



The Library Services to People with Special Needs Section An Historical Overview

Introduction

In late 2008, IFLA approved a proposal by the Libraries Serving Disadvantage Persons Section (LSDP) to rename it Library Services to People with Special Needs (LSN). As was the case with previous name changes, this one was felt necessary, not only because it better reflected the section's current work, but also because the terminology surrounding its areas of concern had again significantly changed.*

Its new name notwithstanding, the section remains one of IFLA's oldest, dating to 1931. In that year, it was created as the Sub-committee on Hospital Libraries (patients' libraries), and its mission was to promote professional library services to hospitalized people - a group who, because they were confined, could not make use of regular library resources. Bibliotherapy, or the use of books and reading as aids to healing, was a second focus. But, the sub-committee soon saw that, due to a range of disabilities that often were secondary to the cause of hospitalization, some patients required special materials - sensory and mobility aids, for example - as well as special services. That need also became evident among community members confined for any number of reasons. Concerned with those needs and, by virtue of a diverse membership, well-positioned to address them, the sub-committee overtime expanded its focus to include people who for whatever reason were unable to use conventional libraries, materials and services.

Throughout its long and productive history, the section has remained remarkably true to its mission, thus it continues today to advocate for those in the community who cannot make use of conventional library resources. Those groups include: people who are hospitalized or imprisoned; elderly and disabled people in care facilities; the housebound; the deaf; and the physically, cognitively or developmentally disabled. Always blessed with standing committee members having broad expertise in their fields, LSN continues, among its other activities, to develop guidelines for library services to people with special needs. In the aggregate, those guidelines have been translated into fifteen languages and are used in many parts of the world. As of this writing, they constitute nearly fifty percent of IFLA's Professional Reports. (Not surprisingly, when the Professional Reports series was inaugurated in 1984, the section developed its first two publications.¹)

Background

LSN's forerunner, the Sub-committee on Hospital Libraries, was established August 29, 1931,² just four years after IFLA's own founding.³ It was the seventh sub-committee the Federation formed and the first to focus on library services to a special user group.⁴

* For the sake of historical accuracy, this overview has retained - and reflects - the terminology of special needs groups that was in use during the different eras of the section's development.

The sub-committee was formed in an era remarkably ready for an international hospital libraries group: the times had been witnessing growing interest in library services for hospital patients,⁵ a phenomenon fueled in part by the positive effect books and reading had on hospitalized military personnel during and after World War I;⁶ coincidentally, thanks to multi-national efforts beginning roughly in the late 1800s, that era was also witnessing the dawn of organized international collaboration in librarianship, at the heart of which was the founding of IFLA.⁷

Formation of the sub-committee was proposed by Marjorie E. Roberts, at the time, organizing secretary for the British Red Cross and Order of St. John Hospital Library.⁸ Roberts was an energetic, politically astute woman who was deeply passionate about the need to provide library services to hospital patients. Because she realized that library work in hospitals required unique expertise - particularly when reading was used as a therapeutic tool - she was also a zealous advocate of specialized training in the field. Finally, knowing something of the often vastly different ways in which patient library services were organized nation to nation, she further saw the worth of an international forum where different methods could be studied and ideas exchanged.

The catalyst for Roberts' proposal came through a (British) Library Association conference in Cambridge in 1930. The Association's first session on library services to patients was held there,⁹ and with Roberts as Chief Steward,¹⁰ it included descriptions of that work in Denmark, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US).¹¹ Subsequent informal talks among the session's attendees included reviews of patient library services in Germany and Sweden, and together with the formal session, seem to have given the group a sense of the benefits multi-national collaboration could bring: at discussion's end, a suggestion was made to form international alliance,¹² one that would, as Roberts later noted, fill the need for the "collection of information and exchange of opinion internationally."¹³

While it is unclear whether Roberts or the group as a whole chose to pursue affiliation with IFLA, nonetheless that organization must have seemed the perfect venue: it was an international body, and as such, offered widespread routes to existing hospital library services and for the promotion of such services where none existed; it was also an effective way to be in touch with municipal libraries, which in some countries bore the responsibility for the library services to patients; finally, it had a professional education sub-committee, perhaps important especially to Roberts.

