The Section is aimed at the community of libraries, information centres, archives, and documentation centres which are part of and work for a body with a governing task and which have, in any way, a political responsibility or connection.

Its objectives are:
- Promote government libraries and government information services
- Assist government libraries in working with each other
- Provide advice to librarians working in government libraries to better assist their patrons in utilizing government information
- Provide means for librarians in government libraries to exchange information and communicate with each other.

The current strategic plan (2010-2011) has the following 5 strategic goals:
1. Promote government libraries and government information service.
2. Expand the ability of government libraries staff and the members of the Government Libraries Section to communicate on issues, policies, and operations
3. Promote and evaluate the publication *Guidelines for Libraries of Government Departments*
4. Develop and maintain an online publication of mission and/or vision statements of government libraries worldwide.
5. Increase membership of the Section

2.3. Conferences

The Government Libraries Section sponsors at least one program at every IFLA General Congress that focuses on issues of interest to government libraries. Recent conferences included programs on providing services in multiple official languages, the politics of government information, information literacy in a democracy, and national information policies. Speakers from all around the globe have participated (China, Iran, Spain, Canada, Malawi, UK, South Africa, USA, Portugal, Japan, Germany, Brazil, Italy, Finland, China, Colombia, Argentina, Bulgaria, Mali…).

Here you are a list of the last programs within the IFLA General Congress, usually hold every August:

- 2010: Gothenburg, Sweden (forthcoming)
  - *Creating an International Legal Information Policy Agenda: Issues and Challenges* (with Law Libraries and Government Information & Official Publications Section)

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- *Librarians in Action: Information Policy & Human Rights* (with Law Libraries, Government Information & Official Publications Section, Knowledge Management Section, and the Preservation & Conservation Section)
- 2009: Milan, Italy. Session 133: *Transforming learning cultures: government libraries as the treasures within*
- 2008: Québec, Canada. Session 165: *Conquering barriers - the politics of information: communication, collaboration and content*
- 2007: Durban, South Africa. *Government libraries: approaches to multi-lingual collections and services*
- 2006: Seoul, South Korea. Sessions 78 and 110 (with Social Sciences Libraries): *Customer needs: the engines of change for government libraries and information centres; Partnership building with government and social science libraries*
- 2005: Oslo, Norway. Session 98: *Destination unknown? Piloting innovation in government libraries*
- 2004: Buenos Aires, Argentina. Session 81: *The role of information literacy in a democracy: how government libraries can help*
- 2003: Berlin, Germany. Session 129: *Changing governments, changing libraries*. Session 172: Off-site workshop.
- 2002: Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom. Session 81: *National information policies and the role of government libraries*
- 2001: Boston, United States. Off-site workshop: *Strategies for recognition - how to promote government libraries and services*

Sometimes satellite conferences, pre-conferences and mid-term conferences take place. These are unofficial events organised by the Section members.
So far they are:

- April 2010: Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain). Mid-term conference: *Case studies in government libraries*
- April 2007: Cardiff (Wales, UK). Mid-term conference: *Government libraries: creating impact from information*
- March 2006. Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). Mid-term conference: *Access to Information and Knowledge for Development*
- August 2005: Stockholm (Sweden). Pre-conference.
- August 2002: London (United Kingdom). Seminar / workshop: *Informing government: government library and information services in the information age.*
- 1999: Moscow (Russia). *The role of libraries in ensuring public access to official publications and government information.*

2.4. Publications
The Section is responsible for the following publications:

- *Annual reports*
- *Guidelines for Libraries of Government Departments*. By the by Government Libraries Section and the Government Information and Official Publications Section. Edited by Nancy Bolt and Suzanne Burge. Available in English, German, Russian and Japanese. More translations to come.
- *The Information Point*. Biannual newsletter.

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- *Minutes of meetings*
- Conference proceedings

2.5. Communication tools
The Section is offering the following communication tools, accessible from its web page:
- Wikis. These are built for specific purposes and only for registered users.
- Blog (http://blogs.ifla.org/government-libraries/). Open access. It is for the Sections' activities and for government libraries issues. Writing privileges only for Section members.
- Mailing list (govlib@infoserv.inist.fr). Its purpose is to facilitate discussion about government libraries and to encourage idea and information exchange on issues facing libraries and librarians today. Any librarian or information professional interested in this topic is welcome to subscribe.

