

IFLA '96: The Challenge of Change

By Hannelore B. Rader

IFLA's 62nd Conference, Beijing, China, August 25-31

More than 3,200 delegates and exhibitors from 93 countries participated in the 62nd IFLA Conference held in Beijing, China, from August 25-31, 1996. Among the delegates were more than 200 from the United States. IFLA's theme this year, "The Challenge of Change: Libraries and Economic Development," was reflected in the various programs offered. Libraries worldwide are facing new challenges and expanded roles. Greater recognition is being given to the educational role of libraries in assisting with the development of the intellectual capital of every country. Information is valued as an economic resource and new technologies are making information available instantly and globally. Libraries need to use their information management skills to play a leading role in this new information environment. The IFLA Conference chose this theme to reflect different facets of information as one of the key elements in contemporary economic and social life.

Subthemes within the conference were:

- libraries as gateways to information;
- continuing education of librarians in a changing environment;
- resource sharing: local, national, and international issues;
- identifying user needs;
- taking information to the users;
- networking and document delivery;
- the library as key to exploring economic resources;
- funding of library information services;
- the role and image of libraries in developing countries.

Issues for university libraries

As one of the four officially appointed U.S. representatives on IFLA's University Libraries and Other General Research Libraries Section, I attended that section's meetings and programs at the conference. The University Libraries Section has been very actively working on the following issues:

Performance measurement for academic libraries

A discussion group on this subject has been in place for four years and a book has just been published: *Measuring Quality: International Guidelines for Performance Measurement in Academic Libraries*, by Roswitha Poll (Munich, Germany: Saur, 1996). The discussion group held its annual meeting at IFLA and reported progress on its efforts. It was also decided to extend the group for four more years.

Cost analysis of library operations

The section is now beginning to focus on cost analysis of library operations in relation to performance measures and management of academic libraries.

Management issues related to academic libraries

The section sponsored an all-day workshop for 50 participants on "Managing Academic Libraries: The Challenge of Change," which covered the influence of information technology on academic library activities and services and its effect on librarians' roles. Speakers addressing the theme represented China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Norway, and New Zealand. Participants were amazed at how similar managerial issues for academic librarians are worldwide.

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(233 pages, March 1996), contains 18 articles on the importance of postcard collections in scholarly research. Although postcards are vastly underutilized in research settings, Stevens reminds us that they may contain the only remaining visual images of a building, monument, person, or place during a specific time period; that postcard collections may represent the best set of images of a natural feature, an historic event, or a city or town; and that the messages written on the backs of postcards can reveal a great deal about individual or societal attitudes. Of particular interest are articles on the Curt Teich Postcard Archives (Katherine Hamilton-Smith), the Marguerite Archer Collection of Historic Children's Materials (Meredith Eliassen), George Watson Cole's plan for postcard classification and the holdings of the American Antiquarian Society (Jennifer Henderson), and postcard preservation

options (Jan Merrill-Oldham). Simultaneously published as *Popular Culture in Libraries*, Vol. 3, No. 2. \$34.95. Haworth Press, 10 Alice St., Binghamton, NY 13904-1580.

The **Seismo-Watch Newsletter**, a weekly publication now in its fourth year, offers a worldwide survey of earthquake activity with particular emphasis on North American events. Libraries in fault areas will find this newsletter especially useful as a timely record of local quakes. Predictions and forecasting are explicitly excluded. Notable seismic events, trends, historical correlations, seismological and geological terms, and significant earthquakes of the past are summarized in sidebars. Preparedness information is also included. A yearly subscription is \$65.00. Advanced Geologic Exploration, P.O. Box 18012, Reno, NV 89511. ISSN 1079-2821. ■

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Copyright and intellectual property rights

The section sponsored a program on "Copyright and Fair Use in the Electronic Information Age: Implications for Academic Libraries." Speakers were from the European Bureau of Libraries, the Information and Documentation Association in Belgium, the Association of Research Libraries, and Trondheim University in Norway. Copyright issues were very much on the mind of most conference delegates and other IFLA groups held meetings on the topic as well. A preconference seminar on the topic was held in Tianjin, China, August 22–23, and attended by 55 participants from China and other countries.

User education

Another topic of interest at the IFLA Conference was user education. The new IFLA Roundtable on User Education sponsored two programs in Beijing. One was on "Information Literacy: Global Perspectives," featuring papers from Finland, China, South Africa, and the United States. Another program featured the theme of "User Education for Remote Library Users," with speakers from the United States and Canada.

Other highlights

Li Peng, China's premier, addressed the opening session of the conference saying that China

is committed to the continued development of its systems of libraries, literature preservation and information, and to integrating them with the country's overall progress. News about the IFLA Conference was featured on Chinese television every day and written about in Chinese newspapers.

Social and cultural events provided by the Chinese government and the Chinese IFLA Organizing Committee were impressive. All conference participants were taken to two events across the city by 90 buses in a police-escorted caravan while all traffic along the route stopped. The first event was a kaleidoscope of Chinese folk music, dance, acrobatics, and opera. The second event was a sit-down dinner in the Hall of the People—an elegant, efficiently served dinner of 12 courses. The host country and thousands of volunteers ensured that delegates enjoyed the conference.

The exhibits were interesting and educational and especially attractive to thousands of Chinese who were able to attend them.

Professional dialogues and exchanges with peers from China and other parts of the world proved most enlightening and useful. The knowledge that we in academic libraries share problems, issues, and challenges and must work together to find solutions encouraged many of us to face these challenges here in the U.S. and to seek solutions globally in cooperation with our colleagues in other countries. ■