The Sub-committee's Formation

In August, 1931, at IFLA's annual conference, that year held in Cheltenham, IFLA's then governing body, the International Library Committee (ILC, subsequently IFLA Council¹⁴) considered Roberts' proposal, a "Memorandum on the Need for an International Sub-committee on Hospital Library Services." In part, the proposal stipulated that the sub-committee would:

- collect information regarding methods of conducting the hospital library service in whatever countries it may exist;
- undertake such publicity as may be seem desirable so that the principle of hospital libraries...may become better known, and

- more widely established;
- ...[draw] up a recommendation with regard to the organisation of Hospital Libraries, based on its own study of existing programs ¹⁵

The proposal was approved and, beyond its merits, two prior events might have contributed to that. First, in a letter written the previous March to ILC member Henri Lemaître, Roberts talked at length about the importance of library services for hospital patients. Knowing that Lemaître would soon attend a public libraries congress in Algiers, she hoped to persuade him to open a discussion of the topic there.¹⁶ Second, Carl Milam – also an ILC member, chair of IFLA’s Public Library Sub-committee, and secretary of the American Library Association (ALA) – had become keenly aware of the benefits of providing reading material to hospital patients: he had seen it in the US growing out of the ALA’s work with hospitalized military personnel,¹⁷ and, as sub-committee chair, he had exposure to the movement outside of the US.¹⁸ So it seems that Roberts’ proposal went to IFLA with considerable advantage: two ILC members already recognized the growing interest in the field.

The ILC proposed Henri Lemaître as sub-committee president.¹⁹ Dr. Rene Sand, technical counselor to the League of Red Cross Societies, became representative at large of medical/hospital interests, and Roberts became secretary.²⁰

Early Years

The sub-committee's initial work centered on enlisting correspondents (members) and collecting as much current information on the field as was possible. To do both, it developed and sent a hospital library services questionnaire to representatives of library, health, or medical institutions in twenty-seven countries. The response rate was impressive: nineteen countries - representing Eastern and Western Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceania - answered, and nineteen people representing eighteen countries agreed to be correspondents.²¹

Lemaître discussed the survey results at IFLA’s annual conference in 1932 (Berne), noting in particular that the findings showed widespread physician interest in the sub-committee’s work.²² Wanting to encourage the interest, he recommended a collaborative relationship with the League of Nation's Health Section, an idea endorsed by William W. Bishop, IFLA's then president. Bishop went on to suggest that Dr. Tietse Pieter Sevensma, IFLA Secretary General and League of Nation’s Librarian, discuss with the League’s director "the possibilities of [such] collaboration."²³ Subsequent records are unclear, though, as to the specific benefits the relationship produced.

Meantime, Roberts - whom Lemaître once termed the "tireless propagandist"²⁴ – oversaw a set of hospital library resolutions passed by the International Hospital Association (IHA). In part they read:

- that a library for patients is an essential part of every hospital
- that all hospitals should provide the necessary space to maintain a central library for patients
- that books should be distributed to patients on a regular basis
- that each country should supply books to hospitals according to

- the methods most suitable to it
- that special attention should be paid to books / libraries in mental hospitals and sanatoria

The resolutions were adopted at IHA's annual conference in Belgium and reported by Lemaître when the sub-committee met in 1933 (Chicago; Avignon)²⁵

A significant event in those cornerstone years occurred shortly thereafter when Roberts formed, in England, the Guild of Hospital Librarians.²⁶ While the Guild's aims were in part similar to the sub-committee's,²⁷ the composition of the two groups differed greatly: the IFLA sub-committee consisted of practicing professionals - librarians, medical and hospital authorities – whereas the Guild included anyone working in any capacity with, or even just interested in, patient library services. In essence, the Guild formed a "link between professionals and volunteers and all other persons interested in that essential work."²⁸ In focus, it and the sub-committee ran side-by-side for many years, with Roberts as informal liaison.

Throughout the latter part of the 1930s, the sub-committee continued to assemble information on patient's library work internationally.²⁹ And, for the first of what would be many times, it considered extending its focus, in this case, to include two other groups of confined people - elderly men in hospices and prisoners.³⁰ Prisoners in particular were considered because in some countries they were served by the same public library unit serving hospital patients, thus the extended focus seemed fitting. But, action on both matters was deferred for a time.