These are means to interchange information that will help to grow a community of government librarianship.

2.6. Why register to the Government Libraries Section?
Once you decide to join IFLA, you may select one section for free and others for an additional fee. We hope that you select Government Libraries as your free section and participate in our online dialogues on everyday issues facing government libraries.

All the associations, institutions or librarians related to the government libraries field are welcome. The Section needs their support for the sheer potential value of information sharing. It intends to be a forum or community related to this specific topic.

Government Libraries is an open Section where people interact and collaborate. You will find help and feedback. For instance, what better way to find out how one government librarian handles or deals with one topic or problem than to ask another government librarian? Librarians everywhere like to help their fellow librarians, so just an e-mail response for assistance or idea can be very helpful.
Registered members will be able to use Section's tools like wikis, the blog and the mailing list.

Government Libraries works on a wide field and uses to collaborate (organising joint programs, etc.) with other Sections, for instance Law Libraries, Government Information & Official Publications and Knowledge Management sections)

In addition to IFLA general benefits, members of the Section receive email notifications of the availability of the biannual newsletter *The Information Point* and periodic email updates.

2.7. Becoming a registered member
Libraries, associations, institutions and individuals may just become a member of IFLA and register to the Government Libraries Section. There are different procedures and quotes depending on the type of affiliation.

Government Libraries Section has already up to 70 registered members all around the world, including libraries of government departments, national libraries, parliamentary

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libraries, agency libraries, international and national associations, and personal and student affiliates.

2.8. Becoming an elected member or a corresponding member

To be elected for the Government Libraries Section, you need to be nominated by a registered member and submit your nomination forms prior to the deadline set by IFLA. If there are less than 20 people already in the Section, your election will be automatic. If there are more than 20, the election will be made by the Section officers.

Elections are held for IFLA sections membership every 2 years. Next elections will be organised in February 2011.
Elected members make their service in 4-year term. Newly elected members are notified by late March of an election year. Term of service will begin with 2nd meeting of their 1st annual conference and end with the 1st meeting of their 4th conference.
They may be elected for 2 consecutive terms.

IFLA seeks a universal balance of membership on sections. Knowledge and skills of elected members complement the work of IFLA and the Section.

To be eligible as a corresponding member, you do not need to be nominated; you only need to apply for that. The Section will evaluate your candidature.
Each Section may have up to 5 corresponding members.

IFLA Government Libraries Section has 17 elected members and 5 corresponding members from different countries around the world.

2.9. Being involved as a Section member

Elected members form the Standing Committee. They can vote for the Chair, Secretary and Information Coordinator. They are expected to attend at least 3 of the 4 annual conferences. They can participate in all discussions, deliberations and planning, and assist with review of papers submitted for the conferences.

The Standing Committee has an Executive Committee, composed by the 2 officers: the Chair and the Secretary/Treasurer.
The Chair is the person in charge of the Section's work, the one who leads and represent it. He or she takes the final decisions.
The Secretary/Treasurer manages the financial and administrative affairs and maintains and records activities of the section.

There is also an Information Coordinator, responsible for editing the website and the management of the communication tools (wikis, weblog, email distribution list). Also, the IC collects news from members and prepares the biannual newsletter, The Information Point.

Both chair and secretary/treasurer must attend two Leadership Forum meetings held at the annual conference along with one officer training session. The Information Coordinator also attends an officer training session.

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Corresponding members are not part of the Standing Committee, but participate in the work of the section. Nevertheless, they have no voting privileges and they are not required to attend annual conferences.

The Government Library Section meets twice at the annual IFLA congress and once at the pre or mid-term conferences, when they take place. The meetings are open and visitors are invited to attend.

3. Conclusions

The IFLA Government Libraries Section wants to encourage government libraries and librarians to join it and to take advantage of the services and tools provided, as well as participating with new ideas or suggestions.
The Section was to become a big community or forum where every government library and library worldwide may find a place for exchanging information and professional development.

The Section is looking forward to working with you.