Roberts herself remained active: she again reported on IHA's adoption of another set of hospital library resolutions;³¹ she continued to speak and write on the value of library services for patients; and she continued as liaison between the sub-committee and the Guild of Hospital Librarians. (To more accurately reflect its international character, the Guild was renamed in 1936: it became the International Association of Hospital Libraries, the International Guild of Hospital Librarians, and is said to have been the first international organization to join IFLA.)^{32, 33}

1940 - 1959

World War II suspended the sub-committee's activities. But, it began to be reconstituted in 1947 under the abundant energy of a new leader, or "rapporteur général," Paul Poindron, who took office upon Lemaître's death.³⁴ Attached to the Ministère de l'Education Nationale,³⁵ Poindron's immediate goal was reorganizing the sub-committee – specifically, reestablishing relations among former members and contacting non-member librarians working in the field. In part toward that end, he spearheaded a second international survey and presented lengthy reports on its findings when the sub-committee met at ILFA's 1947 annual conference (Oslo).³⁶

Following the reports, and partly based on them, Poindron developed a number of "recommendations" for patients' libraries centering on a belief that such libraries should be an integral part of any institution caring for sick people. Extensive and detailed, and meant to apply to hospitals, hospices, preventoriums, sanitariums, and recovery homes,³⁷ they were the earliest multi-national recommendations in the field

Like Roberts, Poindron deeply believed in the value of bibliotherapy as a therapeutic tool and he was successful in having many of his recommendations in that area supported. For example, under his guidance, the sub-committee resolved that:

- every mental hospital should have a library for its patients;
- methods used in the US, UK, and the Scandinavian countries for library services to mental hospitals should be brought to the attention of doctors and administrators of such hospitals.

The resolutions were endorsed by the Third International Congress of Librarians in Brussels in 1955.³⁸

Again like Roberts, Poindron was concerned with education for hospital librarianship, and his tenure saw development of a number of strategies for training practitioners in the field. They included recommendations for courses, practicums and conferences that could be adjusted for presentation at local levels. In particular, Poindron suggested that the conferences include non-librarians, for example, school of medicine faculties, and nursing and social work students – important, since those groups also focused on patient well-being.

To more effectively publicize its work, the sub-committee moved in 1948 to ask IFLA for permission to distribute its conference reports immediately at the close of the annual meetings. It also wanted the reports distributed to a wider audience that would include: UNESCO; the World Health Organization (WHO); the International Federation of Red Cross Associations; secretariats of international medical congresses; and international federations of physicians and hospital personnel. Subsequent correspondence indicates that that distribution continued for some years.

Finally, recognizing that a wealth of information on patient libraries had been - and continued to be - generated in many parts of the world, Poindron and the sub-committee agreed on the need for a bibliography on the field.³⁹ Eventually to become “as comprehensive a list as possible of books and articles relating to library services to the sick and handicapped throughout the world,”⁴⁰ it was a formidable project that would take several years.

In 1952, new IFLA statutes were adopted: in part, they renamed sub-committees committees, thus the Sub-committee on Hospital Libraries became the Committee on Hospital libraries. The new statutes also created standing advisory committees.⁴¹

The name change notwithstanding, the committee continued to promote library services to patients – be they from hospital-based libraries or through public library extension programs. Following Roberts' tradition of maintaining close ties with groups representing hospital authorities, it greatly strengthened its relationship with the International Hospital Federation (IHF), successor to IHA, with which it collaborated on a joint conference program for 1953.⁴²

The committee also strengthened its commitment to providing hospitalized handicapped readers with as broad a range of reading materials and aids as possible. It thus resolved that:

- microfilmed books in various languages should be created for severely handicapped readers; the size of those microfilms

standardized preferably to 35 mm;

- member states of UNESCO should obtain from their governments a general exemption of a) of copyright for the reproduction of microfilmed books for the disabled, and b) of carriages and custom dues for the exchange from country to country of microfilmed books intended for the projectors reserved for the used of handicapped patients.⁴³

When, in 1953, Poindron left the committee due to pressing work responsibilities, its leadership passed to Irmgard Schmid-Schädelin of Zurich's Bibliothekarin am Kantonsspital.⁴⁴ Just prior to her appointment, the committee moved to conduct another international survey⁴⁵ – the third since its founding - and Schmid-Schädelin subsequently organized the findings into a paper entitled “A study of the systems of hospital libraries in use in different countries.” Discussed at IFLA’s 1956 annual conference (Munich),⁴⁶ and at annual conferences over the next two years,⁴⁷ it led to development, along with some of Poindron’s recommendations, of the committee’s first standards.

Finally, the latter part of the 1950s saw the committee again propose recommendations for training for hospital librarianship, the goal of which was to foster international uniformity in that area.⁴⁸

1960 – 1969

The 1960s were years of vigorous activity. The committee: published its first two sets of standards; began assembling lists of patient-oriented health information titles; passed resolutions concerning exchange of recordings for the blind; began work on a massive retrospective bibliography of the field; compiled a list of foreign language books suitable for hospital patients; held its first joint session with another IFLA section; debated and subsequently changed its terms of reference; inaugurated a regularly scheduled newsletter; and began a system of distributing committee annual conference papers and reports to its members.

The first standards were issued in 1960 as *Memoire indicateur sur les bibliothèques d'hôpitaux*⁴⁹ and contained recommendations for: book collections; distribution of books to patients; staffing; equipment; budget; and services to hospital staff. The second, *IFLA Standards for Libraries in Hospitals*, were an expanded set and were written as a more practical alternative to a manual on hospital libraries the committee had considered developing^{50, 51} They were Issued as a part of a UNESCO *Bulletin*.⁵²

Having long advocated providing health information to patients, the committee moved to ask member countries' medical associations for lists of popular books that would help patients learn more about their health.⁵³ Continuing its concern with library services to the blind, and prompted by a communication from the State Library of Pretoria concerning exchange of recordings for the blind, the committee also resolved to work towards issuing a world list of agencies producing such recordings.⁵⁴

In 1964, IFLA adopted new statutes⁵⁵ that in part created Sections and Sub-sections, thus the Committee on Hospital Libraries became the Hospital Libraries Sub-section of the Public Libraries Section. Not long after, the newly-named sub-section moved to ask Mona Going, a British librarian active in hospital library work, to compile the international bibliography it had long considered.⁵⁶ Going agreed to take on the project, although it would ultimately be completed by her colleague, Eileen Cumming.

Difficulties in obtaining books in foreign languages for patients needing them also concerned the sub-section, thus it voted in the mid-1960s to ask correspondents to submit lists of titles representative of their country's literature. The aim was to produce a selection tool that hospital librarians could use in building foreign language collections for patients needing them.⁵⁷ Published in 1969 as *Reading Round the World*,⁵⁸ the compilation contained titles from twenty-two countries. Within the year, 1000 copies had been sold.⁵⁹

Because the term "hospital libraries" had overtime become identified with 'patients' libraries,' the sub-section voted in 1966 to change its name prior to outlining a new, expanded constitution. It chose the name *Libraries in Hospitals Sub-section* to replace the existing name, *Hospital Libraries Sub-section*, a subtle change, but one that would indicate its coverage of the "fuller services now being provided in most countries" (i.e., non-patient service as well).⁶⁰

The new constitution noted in part:

- the Sub-section would be concerned with library services (of a general nature) to hospital patients and staff and to disabled and handicapped (the blind, partially-sighted, physically handicapped) readers both inside and outside the hospital;
- the Sub-section may be concerned with medical library services in non-teaching hospitals where small medical collections are administratively organized by the same librarian responsible for the general library service. This would be from an organizational viewpoint only, and would not include the specific problems of medical bibliography;
- the Sub-section, while a Sub-section of the Public Libraries Section, shall be concerned with all types of service within its area of responsibility, not only those which are public library based.⁶¹

In 1966, to improve the flow of information and facilitate communication among sub-section members, the standing committee inaugurated its *New Bulletin*, one of IFLA's earliest. It also initiated a program whereby copies of papers due to be read at annual conferences were sent to sub-section members *prior* to the conference. (Many of those papers were subsequently published in *Libri* and *International Library Review*.)⁶² Follow-up reports on meetings were sent to members unable to attend the conferences.

Finally, the 1967 Sevensma Essay Prize was awarded to M. Joy Lewis, sub-section chair 1969-1972, for her essay on library provision and services for the handicapped.⁶³

1970 - 1979

During the decade, the sub-section organized and sponsored its first institute on hospital librarianship. It also published: its third standards for hospital libraries; a directory of technical reading aids; its landmark bibliography; and national statements on hospital library service. It further: incorporated libraries for the blind in its proceedings and subsequently worked to give those libraries heightened visibility within IFLA; changed its name to reflect a widening focus; and expanded its work on behalf of library services to mentally handicapped children.

The International Institute in Hospital Librarianship, thought to have been the first of its kind, was jointly sponsored by the School of Librarianship, Polytechnic of North London. Held in London, the week-long program drew participants from three continents.⁶⁴

*Standards for hospital libraries*⁶⁵ was published in 1973 and contained recommendations for library services, not only to hospital patients, but also to the elderly, the housebound, and the physically and mentally handicapped.⁶⁶ Besides their intrinsic value, the standards were important because they reflected and addressed the sub-section's new mission.

The long-awaited *International Directory of Technical Reading Aids* was completed shortly thereafter. Assembled from a questionnaire on reading aid equipment manufactured for handicapped people, it included current information on a range of items.⁶⁷

The sub-section's annotated bibliography, *Hospital and welfare library services: an international bibliography* was published, finally, in 1977. Its 2,164 entries covered the period 1863-1972 and included "aspects of library service to patients in all types of hospitals, to the homebound, the elderly, the physically handicapped (blind, deaf, etc.) and to the mentally disordered...whether in hospital or in the community."⁶⁸

The compilation *National Statements* reflected several countries' status of library services to hospital patients and other care institutions as well as to handicapped people. Edited by the sub-section's chair, it covered the period 1974-1976 and included information such as each country's population, percentage of hospitals beds, related legislation, library service organization, and collections.⁶⁹

Concerns with the needs of blind users became more formalized in the 1970s when the Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, the Library of Congress (US), asked the sub-section for help in establishing within IFLA "an international platform for libraries for the blind." As a first response, the sub-section conducted an international survey to determine if support for such a "platform" was likely. Finding that it was, it included a libraries for the blind session at IFLA's annual meeting in 1977 (Brussels) and subsequently recommended to the Professional Board that a working party for those users be set up.⁷⁰ The Board approved, and the newly formed working group for the blind⁷¹ went on to become a round table and subsequently a section, Libraries for the Blind.⁷² In 2008, its name was changed to Libraries Serving Persons with Print Disabilities.

In 1976, IFLA adopted new statutes, and they in part established Divisions and Sections. Consequently, the Sub-section on Hospital Libraries became a Section under the newly created Division of Libraries Serving the General Public. At the same time, it took on a new name, the section on Library Services to Hospital Patients and Handicapped Readers.⁷³ Besides more specifically reflecting the section's work, it was hoped that the new name, together with establishment of the Biological and Medical Sciences Libraries Section, would end the confusion as to whether the section covered *professional* medical library services in hospitals. Its new mission was:

- to consider matters concerning library services, of a general nature, to the staff, patients, and residents of hospitals and similar institutions;
- to consider matters concerning library services to the housebound and handicapped readers who are unable to use normal public library services.⁷⁴

Finally, in further support of handicapped users, the sub-section prepared a statement on library services to handicapped readers for inclusion in a revision of UNESCO's Public Library Manifesto.⁷⁵ It also held a joint session with the Children's Section where it agreed to co-produce a publication that would include expansion of the criteria of mental handicaps and a list of books suitable for children so diagnosed.⁷⁶ Published in 1984, it was IFLA's first Professional Report.

1980 - 1989

In the 1980s, in response to what it saw were clear international concerns for library services to disadvantaged groups previously not well-represented - specifically, prisoners, the deaf and those needing easy reader publications - the section once again redefined its terms of reference. The initial proposal for the change came in 1981 and concerned library services to prisoners.⁷⁷ The Professional Board agreed that the additional coverage was needed, but thought that the section should change its name to reflect that wider interest. It did so, choosing the new name, the Section for Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons (LSDP).⁷⁸ The new terms of reference became:

- the promotion of services to those members of the community who are unable to use library services available to others, e.g., hospital patients and people in penal institutions;
- the promotion of services to those who have difficulty using available library services, e.g., housebound people, and elderly people using centres or living in residential homes;
- the promotion of library services to people who are handicapped and who live in the community, e.g, the mentally and physically handicapped, including the deaf;
- to improve libraries in hospitals and to promote professionalism in this field;

- to provide a forum for discussion on the reading problems of the handicapped.⁷⁹

In the case of prison libraries, the section voted to establish a working group to organize and assess relevant interests. Once established, the group held an IFLA annual conference open session in 1985,⁸⁰ and the year after, held a joint pre-conference seminar during which it distributed the results of a survey it had conducted.⁸¹ With remarkable energy, the working group next held at the 1988 conference in Sydney an open meeting, a half day workshop, and a study tour of prison libraries. The following year, it organized a pre-conference seminar on Prison Library Services, and in 1990 - just five years after its establishment - developed a final draft of *Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners*. It also co-sponsored a workshop on administering prison libraries – “Build a child and you don’t have to repair the adult” - that featured examples from various countries.⁸² By the end of the decade - as a result of the working groups' sustained efforts - library services to prisoners had become a viable section focus, with international guidelines in that specialty about to be published.

Organized efforts to provide library services to deaf people took hold at an IFLA annual conference in the early 1980s, when the section agreed that deaf individuals, "were a large group of handicapped readers who have perhaps been neglected by librarians in the past." Subsequently, it set up a working group to address the problem, and once established, that group went on to hold an open meeting at IFLA's 1983 conference. The following year, the section issued an informational publication, *Deaf Newsletter*,⁸³ and soon after, developed and circulated for comment a draft training manual. It also sponsored a conference entitled "Opening doors for closed ears." Held in March, 1988, at the New South Wales State Library, the conference drew 145 delegates. That same year, at IFLA's annual conference, the section as a whole voted to draft a resolution offering consultative status to the World Federation of the Deaf.⁸⁴ Finally, and a major accomplishment for a group so young, the working group developed *Guidelines for library services to deaf people*; they were subsequently adopted and published.⁸⁵

Later in the decade, the section established a working group dedicated to the needs of easy reader patrons. The section's chair was to note:

...it is of utmost importance to promote the publication of easy readers. The pre-lingually deaf need easy-to-read books. So do many other handicapped and disadvantaged persons, e.g., the mentally retarded, people suffering from aphasia, dyslexia, concentration difficulties due to illness, medication, tiredness or old age, newly arrived immigrants, semi-illiterates etc.⁸⁶

Soon after its was established, the group held a seminar to exchange information on 'ER' publications.⁸⁷ It also held its first meeting at an IFLA annual conference, during which it formalized its aims. Not long after, it arranged an international seminar (Tilburg, The Netherlands), in which papers were presented on different aspects of producing and distributing 'ER' materials.⁸⁸ All of this activity eventually led to the development of guidelines for 'ER' materials, which were published in the next decade.

Beyond expanding the range of disadvantaged users for whom it was working, the

section also completed two major works that IFLA published as numbers one and two in its Professional Reports series. The first, *Books for the mentally handicapped: A guide to selection*, was done jointly with the Section of Children's Libraries. The second, developed by a working group under the auspices of the section, were *Guidelines for libraries serving hospital patients and disabled people in the community*.⁸⁹ The working group elected to develop guidelines rather than the section's traditional standards because they felt their innate flexibility would make them more useful in more situations – ideally, guidelines would provide both developed and developing countries a tool that could be adjusted according to local conditions.⁹⁰ LSN has since followed that pattern.

Finally, the section held its second international course on library services to hospital patients and disabled people, this time in Stockholm. Sponsored by the Nordic library associations and library centres, forty people from fifteen countries attended the one-week program, including four librarians from “third world” countries.⁹¹

1990 - 1999

These years continued to be productive ones for the section. Of major importance, the working groups it had established in the last decade each issued guidelines in its areas of expertise.

First were *Guidelines for library services to deaf people*.⁹² The need for the guidelines had been a concern of the section's Working Group to Identify the Needs of the Deaf, and they was written in conjunction with the Division of Libraries Serving the General Public's guidelines preparation project – a part of IFLA's 1988 Medium Term Programme. Review of, and subsequent Input for, the guidelines came from several organizations for the deaf including the World Federation for the Deaf, which reviewed, provided input for, and subsequently endorsed the guidelines.⁹³

Next were *Guidelines for library services to prisoners*,⁹⁴ which were published in 1991. Planned as a guide for countries developing national guidelines for prison libraries, they included recommendations for: personnel and staffing; collections; physical facilities; equipment; funding and budget; and services. A second edition published in 1995⁹⁵ included more specific information on levels of service, size of collections, staffing, funding, evaluation and marketing methods.

Finally, *Guidelines for easy-to-read materials* was published in 1997.⁹⁶ The guidelines aimed to, 1) describe the nature of and need for easy-to-read products and to identify target user groups, and 2) make suggestions for publishers of easy-to-read materials as well as organizations and agencies that serve the reading disabled. The Guidelines covered topics such as editorial work; design; layout; the publications process; and marketing information.

Among its other activities during that era, the section established a working group on library services to the elderly.⁹⁷ It also presented a number of proposals to the Coordinating Board, Division of Libraries Serving the General Public, among them a recommendation for establishing a literacy core programme.⁹⁸ Though the Professional Board agreed with adoption of the programme,⁹⁹ the Executive Board ultimately rejected it on financial and organizational grounds. Instead, a working group was set up

to study the issues and make related recommendations.¹⁰⁰ That eventually led to the establishment of a full section on reading. In 2007, it became the Literacy and Reading Section.

Finally, the section proposed to the Coordinating Board production of an International resource book for libraries serving disadvantaged persons. Planned as a two year project, the monograph would include: the section's history; a bibliography of its conference papers; and updated subject bibliographies relating to disadvantaged groups (the later an extension of Cumming's 1977 bibliography). It was published in 2001 as *International Resource Book for Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons*.¹⁰¹ A second edition is scheduled for publication in 2009.

2000 – 2009

This era saw the section revise its strategic plan, which IFLA termed a “perfect model.”¹⁰² Part of the plan called for continued research into the global status of library and information services to disadvantaged groups, an important focus, since any meaningful work the section pursued depended upon a sound view of the field. The plan also identified ways to continue recruiting as broad an international membership as possible. A third goal was the continuing development of guidelines, *critical* vehicles in fostering equal access to libraries and library services for people with special needs. Finally, the plan aimed to continue identifying organizational partners outside of the library profession, for example, bodies such as the European Dyslexia Association and the World Federation for the Deaf¹⁰³.

The era also saw the section celebrate its 70th and 75th anniversaries - Boston, 2001, and Seoul, 2006, respectively. For the 75th anniversary, both the text and graphics of the section's informational brochure were revised to better reflect its work.

During the decade, IFLA mandated section reviews covering the period 2001 – 2005, and LSN's review, submitted in November, 2005, centered on past, present and future goals, objectives and activities.¹⁰⁴ The era also saw the standing committee discuss at length a section name change that was, in part, mandated by evolving international terminology relating to its user groups. Its name was changed, finally, in late 2008, to the Library Services to People with Special Needs Section.

Finally, those years saw publication of five new sets of practice guidelines, a resource book for libraries serving disadvantaged persons, and an accessibility checklist. While the guidelines and the checklist were translated IFLA's official languages, some were also translated into: Japanese; Croatian; Farsi; Norwegian; Brazilian-Portuguese; Danish; Finnish; Swedish; Italian; Korean; Slovenian.

First to be published were *Guidelines for library services to hospital patients and the elderly and disabled in long-term care institutions*.¹⁰⁵ Aiming to portray levels to which such library services should aspire, the guidelines were designed as flexible sets of recommendations that could be used in most situations, regardless of local restrictions. Input for the guidelines came from more than thirty countries, and its reviewers represented five countries on four continents.

Next were *Guidelines for library services to deaf people*, 2d. ed..¹⁰⁶ The greatly

expanded edition took into account advances in communications, e.g., the Internet and the WWW, which significantly affect deaf people. Beyond providing recommendations, the guidelines aimed to inform librarians of the Deaf community's unique library and information needs. A third edition is planned for 2009.

*Guidelines for library services to persons with dyslexia*¹⁰⁷ followed. A silent learning disorder that affects roughly eight percent of the world's population,¹⁰⁸ dyslexia had been highlighted at annual conference programs twice in the previous decade. In draft form, the guidelines were distributed for review in Scandinavia, and comments were also solicited from the European Dyslexia Association and the International Dyslexia Association.

*Guidelines for library services to prisoners*¹⁰⁹ was published in 2005 as a guide in planning, implementing and evaluating library services to prisoners. They were also designed to serve as a model for nations wanting to develop their own guidelines in that area. Finally, they were to serve as a statement reinforcing the idea that prisoners have a fundamental right to read, learn and access information. They were written for: librarians, library administrators, prison authorities, governmental branches, and other agencies/authorities responsible for administering and funding prison libraries.

Finally, *Guidelines for library services to persons with dementia*¹¹⁰ was published in 2007. The guidelines were wide-ranging, providing background on dementia, its causes and varieties, and the challenges of serving people so-afflicted, be they housebound or institutionalized. They also addressed materials and services for people with dementia and included models for services, reading representatives, and the problem of ethnic and cultural minority groups.

The *International resource book for libraries serving disadvantaged persons*¹¹¹ was published in 2001 as part of the K. G. Saur series. It updated the section's landmark bibliography on library services to its user groups and also contained a detailed account of the section's founding and growth through 2000.

*Access to libraries for persons with disabilities – CHECKLIST*¹¹² - was published in 2005 and provided recommendations for physical access to libraries, materials, services, and media formats for disabled people. The guidelines also suggested ways to train library staff to provide needed services and effectively communicate with special needs people.

A *Glossary of Terms* related to LSN user groups is scheduled for publication in 2009. Its more than 250 entries were drawn primarily from international sources and from LSN's own working knowledge of the groups for whom it advocates. It is anticipated that the glossary will be helpful, not only to LSN members, but also to other IFLA sections and to members of the international community interested in LSN's work.

Also scheduled for 2009 publication is the 3rd edition of *Guidelines for Easy-to-Read Materials*. The range of needs addressed by these guidelines will include: people who are cognitively disabled; people with low literacy levels, including those with limited language skills; and non-cognitively disabled people who nonetheless have reading problems.

Finally, 2009 will see publication of the second edition of the *International resource*

book for libraries serving disadvantaged persons. The monograph will update bibliographies on library services to people with special needs and will also update the section's achievements, 2000-2008.

Today and Tomorrow

LSN has evolved from a sub-committee concerned with library services for hospital patients to a section dedicated to fostering improved library systems, resources and services for a range of special needs groups. It continues today to work to improve the availability of all forms of library materials to people with special needs and to provide an international forum for discussion of those needs.

In the future, LSN will continue among its other aims to: promote copyright legislation that addresses special needs groups; pursue joint ventures with agencies such as the World Federation for the Deaf and the European Dyslexia Association whose focus in one or more areas is similar to the section's; work with other IFLA sections in improving resources and services for people with special needs; conduct research in the field; and speak and write in its areas of concern

Notes and References

1. The publications were: *Books for the mentally handicapped: a guide to selection.* IFLA Professional Reports No. 1 (prepared jointly with the Children's Section); and *Guidelines for libraries serving hospital patients and disabled people in the community.* IFLA Professional Reports No. 2. Both reports are currently out of print.

2. *Comité International des Bibliothèques, 4me Session Cheltenham, (Angleterre), 29-31 Août 1931, Actes.* (1931) Genève: Albert Kundig, 18-19.

3. IFLA was founded in 1927 as the International Library and Bibliographical Committee. See: Fiftieth anniversary conference of the British Library Association held at Edinburgh 26th – 30th Sept. 1927. In *Actes du Comité International des Bibliothèques, Travaux Préparatoires Congrès De Prague 1926, D'Atlantic City et Philadelphie, 1926, D'Édimbourg 1927, 1ere Session Rome 31 Mars, 1928, 2e Session Rome-Florence-Venise, Juin 1929.* (1931) Upsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri-A,-B., 13-15.

4. For formation and/or reports of the earlier permanent sub-committees, see: *Actes du Comité International des Bibliothèques, Travaux Préparatoires Congrès de Prague, 1926, D'Atlantic City et Philadelphie, 1926, D'Édimbourg 1927, 1ere Session Rome, 31 Mars, 1928, 2e Session Rome-Florence-Venise, Juin 1929.* (1931), *op. cit.*, 44; *Actes du Comité International des Bibliothèques, II. 3e session, Stockholm, 1930.* (1930) Upsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 16-19, *Annexe IV*, 43-50; *Comité International...1931, op. cit.*, 13-19.

For membership of the sub-committees – which were, hospital libraries, popular

(public) libraries, exchange of librarians, exchange of university theses, professional education, library statistics, and statistics on printed matter – see: *Actes du Comité International Des Bibliothèques 6me Session Chicago, 14 octobre Avignon, 13-14 novembre 1933.* (1934) La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 9-11.

5. While no one published source comprehensively describes the growing interest in library services to hospital patients during that era, a sense of the movement can be had by perusing citations in Cumming's international bibliography, particularly for the years 1908 through 1931. See: Cumming, E.E. (1977) *Hospital and Welfare Library Services.* London: The Library Association. See also note 6.

6. National programs to provide reading matter to military personnel - including those who were hospitalized - sprang into existence during and at the close of World War I. Beyond their immediate benefit, the programs carried the unexpected value of demonstrating on a widespread basis that books and reading can hold therapeutic value for sick people.

Two of the more highly publicized programs were Britain's War Library and the United States' War Service Program. Detailed descriptions of these can be found in: Koch, T.W. (1919) *Books in the war: the romance of library war service.* Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin; Koch, T.W. (1917) *Books in camp, trench and hospital.* London: J.M. Dent & Sons; Young, A.P. (1981) *Books for Sammies: The American Library Association and World War I.* Pittsburgh: Beta Phi Mu; Gaskell, H.M. (1917) *The Red Cross and Order of St. John War Library.* London (8 page pamphlet).

For a brief picture of both programs, see: Panella, N, M. (2000) The development of libraries for hospital patients. In *Guidelines for libraries serving hospital patients and the elderly and disabled in long-term care institutions.* IFLA Professional Reports No. 61 The Hague: IFLA, 2-3.

7. For an overview of early attempts at international cooperation in librarianship, see: Rudomino, M.I., The Prehistory of IFLA. In Koops, W.R.H. and Wieder, J. eds. (1977) *IFLA's First Fifty Years: Achievements and challenge in international librarianship.* München: Verlag Dokumentation, 66-79.

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